From 1 August 2019, new rules will apply to all motorists when passing cyclists. When traveling in a 60km/h or less speed zone, motorists will be required to leave a minimum 1 metre passing distance when overtaking a cyclist. When the speed limit is over 60km/h, motorists will be required to leave a passing distance of at least 1.5 metres.

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# What is the purpose of the rule?

This rule better protects cyclists from the risks of a crash when they are being passed by a motor vehicle. Leaving a safe passing distance better protects cyclists, particularly in situations when they may not realise a vehicle is approaching them from behind.

Cyclists have less protection than other motorists and are more likely to be injured in the event of a crash.

The rule is intended to improve safety by providing more space for everyone – particularly in the event a cyclist has to move suddenly to avoid a hazard.

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# What are the key features of the rule?

When passing a cyclist, motorists must leave a minimum passing distance of:

* **1 metre** when passing a cyclists in a 60km/h or less speed zone or
* **1.5 metres** when the speed limit is over 60km/h.

These rules only apply in situations where the motorist and the cyclist or cyclists are travelling in the same direction. This includes when you are travelling side-by-side in separate lanes on a multi-lane road. It does not apply if you are travelling in opposite directions.

# What do cyclists need to do?

To keep safe, cyclists should obey all road rules, including wear a helmet and ride with lights at night. Just like motorists, they also need to stop at stop signs and traffic lights, ride on the left side of the road and give way to pedestrians on crossings and at intersections.

They should also ride predictably in a straight line and signal their intention to turn or change lanes.

# How is the passing distance measured?

The 1 metre or 1.5 metre safe passing distance is measured from the furthest point to the left on the driver’s vehicle to the furthest point to the right on the bicycle.

For the purposes of the rule, cyclists themselves, bicycle trailers, any passengers on the bike or bicycle trailer, as well as baskets and pannier bags are considered part of the bicycle. A flag or stick attached to a bike sideways and extending out from the bicycle or bicycle trailer is not considered part of the bike.

When two cyclists are riding side by side, the distance is measured from the furthest point on the right of the bicycle on the right-hand side of the pair of cyclists.

# Does the minimum passing distance apply to all motor vehicles?

These new road rules apply to all motor vehicles including: cars, motorcyclists, heavy vehicles and public transport vehicles.

In some situations, such as for certain heavy vehicles like trucks and buses, a safe passing distance may be more than the 1 metre or 1.5 metre minimum. In these circumstances, motorists need to provide cyclists with as large a passing distance as is necessary to ensure their safety.

**Remember** - the minimum passing distance applies to motorists passing cyclists, not cyclists passing motorists. This is because of the greater risk faced by cyclists when motorists pass them too closely. Cyclists do not pose the same risk to motorists. However, cyclists are also expected to keep a safe distance when passing other traffic.

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# What should I do if I can’t leave the minimum safe passing distance?

Before indicating and passing cyclists, motorists will need to check their surroundings to ensure they are able to leave the minimum passing distance required. If you are unable to pass a cyclist or cyclists without leaving the minimum required passing distance, then it is not safe to pass. **You will need to slow down, be patient and wait until it is safe to pass.**

# Can I cross centre lines when I am driving to pass a cyclist?

To help motorists to comply with these rules, some exemptions to the road rules apply, such as being allowed to cross centre lines when completing the manoeuvre. These exemptions only apply if the driver has a clear view of any approaching traffic and it is safe to pass the cyclist.

When motorists are passing a cyclist and only when it is safe to do so, they are permitted to:

* straddle lanes or move across lanes
* drive to the right of the centre of the road
* cross over or drive to the right of the dividing line, including double solid lines
* drive on or over continuous lines around a painted island
* drive on a dividing strip that is at the same level as the road

# Does this rule apply when driving through a roundabout or where there is a raised median strip or island that does not allow a minimum passing distance?

