

Keep moving this winter

Advice on cycling during
the winter months



Go
Smarter



Prepare and take care

With a little preparation, cycling to work in the winter can be as enjoyable as the summer – think of crisp fresh mornings seeing the sunrise, a glow in your cheeks as you arrive to work and that great feeling you get inside from the fresh air and exercise. While journeys as simple as that do happen, we know that winter often means dark and damp mornings leaving you feeling grey and chilled to the bone. A few simple tips will help you cycle comfortably through winter.

Check the weather – we all know how changeable our weather can be but having an idea of the forecast can help you decide which route to take, how many layers you may need and even if it's worth keeping the bike wrapped up for a day and using an alternative mode to get to work.

Plan your route – consider alternative routes in winter and know your back up plan for getting to work just in case you decide not to cycle. Also consider what would happen if poor weather meant you couldn't cycle home, is there somewhere you can leave your bike at work? If you consider these things while the weather is good and nights are lighter you'll be well prepared for dark winter nights. Please see the Go Smarter Journey Planner to help you plan your journey www.gosmarter.co.uk/journeyplanner

Take your time – while cycling quickly will help keep you warm on winter days, speedy cycling could mean you miss a hazard such as a pothole or hit black ice. Cycling to work is not a race, go at your own pace and you're certain to find it more enjoyable.

Make sure your bike is kitted up for winter – consider the extra wear and tear winter commuting can cause. Your chain will need to be checked regularly as winter roads can cause increased wear and rust. Wipe your chain dry on wet days and always keep it well lubricated. If you would like more information please speak to your workplace contact.

Go Smarter to Work can also offer free cycle training sessions where you can pick up some top tips and practical advice about cycle commuting during winter.

If you're interested in cycle training, please email info@gosmarter.co.uk

Make sure you carry your basic tools especially a spare inner tube and pump. Fixing a bike in the dark can be fiddly! As a back up you could keep the number of a local taxi firm or friend who would be willing to pick you up if you did breakdown en route.

Be bright and get lights

Lights are required by law when cycling at night. Lights not only help you see in the dark but they also help you be seen so think about this when purchasing lights.

Light sets come in a wide range of brightness (lumens) and price ranges – you don't need to buy an expensive light which is as bright as the sun but do make sure your light helps you to be seen by others. If you're going to be commuting regularly consider purchasing rechargeable lights or even dynamo lights.

