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Home : Destinations : Activities : **Community** : Travel : Gear : Books & Maps

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 **BIKING FORUMS**

[Back](#) [Refresh](#) [Options](#) [Search](#)

HELMETS - WEAR 'EM . . . ALWAYS

Using Your Noggin the Right Way	Ethan Gelber	03/08/00
Wearing Helmets	Dave Patria	03/15/00
helmets	Nate	03/17/00
Puttin' the Brain Bucket Where It Counts	Randy	04/28/00
↳ putting a brain bucket where it counts	chris	02/12/01
You Never Know	bikerbill	05/09/00
Helmet saved my son's head.	Daddy-o	07/12/00
It's not just for the big crashes	Oscar	07/13/00
Is Life Safe Enough for you?	Safety Frog	08/04/00
↳ RE: Is Life Safe Enough for You?	Bill	12/15/00
Wearing a helmet all the time?	Brian Baker	08/23/00
↳ Freedom yes, intelligence no	Will	01/03/01
↳ Stupid people shouldn't breed	Colin Parker	01/12/01
...but should government tell us that we must	Ethan Gelber	08/29/00
Helmets...	Denis Rochon	09/27/00
Life, it's so fragile...	PabloV.	10/29/00

[Post new message in this thread](#)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: March 08, 2000 12:15 PM
Author: Ethan Gelber (ethang@gorp.com)
Subject: Using Your Noggin the Right Way

If you do not wear a helmet, even on the shortest of rides, you are asking for trouble. If you live in a city, if you are new to the saddle, if there has been wet or humid (or even particularly dry) weather, if you know to expect unusual road conditions, if there are dogs along the way... in short, if there is anything that could upset the straight and forward movement of your pedaling, you should wear a helmet. Any excuses to the contrary are baseless equivocations.

But let me back up for a second. I must in all honesty confess that I am no expert in this area. I have neither studied the ins and outs of the issue (although I should) nor do I fully understand the politics. But I have very strong feelings and will argue them as stubbornly as my will and still-intact brains will allow.

I think I have heard every excuse in the book. I have even probably used every excuse as well. I grew up cycling in New York City, hating the idea of a helmet. I worked for years as a bicycle guide and shunned the helmet. I was a fool. Fortunately, I was a fool who escaped disaster. I have (knock on wood) never been in a serious bicycle accident. But I have been bumped and nudged and swiped. And, especially during my years as a guide, I have seen bumps, nudges and slides and plenty worse. In most cases, helmet wearers walked away a little shaken. In many cases, the helmetless took home head bruises and bangs (and worse) that could have been avoided. I have heard too many people say that no one has ever actually seen an accident where a helmet helped. Well, I have. Lots.

Am I suggesting mandatory helmet laws? Not necessarily. Although I do often find myself scoffing at the politics of bike lobbies that fight helmet laws. Yes, maybe people would be turned off to cycling if there are mandatory laws. But I wonder if these are the people we would want on the road. Yes, politicians see helmet laws as an answer to problems that are much more profound. But what are we sacrificing (time, money, people's lives) by fighting this battle?

Why would anyone want to risk his or her life? Why do so many people learn after the first accident... sometimes too late? Why is it uncool to want to stay alive? Answer me that.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFAApp=52&Message_ID=32840)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: March 15, 2000 08:37 PM
Author: Dave Patria (UnderBPatD@aol.com)
Subject: Wearing Helmets

I have to disagree with Ethan. There is NEVER a time to get on a bike without a helmet - no matter how skilled, experienced, or confident. I witnessed a header over the handlebars at a good rate of speed when a young woman's front tire blew out and the tube caught in the spokes. No. The only excuse for not wearing a helmet is a conviction that you really don't deserve to contribute to the human gene pool.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFAApp=52&Message_ID=33504)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: March 17, 2000 03:27 PM
Author: Nate (s03.nhawkins@wittenberg.edu)

Subject: helmets

I would have to agree that every time you get on a bicycle, you should wear a helmet. Who knows what could happen? I've been tossed over the handlebars after hitting a patch of loose sand on a neighborhood street. Luckily for me, I escaped without a scrape and I wasn't wearing a helmet. My front wheel, on the other hand, was taceod pretty badly. Now that I am more serious about bicycling, I wear my helmet every time I get on my bike. It has only saved me once, but I'm glad for that. Smashing my head open against a tree root isn't my idea of a good time.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33590)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: April 28, 2000 03:54 PM

Author: Randy (razman1@madmail.com)

Subject: Puttin' the Brain Bucket Where It Counts

I used to take my helmet off when I would be climbing a long mountain on a hot day, but never any other time. And after I saw several particularly nasty head wounds caused by helmetless bikers catching rocks at bad angles, I even quit doffing my helmet then except back at the car. Since then, I've seen a helmet save many a bud's melon from getting splattered all over the single-track. Wearing a helmet is the only smart thing to do if you want to bike on into the twilight.