Yes. The new rules apply at all times, to all motorists on the road. In situations as described above, common sense and etiquette from motorists is essential

At a roundabout, treat the cyclist as you would any other vehicle in the roundabout. Don’t crowd the cyclist and give way accordingly.

When a physical barrier such as an island or median strip prevents motorists from leaving a safe passing distance, they must wait until the cyclist or cyclists themselves have passed the barrier before passing, and then only pass when they have a clear view of any oncoming traffic and it is safe to do so.

# Do motorists need to indicate when passing cyclists?

Motorists must indicate when passing cyclists if they need to change their position on the road.

* Before passing, indicate 'right' long enough to warn other road users that you are about to veer to the right to pass a cyclist or cyclists.
* After passing the cyclist or cyclists, indicate 'left' when returning to your original position on the road.

You must indicate if you need to change your position on the road, even if you do not need to cross the centre or lane lines.

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# What happens if a cyclist moves closer to the person trying to drive around them to pass?

The motorist still needs to leave the minimum passing distances, however cyclist need to ride as safe as practical to the left, ride predictably in a straight line and signal their intention to turn or change lanes.

The new rules are intended to improve safety by providing more space for all road users – particularly in the event a cyclist has to move suddenly to avoid a hazard.

# Does this rule apply when the person I am passing is cycling in a bicycle lane?

Yes. The new rules apply even when a cyclist is riding in a bicycle lane. All motorists must keep the appropriate minimum safe distance when passing cyclists riding in the same direction, traveling in a bicycle lane.

# Are cyclists required to use on-road bike lanes where they are provided?

Yes, by law, cyclists riding on the road are required to use an on-road bike lanes where they are provided, unless it is impracticable for them to do so.

# Are cyclists allowed on the road even when there is an off road bike path?

Yes. Cyclists can choose to cycle on the road, even when there is an adjacent off road path. Bicycles are classed as vehicles and cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as other road users. When cycling on the road, cyclists must obey the road rules.

# Are motorists allowed to use bike lanes?

Motorists are only allowed to use bike lanes under certain conditions. Motorists can occupy a bike lane for no more than 50 metres, and may only do so where necessary to pass a vehicle turning right, to enter or leave a side street, to enter or leave another traffic lane or parking space, or when stopping or parking if permitted**.**

# Do cyclists need to leave parked cars 1 metre when riding past them?

Cyclists do not need to leave 1 metre when riding past a parked vehicle. The minimum passing distance rules do not apply to cyclists. The rules only apply to motorists passing a cyclist or cyclists.

However, cyclists should always take care when riding past parked vehicles to leave sufficient room to avoid a collision.

Drivers should also take extra caution to look for cyclists before opening their doors when parked.

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# Are cyclists permitted to ride side by side in the same lane on a road and do these overtaking rules apply?

Cyclists are allowed to ride side-by-side on the road, as long as there are no more than two cyclists riding next to each other at any given time and the gap between them is no more than 1.5 metres.

When riding side-by-side, cyclists should ride as close together as is safe to do so.

When two cyclists are riding side by side, the minimum passing distance applies and the distance is measured from the furthest point on the right-hand side of the pair of riders. If you are unable to pass the cyclists without leaving the minimum required passing distance, then it is not safe to pass. You will need to slow down, be patient and wait until it is safe to pass.

# Are the road rules for cyclists the same as those for drivers?

Yes, just like other drivers and motorcyclists they also need to stop at stop signs and traffic lights, ride on the left hand side of the road and give way to pedestrians on crossings and at intersections.

Cyclists need to ride predictably in a straight line and signal their intention to turn or change lanes.

# What is the penalty for motorists not giving the minimum passing distance?

Police can charge motorists with a number of existing road traffic offences including overtaking a vehicle without leaving a sufficient distance.

# How does this rule compare with other states and territories?

Most states and territories have implemented, or are trialling, this road rule.

# Where can I find more details?

For more information on cyclist safety tips and road rules please visit: <https://roadsafety.nt.gov.au/safety-topics/cyclists>