

# LESSON 5 - Know the street

(developed by Cynthia McArthur)

Audience: Junior High and higher

Time: 1 to 2 hours

Materials Needed:

Description: This activity comes after the map reading safe riding activities. Participants will learn how to identify situations in their community that might be dangerous or may impair their ability to bike safely or securely. They will discuss both perceived and real situations they may face and come up with strategies to enhance their ability to use their bikes and reduce or prevent situations that could result in loss of equipment, personal injury or sense of safety, either personally or in traffic. In addition, participants will learn more about their community, where they live, who lives near them and how their community can be a positive support to them while riding their bikes.

Learner Outcomes:

Participants will learn three ways to keep themselves safe when riding their bike to work, school or for fun.

Participants will learn three ways to keep their bikes safe from theft or damage when riding their bikes to work, school or for fun.

Participants will learn three or more places they can go in their community for help and support when riding their bikes for work, school or for fun.

Participants will identify three people, businesses, homes or organizations that they can go to in getting help or support when riding their bikes for work, school or for fun.

Activity:

Students will use their map reading skills and routes they designed from the previous activities on map reading as the basis of the environment they will learn about.

In teams of two or more, students will work on designing a individualized plan to help them be and feel safer on their streets. Team up youth who live near each other or find some similarity in their living experiences when teaming participants for this activity.

Discuss concerns, realities or perceptions of walking, biking or being on the streets in their neighborhoods. List them using as little discussion or prioritizing as possible so that all ideas or comments are listed. It is easy to minimize or eliminate a concern if only one person feels it is important or there are other bigger issues facing team members. All ideas are valuable and should be considered.

Move the discussion to what is unsafe about their neighborhood. For instance, are there

abandoned houses that are unsafe to ride by, are there alleys or streets that are poorly lit, is traffic heavy and intersections difficult to cross or use with a bike, is there long stretches of roads, sidewalks or blocks between populated business or residential areas that could be unsafe to ride?

Discuss areas of the neighborhoods that are safe such as homes where friends live, businesses where you can use the phone, stores where you can lock a bike safely, transtops to use for shelter from the weather, etc.

Have students design a plan to go out into the neighborhood in teams to view, identify and list places they feel are both unsafe and safe. This could be on foot or on bike, depending on the timeline and preference of the team. This trip should include going into businesses to determine if they could use a phone. (Do they need money, can they be in the store at any time – a liquor store may prohibit youth from entering, some stores limit the number of youth who can be in the store at the same time, etc). Look for homes that can be counted on to have people that would help them if necessary. Are there places where shelter for the bike or from inclement weather on the route? Are there roads, streets, intersections, driveways, alleys that are in poor condition, are unsafe to easily use, are too narrow or too wide to safely travel on? This list should be a good assessment of what the neighborhood has to help the students feel safe and comfortable when riding their bikes.

Next the students should list what they can do to make themselves safer when riding. The discussion should include personal safety, the safe keeping of the bicycle and how they will use their bikes safely.

Personal safety - Wearing light colored clothes, especially at night, carrying or wearing a jacket if it is cold or rainy, carrying money for a phone call or to get something to eat or drink, wearing a helmet when riding, knowing and using the traffic laws safely and legally, riding with a buddy, telling someone where they are going, what route they are using and when they plan to arrive at their destination are a few of the things to begin the discussion with. Let the kids add to this list as they see relevant.

Safe keeping of the bicycle - Having the bike in good working condition, using a lock when leaving the bike unattended, registering the bike (if possible or required), securing the bike safely in a rack or in a safe and legal place when leaving it unattended.

Using their bikes safely - Knowing the laws and obeying them. Knowing how to ride their bikes safely in their neighborhoods on streets or roads. Being good at riding a bike by practicing often.

Have the students create a plan using paper, computers, journals, etc to put their ideas into a written format that they can read, share with others and display. Have them share their final projects with the team or the group. It is a good way to make sure their plans are useable and realistic and it is a fun way to reward everyone for coming up with a plan to know their streets.

Considerations for discussion:

\*The leader should know the dynamics of the neighborhoods that the kids live in so they can help the students make their plans realistic. If crack houses, theft or personal assault are important concerns, emphasize strategies to reduce or prevent them from becoming the things that prohibit a youth from using his or her bike. If it is long distances from home to services, such as it is in many suburbs, help the students create options for using their bikes more often

and safely.

\*Recognize the perceived and real fears that parents, guardians or teachers have in letting kids at this age ride their bikes further and further from home. Include these concerns into the discussion so strategies to acknowledge these are taken into consideration.

\* Bring the kids back together after they have had an opportunity to use their plan and discuss what worked and what needs improvement or changes. This can be an on-going activity that is expanded or reassessed as it fits the program.