



## Getting Started with Road Cycling

For the last thirteen years I worked for American Bicycle Group in Chattanooga, TN. I worked in an office with 15-20 people who all had stories about their years as cyclists. Cycling is a great sport - you can push yourself beyond belief. You can die a thousand deaths on a bike. Cycling does not pound your joints like running, so you can cycle for hour after hour and still be healthy the next day.

One thing we need to be aware of is the risks we face while riding on the road. You get your shiny new bike, the sun is out and you are ready to go. The obvious risks you will face are cars. But gravel, dogs, and other cyclists are usually the cause of bike accidents. Your eyes should be constantly scanning for rocks, pot holes, sticks, etc in the road, and you should point them out to your fellow riders.

Dogs cause many accidents each year. Do not try to out run them. The faster you're going when you hit them, the faster you will be going when you crash. One technique I have used for years is a shot of water from my water bottle into the face of the offending dog. The dog's owner might not like this, but if a bite seems eminent, it might be necessary. Usually cyclists are their own worst enemy with dogs. Your best action usually is no action. Just keep riding and avoid crashing into the dog.

Other cyclists are a very real risk, but I enjoy the company of others. Riding with a group of cyclists can push you harder then you can push yourself and they also make your cycling more fun. Give your self sufficient space from other cyclists, especially those with whom you are not familiar. Also, have a plan if the rider in front of you slows or swerves. Will you move to the right or left? I know the answer to that before I need to make the move.

Choosing roads or trails: Here in Wisconsin, we are blessed with great road riding - lots of quiet back roads and bike paths. So pressure from traffic here is not that great. But for areas that are not so sparsely populated, picking your route can take a bit more planning. I recommend getting a bike-specific map. These maps often recommend certain roads or paths that are better suited for cyclists. Put the map in a zip-lock bag and take it along for your rides. This will help to keep you off of major roads and out of traffic.

I have lots of great memories from my years as a cyclist, and only a few incidents. Generally, the trade-offs are worth the risk. So with these thoughts in mind, get out there and create your own stories about epic road rides!

Coach Lee  
[PRTriCoach.com](http://PRTriCoach.com)