There is the other side of it, tho'. For those who insist on not wearing a helmet, there's a spot on the porch at the old biker's home where they can sit and drool and dream about the time they used to ride. It's not a matter of if you will need a helmet, but when.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=35429)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: February 12, 2001 05:48 PM

Author: chris

Subject: putting a brain bucket where it counts

not only riding mountain bikes i once rode moterized bikes and learn thing do happen beyond your own control. wearing a helmet at all times on a bike is a smart idea.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=47058)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: May 09, 2000 06:45 PM

Author: bikerbill (bikerb40@yahoo.com)

Subject: You Never Know

Last year coming down a technical run I was thrown over the bars and landed head first into a 3foot round rock. With out a helmet it my have been "8)7%"up. This year going down some soft gravel I had to bail out and hit a root that put a 2 inch groove into my helmet. Wiping out is most often when you least expect it. Life is too short to spend it as a vegetable. Needless to say a always wear a helmet.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=35897)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: July 12, 2000 12:55 PM

Author: Daddy-o (sblack@iglou.com)

Subject: Helmet saved my son's head.

While biking with my 3yr. old on the back, I got a bit to adventurous and hit a trail. Went down and up a 2ft. dip/ditch and came out without him. The child seat had ripped off the back and he did a flip in the air came down still in the seat and landed on his side. His helmet had a good dent in it where it hit the side of the carrier. He cried for 3 min. and then was fine. Without the helmet he may never had cried again. PS: Mom say's no more trail riding with him...I agreed.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=39561)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: July 13, 2000 11:53 AM

Author: Oscar (oscar@freewheeling.com)

Subject: It's not just for the big crashes

How many times do I clunk my helmet against a low branch? What would those thorns feel like against my scalp? How would I look at work the next day with gouges on my forehead?

I've never regretted wear a helmet.

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[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: August 04, 2000 10:37 PM

Author: Safety Frog (sfrog@aol.com)

Subject: Is Life Safe Enough for you?

"what will it feel like..." "what will you look like..." "what if you become a vegetable..."

Isn't life itself risky? Why don't you simply wear a helmet around all-day? Biking, walking, swimming, sitting, maybe even sleeping. Heck, those bed-side tables have sharp edges, you know! You might, just maybe, roll out of bed. Then your helmet can 'protect' you. Look dude, maybe we should leave it up to one's own choice. I, for one, NEVER travel at a rate-of-speed that I would feel uncomfortable at taking a flying leap from... In my line of work I get cut, nearly fall from ladders, get shocked, lift extremely heavy objects all day, bash my head into low hanging objects, you name it... yes, it hurts...bad too. But I take it. It's called life. Enjoy it. The times that it hurts, as well as the times that it feels wonderful. It's called experience. Experience life dude. Take the risks that you feel like taking and I'll take the risks that I feel like taking. I would never look down on you for wearing safety gear. Never. It's very smart...in certain circumstances, but not all. It's been said "never get on a bike without a helmet". So, when I'm sitting on a bike to measure it for size, I should wear a helmet?? C'mon. I've been flat on my back for a whole summer because of a bulging disc...and you know what did it? A 45mph spill down a mountain trail? No. I simply turned my torso the wrong way. That's it. I did it walking out the back door..did it a million times before with no problem. So I believe that some things could be avoided, some not. Don't feel as if you have to be "safe" at all times. You're Not. Live your Life and allow the Lord to bring into it what you need to grow you into the kind of person that He wants you to be. Life... enjoy the ride. :^)

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=41195)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: December 15, 2000 03:28 PM

Author: Bill (bmccormack@coastcounties.com)

Subject: RE: Is Life Safe Enough for You?

While I don't have major issues with what your saying for the majority of circumstances, I like to keep in mind something an EMT friend told me once. Think of the people who are going to find you, and the people who'll have to try to rescue you. Could be friends, could be professionals. Could be they're traumatized by the sight of blood or brain matter. Gary Busey split his noggin' wide open and almost died during a 15 mph fall from his motorcycle, and I'm sure there have been many others in similar circumstances. I'm not advocating wearing a helmet to bed, I just think we can minimize our risks in knowingly unpredictable or dangerous situations, and maybe keep a friend, relative, or stranger happier because of it. Hey, does OSHA know about your worksite?!

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=45339)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: August 23, 2000 12:32 PM

Author: Brian Baker (bakeb@perkinscoie.com)

Subject: Wearing a helmet all the time?

