



you can pedal it and the brakes work and it works more or less efficiently, you're off to some kind of start," says Cliff Vallentgoed, owner of Redbike (10918 88 avenue).

Ensuring your bike is up to the task is important, and a mechanic at one of the city's many bike shops can let you know what your ride needs to get it ready. EBCS can also help with service: for a low fee, a volunteer mechanic will help you fix your bike.

If you have a little more to spend, buying new lets you get a bike that's the right size for you, looks the way you want, and is ready to go without any repairs. Strangely, however, not even brand-new bikes come with the minimum equipment required to legally ride.

"The law requires that you have a bell and that if you ride after dusk or before dawn that you have lights affixed to your bike," Vallentgoed explains. "That's not just about the law; having a bell is about sharing multi-use trails with other users, and having lights is about protecting yourself."

**NEW \$1000 BICYCLE, YOU MIGHT SPEND A COUPLE  
WAY CHEAPER THAN A CAR.**

**OUT OF UNIVERSITY, THEY COME OUT WITH A DEBT,  
WHAT DO? THEY FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE TO BUY A CAR.**

**AGAIN, THEY GET INTO DEBT."**

"There's so many things that you can get to make the experience more pleasant. Gloves, shoes, pedal systems, a helmet is a fantastic idea—it's not the law for anybody over the age of 16, but it's an awfully good idea," he adds.

Once you've got the basics—a bicycle, helmet, bell, lights, and lock—you're good to go. You can acquire the rest as you need it. In my experience, a good set of fenders will keep your pants clean and dry, a leg strap will keep the chain grease at bay, and a rear rack with panniers (baskets) lets you get groceries and carry other stuff around. But no matter what type of bike you choose to ride or how you choose to trick it out, proper maintenance is critical.

"A well-maintained bicycle is good for safety, it's good for efficiency, and it looks better," Kalmanovitch explains.

To stop safely, both brakes need to be working, and for optimum efficiency, the drivetrain should be clean and well oiled. Also make sure the chain doesn't skip under load—if you're standing on the pedals when this happens, you can wind up on your face.

But just having a bike isn't everything a

budding cyclist needs—you also need to learn how to drive it. Not ride it, but drive it—as in, operate it on the roadway like any other motor vehicle—a skill that even some experienced cyclists lack.

"I think one thing that cyclists often fall into the habit of, they kind of think of themselves as pedestrians that are forced to inhabit a tiny little chunk of road, but what they are is slightly slower motorists without motors," Vallentgoed explains, "they are entitled to space on the road; they are required to ride on the road. Two basic things are to be visible and be predictable."

"If cars know what you're going to do, then they can react accordingly," Vallentgoed says. "I never see cyclists using hand signals, but as dorky as that sounds, it's a really good idea."

"If you're on the road, just go with the flow," Kalmanovitch adds. "Most car drivers have passed a driving test. They understand the rules of the road."

It's these rules that allow all road users—including cyclists—to get around safely and quickly. Being predictable is as simple as following these rules, just as you would when driving a car: don't dart between lanes or parked cars, and follow all traffic signs and laws. Riding to the right is important so as not to unduly slow cars, but leave as much space as you feel necessary to avoid being hit by an opening car door or riding in loose gravel.

"It's up to you as the cyclist to decide where that space is," Kalmanovitch continues. "If you are being crowded, then you need to move more left, not more right. Car drivers respect roadway users because they don't want to hit people; they don't want to be hit."

This fear of collision should be most prevalent at intersections. According to Kalmanovitch, only four per cent of cyclist injuries are caused by collisions from the rear, dispelling a common worry amongst riders.

Being visible is also key. Many road users aren't always on the lookout for smaller vehicles. Bright colours such as yellow are very visible, and there's a reason that lights are mandatory at night.

"Lights are not so much for you to see your path; they're for other people to see you," Kalmanovitch explains. "Reflectors only react to an outside source of light. They're not proactive."

Remembering all of this can make getting started difficult, as any change can be. For the first couple of weeks, your rear end may be a bit sore, or it may be cold and rainy, or you may just not feel like riding on a given day. That's fine. Take a break and try again later.

"Nobody says that you have to do it every day. It's your rules," Kalmanovitch points out. "That's what's so beautiful about our choices in life."



**BIKING IS EASY ENOUGH IN THE SUMMER,** but Edmonton's frozen half the year, but with a little extra gear, getting around in the cold is easy.

"I find it way more pleasant to go out in the cold, get on my bike, [and] ride to work than warm up the car, get in this claustrophobic box all bundled up in your clothes, [and] drive at half the normal speed in the traffic," Vallentgoed explains. "Sure, it's cold riding your bike, but it's still way more fun than driving or riding the bus."

Just keep riding your bike through the fall, adding clothing as necessary. If your hands are cold, get a good pair of gloves; when the mercury really drops, you'll want a balaclava. A set of studded tires is also great for providing precious traction on icy spots.

Just get what you need to keep yourself warm, and if it's too cold for your liking, take the bus. This winter, I didn't ride when it was colder than -20 C.



**CAMPUS IS INFAMOUS FOR BICYCLE THEFT—**

at least, that seems to be the general consensus. But according to Stephanie Hartwig, a crime prevention officer with Campus Security, there were only 41 bike thefts reported on campus in all of 2007. Though this number sounds low, there are some things you must do to ensure you aren't one of the unlucky ones.

"You're going to want to get yourself a U-lock [...] they're the hardest, if not impossible, to break with bolt cutters. You want to lock through the frame of the bike and onto the rack, not the tire," Hartwig explained.

Thieves have been known to steal a bike *sans* tire if it's secured incorrectly. And, as they say in real estate, location is everything. Near HUB Mall is especially risky because of the LRT and bus loop, but Hartwig points out that "anywhere there's a rack that's not well lit, that's out of view of the public, tucked away in a corner, is going to be targeted."

If the unthinkable should happen and you find your ride missing, Hartwig has some tips for maximizing your chances of a quick recovery.

"Call us as soon as you can; don't wait a day or week to report it."

She also stressed the importance of keeping on hand a record of the model, serial number, and value of the bike—including accessories and modifications. All of this information will assist Campus Security and Edmonton Police Services in recovering your beloved ride.

Though the threat of theft exists on campus, Hartwig stressed that it wasn't a very high chance.

"It's pretty low," she said. "The number of people that park their bikes—especially in the summer—is tons of people, and if we only have 41 bikes stolen in a year, that's a pretty low percentage of people."

The bottom line: park it somewhere well lit with lots of pedestrian traffic, and use at least one good lock. A U-lock and cable lock are an especially effective combination. The goal isn't to make your bike impossible to steal; a determined thief can steal anything given unlimited time. The point is to make your ride less tempting than others on the rack. As Hartwig explains, the key is "being smart about the type of lock you use and how you lock it."