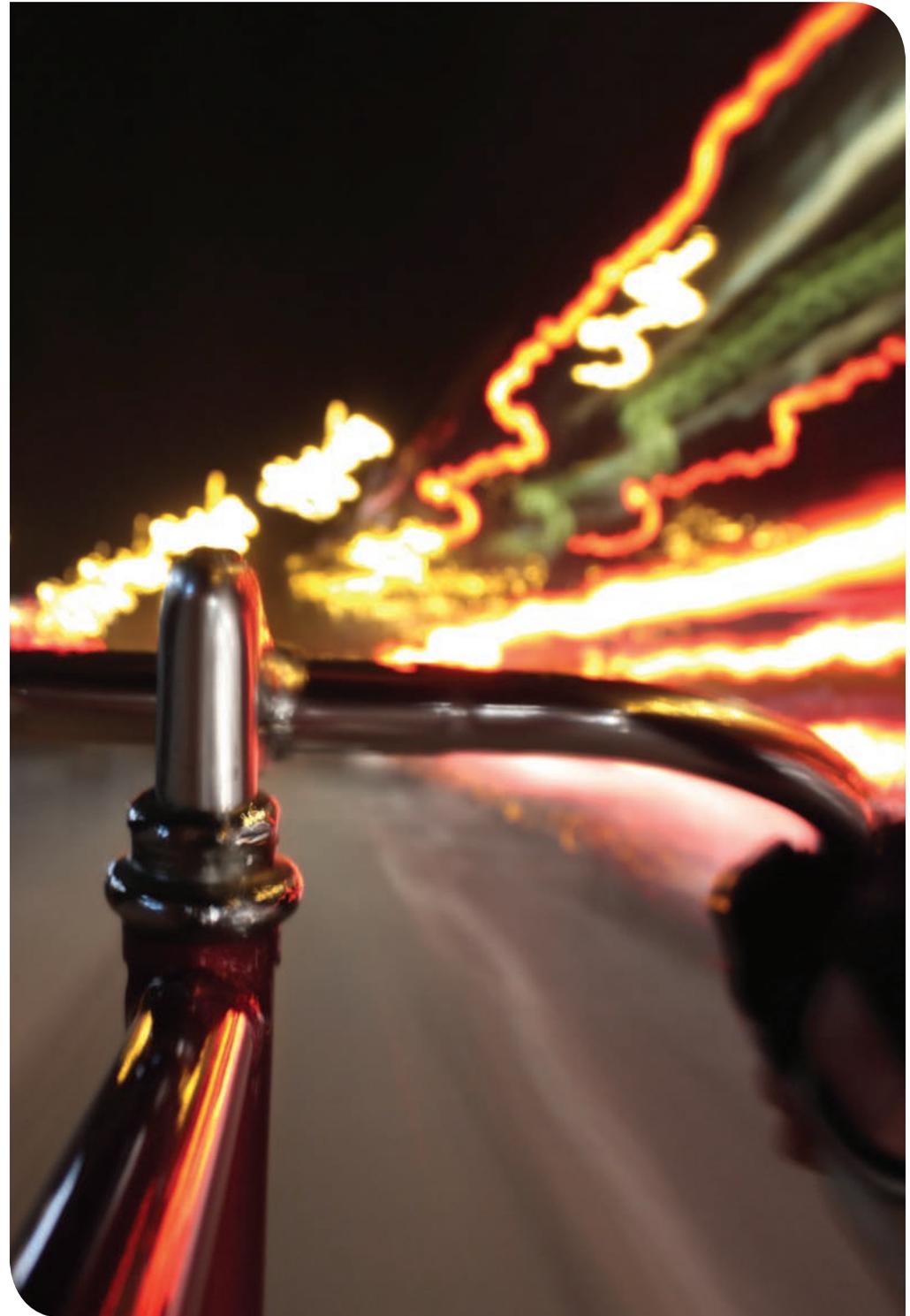
It's a good idea to carry spare batteries or a back up light just in case. Back up lights will help you get home if your lights fail. Remember that it is illegal to cycle on roads at night without a white front light and red rear light. Don't forget to remove your lights when you lock your bike up.

There are lots of ways to brighten up you and your bike to make you visible to all road users – even a couple of reflective stickers or snap bands on your bike frame will help.

Tyres

Keeping your tyres inflated reduces the risk of punctures but also consider that slick tyres which are fully inflated could slip on wet leaves and ice. You could consider changing to some slightly grippier tyres for winter. You can even get tyres specifically for snow and ice if you're really committed to winter cycle commuting.

Tyres can also have reflective walls to help increase visibility.





Clothing

Lots of layers is key to staying comfortable when cycling in winter. Always carry a waterproof layer. Depending on your facilities at work you may be able to dry clothes during the day but many of us do not have that luxury so being prepared is vital to staying comfortable. Some days though, getting the bus is going to be a lot nicer than getting on your bike!

Make sure you have gloves, on the coldest of days a pair of mittens on top of your gloves can help keep your hands warm. Make sure you can still operate your brakes and gears if wearing thick gloves.

Overshoes can help keep your feet dry and warm; you can also buy winter cycling shoes which are designed to be waterproof.

A hat or headband under your helmet will keep your head and ears warm. A buff or scarf will keep your neck and face warm too.

Cycling jackets can be expensive but a good quality, waterproof and reflective jacket is worth the investment. Although fluorescent yellow is great to increase visibility you can get jackets in more subtle colours which have high quality reflective and even LED strips which help you stay visible on dark nights or grey days. Always carry a lightweight jacket just in case the weather changes or you have a breakdown.

Waterproof trousers will keep you warm on cold windy days and dry when it's wet. A good quality pair should last you a couple of winters so worth the investment.

If possible, keep a change of clothes at work just in case you forget anything! Keeping shoes at work is a great way to reduce the amount you need to carry as well as ensuring you have a dry, clean pair for work.

Get into the habit

If you're already a regular cyclist, you'll find it harder to give it up. Keep the habit up during winter even if it means reducing how often you cycle.

If winter cycling doesn't appeal to you, simply pick the best days to do it – this will keep you feeling great and stop you falling out of habit. You don't have to cycle everyday, once a week is enough to help reduce traffic congestion, save you money and improve your health.

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