



How to ride your bike in winter

Low temperatures and rain shouldn't stop you from enjoying yourself on your bike. With the right combination of clothing, technology and creativity, you can still enjoy a comfortable and invigorating ride.

Follow our winter makeover guide and get yourself out there!

CLOTHES

A head-to toe garment guide

Hair & Ears: Try a thermal headband or thin toque under your helmet. If you have a beanie, you may need to swap the sizing pads in your helmet and adjust the chin strap. Helmet covers are a good idea to block cold air and precipitation from entering the vents.

Eyes: Glasses with clear lenses, or goggles will help to stop your eyes from watering. Try attaching a visor to your helmet to protect from rain and grit.

Neck: Tuck a neck warmer into your jacket collar to block cold air; it can also double as a toque. Scarves are great too!

Hands: Gloves are an inexpensive and versatile way to moderate your temperature — build a collection of half-length and full-fingered styles, warm liners, neoprene and wind-resistant outer shells to mix and match as the weather changes. If it's really cold out there, try cushy ski gloves.



Axiom Arctic Glove

Torso: Adapt your clothes according to the length of your ride: wear a big warm jacket for short errands, or multiple layers on longer rides.

Be ready for rain and wind — go high-tech (with a waterproof, breathable cycling jacket) or low-tech (with a

PVC rain slicker).

Wear silk, wool or a moisture-wicking synthetic fibre top next to your skin — avoid cotton which stays damp.

Try a cycle-specific rain cape and boots for a European approach - it's inexpensive and you can throw it over your street clothes. Bike Dr has the best one ever.



Rain Cape

Legs: Mix and match between Pants, shorts, knickers, tights or shells according to the weather report and the length of your ride.

Lined wool slacks, or wool skirts with cable tights, look and feel great on dry, crisp days

Feet: Your feet are closest to the cold, wet road — keep them dry (and your footwear clean) with slip-on shoe covers ("rain booties")

Wear thick wool socks in your winter bike footwear for extra warmth



Endura Luminite Shoe Cover

Seat: Keep a plastic bag handy to protect your saddle and keep your bottom dry. Lock your bike and pull on the cover.

BICYCLE

How to winterize your bike

Bike: Take your bike in for a tune-up before winter to keep it safe and in good shape. During winter, give it a little more TLC to prevent rust & corrosion, a simple clean and lube should be all you need.

Check your brake pads regularly—road grit and small stones can stick in the pads - listen for a sandy sound when you brake.

Get your brakes adjusted if they don't seem to stop, even when you squeeze the levers hard.



Attach a bell (or better yet, an airhorn) to alert cars and pedestrians that may not see you in the rain or dark.

Axiom Roadrunner Fenders

Drivetrain and Brakes

A full fender set is inexpensive and protects both you and your bike's moving parts from road slush—they can be tricky to install, so consider having a mechanic do it.

Switch to a wet lubricant, which is thicker and will adhere better to the chain in heavy rains and repel grit and moisture; only lubricate a chain when the oil has dissipated and be sure to wipe off excess oil with a rag. If you are getting greasy and there is oil build up on chain and gear stop oiling

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and get it cleared off.

Wheels and Tires

Aside from popular belief, smooth tires are better in the wet than knobby or studded tires. Smooth city tires, provide maximum contact with the road, special treads help dissipate water away.

To improve tire grip and traction - switch to a wider tire and/or keep tires a bit softer in the winter

BE SEEN

Front lights: days are dark and drivers are distracted — amp up your front light with an extra-bright lamp that's at least six watts, or add a second front light



Serfas
Thunderbolt
Rear Light

Rear lights: Add a second rear light for extra visibility—make sure one is attached to your bike so it doesn't shift around, and remember: batteries fail faster in the cold

Batteries or USB: Battery powered lights generally more power, however they will cost you more in the long run. Also, in colder weather, they fail faster. Consider a USB rechargeable light, you can charge them at work or home. They are a great option for both the environment and your bank account

Frame: Apply strips of colourful reflective tape on your bike's frame to pickup car headlights—they're good for visibility if your lights fail too.

Wheels and Helmet: You can also mount reflective strips and lights to your helmet.

Cargo: Carry extra clothes, gear and essentials in waterproof pannier bags that hang off your bike.



Ortlieb City Roller
Pannier

Riding with a backpack can apply a lot of unnecessary weight and strain to your back.

Use plastic bags to keep wet clothing separate and to organise your belongings. Bungee cords are great to strap large items onto your rack that won't fit into your bags.

ROUTE

Preparation: Check the weather report so you can plan what to wear. Just remember it may be clear in the morning, but raining for your ride home.

Route

Use bike and transit maps to research your route. Side roads have less traffic, but watch for slippery leaves, swinging car doors and short-cutting drivers.

Try out a few different routes to the same destination — sometimes the best way depends on road surface, time of day and volume of traffic.

On the road

Give yourself more time than you would in summer to allow for detours and walking.

Pedal slowly and smoothly into corners and intersections. Watch out for slippery road paint, service holes, frost, back ice and wet leaves.

Keep your body upright while turning so your tires don't skid out from under you.

Rain can affect your brakes' performance, leave a greater distance for stopping.

Snacks and Fluids

Always carry a couple of spare energy bars, you burn more calories in the cold.

Drink! Dehydration makes you more susceptible to hypothermia and frostbite.

Keep water warm and close—fill a slim thermos with hot tea and store it into your water bottle holder.

Communicate

You're not alone! Meet other winter cyclists at one of the area's many social and policy- making events.

If you see a dangerous new pothole or patch of slippery debris, contact your city's Cycling Hotline.

Links to learn more

Social and policy-making groups - Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition bikehub.ca

Translink - Greater Vancouver Cycling Map and Guide translink.ca

Magazines - Momentum is a Vancouver-published magazine for self-propelled people momentummag.com

For more how-to's, tips, advice and bike information – sign up to our Newsletter

