

- Fixed reflectors on your bike. You are required by law to have a red reflector on the rear of your bike (positioned centrally or to the side away from the pavement) and a yellow reflector on the front and back of each pedal. New bikes are usually delivered with white reflectors placed in the spokes of each wheel.
- Reflectors built in to cycle lights.
- Reflective patches and piping on clothing.
- Reflective slap-wraps that fasten around wrists and ankles.

High viz tabards incorporating reflective patches and piping are a cheap way to enhance the visibility of ordinary clothing.

▼Tops

Ordinary shirts and t-shirts are fine for many conditions. But, if you cycle hard or for any distance, you'll find they get sweaty and uncomfortable. Cycling jerseys are made from specialised material with a particular cut designed to:

- Dispel sweat (a process known as wicking)
- Reduce exposure to wind (normal shirts can act as a sail, holding you back)
- Help you manage ventilation by opening and closing a front zip (the longer the zip, the greater the control)
- Provide pockets strategically placed at the rear to help you get to your stuff on the move
- Give you more protection as you lean over your handlebars by having a back longer than the front
- Prevent the jersey from riding up by providing a silicone gripper around the bottom of the jersey

For increased effectiveness in hot or cold, you can wear two tops instead of one: a close-fitting, wicking base layer and a looser-fitting thin jersey over the top.

For extreme wet weather, a cycling cape will keep you mostly dry (it can't protect you from spray coming up from the road). Capes tend to act as sails in the wind, however, so can make cycling harder.

▼Bottoms

Getting your clothes tangled in your chain is likely to ruin them. Worse, you could damage your ankle and/or come off your bike. Some bikes have a chain guard to help prevent clothes getting tangled. If you have one, you should have a good look to see if it's adequate. Some are much better than others. If you don't have an effective chain guard, consider wearing:

- Shorts
 - Tights
 - Slim cut trousers
 - Trousers with elastic or Velcro designed to keep fabric out of your chain
 - Trousers with:
 - Cycle clips
 - Slap wraps
 - Bottoms tucked into socks
- Not cool, but safer than doing without!

▼Cycling shorts/tights

Yes, we're talking about Lycra! Quite unnecessary if you cycle for short distances. The further you go, however, the more you'll benefit from:

- Padding! Even gel saddles start to feel hard after a while and built-in padding always fits in the right places
- Lightweight material without seams to keep you cool and protect against chafing
- Silicone grippers prevent them from riding up
- Reflective patches to aid visibility at night

Long cycling tights help you keep warm in rain and cold and can't get tangled in your gears.

▼Shoes

What you wear on your feet depends a lot on what type of pedals you use. If you have plain, flat pedals look for comfortable shoes with:

- Thin soles so you can feel where your feet are on the pedals
- Non-slip soles to keep your feet on the pedals
- Uppers fitting below your ankles so they don't chafe or restrict your movement
- Waterproofing for rainy days, and ventilation for hot days – you're unlikely to get both in one shoe, though!

If you wear shoes with laces, don't have the laces so long that they might get tangled in your chain. Use a double knot to ensure they can't come undone while you are cycling. Specialist cycling shoes either use Velcro or provide a way to secure the laces.

Toe clips allow you to apply pressure to the pedals for more of each cycle. You don't need special shoes with toe clips. Heavy shoes and boots don't work well with them, however.

Clipless pedals engage with cleats fitted to the bottom of your shoes so you can apply pressure throughout the full cycle of each pedal. They also make sure your foot is in exactly the right place on the pedal. You disengage them with a sideways twisting motion. These obviously require special shoes. Typically, they come well ventilated to keep you cool. For cold or wet conditions you should consider cycling overshoes which come with cutouts to accommodate cleats.

▼Balaclava/scarf/bandana

Good for keeping ears warm while cycling in the cold.

Bandanas provide better sweat absorption than the pads provided in cycle helmets.

▼Extreme cycling kit

If you are going in for more adventurous cycling such as BMX, downhill, cross-country or trick cycling, you should consider additional protective gear. Ride organisers might insist on particular equipment. You should find out from them what protective gear is appropriate. If in doubt consider:

- Elbow pads
- Knee pads, shin pads or combined knee and shin pads

- Full face helmet
- Body armour

We're happy to [help you choose suitable clothing for cycling](#).

This entry was posted in [Help with cycling](#) by [Andy Henderson](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

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