As America increasingly loses all of its freedoms to the safety nazis, bicycle helmet laws are becoming more mandatory and costly. You now can get tickets for not wearing a helmet in Seattle and most parts of Washington state. Granted you will want to wear a helmet while going down your favorite mountain trail, but when you are taking a leisurely ride in the country it kind of defeats the purpose of freedom one feels riding a bike. What is next, mandatory shock absorbing clothing in case you fall off your bike? While we are at it, why don't bikes have mandatory turn and stop tail lights too? Sorry, I've been hit by cars going going over 50 mph, and spent a lot of my childhood crashing my bikes. Learning to tuck and roll saved my life more than any piece of styrofoam. I'm sure eventually we will have to pass a bicycle driver's education course to ride. I'd just as soon like the freedom to decide for myself thank you.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=41953)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: January 03, 2001 12:49 PM

Author: Will

Subject: Freedom yes, intelligence no

I defend Brian's right to ride without a helmet if he wants, but he's a moron. Tuck and roll all you want, eventually the law of averages will catch up to you. I've done judo and karate, and can somersault and protect my noggin as well as anyone, but I'm smart enough to realize that these techniques still won't protect you if you suddenly fall backwards or a trailside rock is positioned just right. People can and do die riding on park sidewalks in NYC when they are surprised and fall backwards hitting the backs of their heads on pavement. Leisurely country rides can become death rides if you're brushed by a car or hit with a beer bottle. One swipe of a sideview mirror is enough to send a cyclist into a rocky ditch or into the path of another vehicle, Brian's been lucky so far. I know of a local road cyclist who was killed on a two-lane country road in this manner. She had biked for 15 years, but on this day did not wear her helmet only her campy hat. Too bad.

I was once hit by another m.b.iker rocketing out of a hidden side trail onto the fire road, and the sudden impact stunned me as it flung me over a gully onto the rocks. Only the helmet saved my life. I have seen more than one m.biker who is now a vegetable because they too thought they could roll their way to safety. Unfortunately the only ones who realize later they couldn't have done without the helmet are the ones who bit the bullet and wore one beforehand. Like canoeing whitewater without a lifejacket, it's just not smart to ride a bike without a helmet.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=45789)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: January 12, 2001 02:10 AM

Author: Colin Parker (cwp2525@yahoo.com)

Subject: Stupid people shouldn't breed

Brian has a good point about the government over regulating everything. And with a serious population problem in the world, the last thing we need to do is make safety mandatory. The best thing that could happen would be for all the mentally challenged people to stop wearing helmets and seatbelts for that matter and kill themselves off so I have more space. Or at least they would become vegetables so they can't contaminate the gene pool. But while these idiots aren't wearing helmets, you can bet your next paycheck that I will be!

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=46106)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: August 29, 2000 05:58 PM
Author: Ethan Gelber (ethang@gorp.com)
Subject: ...but should government tell us that we must

As usual, there are conflicting reasons for wanting or not wanting to wear helmets. Yes, it can be tiresome listening to people (like me) who advocate endlessly and loudly for helmet use at all times and under all circumstances. It can be equally yawn-worthy shrinking before vociferous let-me-do-what-I-want-ers who feel that others' concern for their wellbeing is misplaced. Obviously there's no easy answer, although erring on the side of knowing that you have some sort of protection doesn't strike me as mighty wrong.

The next question is, of course, for people who believe that helmets should always be worn, whether cyclists should be *required* to wear protective gear. Children out on wheels must have their heads properly padded. But how about adults? Does anyone have a right to tell us how and when to protect our noggins?

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=42162)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: September 27, 2000 03:18 PM
Author: Denis Rochon (deroyo@bikerider.com)
Subject: Helmets...

As soon as you sit on your bike,you should wear a helmet,until you get off the bike.That's it,as simple as that.This way you don't have to think of when you should or not.I could give millions of examples of head injuries while people were simply riding to the corner store(a block away),but I won't.I think you have heard them from other riders.Keep the brain bucket on and have your knogin protected at all time,you can replace the helmet but you cannot replace the head you own now. :)

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=43226)

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

Date: October 29, 2000 02:21 AM
Author: PabloV. (axan@prodigy.net.mx)
Subject: Life it's so fragile...

I used to do a lot of skateboarding about 5 or 6 years ago, and I never weared helmet. Fortunately, the worst accident was a fisure on the feet. Now that I'm becoming fan of the bikes, I just wonder, if the helmet can prevent a severe injury, Why don't use it?. Feeling the adrenaline running through your body doesn't mean being as much unprotected as you can. The head is a very delicate part of our bodies, so why don't protect it?. Brake your leg, if you wish, and you'll be resting for a couple of months, but if you brake your head... you don't need a rest anymore.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=44069)



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