

Top 10 Excuses for Not Biking to Work!

If everybody who rode a bike for recreation or exercise was to throw a leg over the bar on a weekday morning and ride to work (even occasionally), public officials would take notice, drivers would begin to realize that they don't own the road, and (most importantly) those riders would be smiling when they got to work.

Not everyone can do it, of course, and certainly not every single day. But most of us can figure out a way to make better use our bikes for transportation, if we just stopped making excuses.

#10) It's Too Dangerous.



Most of us are creatures of habit. If we've always driven to work, we might only be familiar with the most heavily traveled roads. Take time on the weekends (by car or by bike) to search out what alternatives might be available. Local bike shops or clubs can be very helpful, as can online maps that feature bike-friendly directions. Practice your ride to work on a quiet weekend, beforehand.

If you can't completely eliminate travel on a high-speed, or congested, road, make yourself as visible as possible (lights, reflectors, hi-vis clothing), obey the traffic laws, signal your turns, and make eye contact with merging drivers.

#9) It's Too Far (and I'm Out of Shape).



Bicycling is a great way to get back into shape. Most people in good health can easily work up to a 5 – 10 mile commute on flat roads. Take a few easy rides a week or two ahead of time; use all the gears and don't worry about how fast you're going.

If your commute is longer than 10 miles, consider these strategies:

- *Drive part way.* Put your bike on the car. Find a convenient parking spot that's closer, and cycle the rest of the way. Gradually increase the distance if you want.
- *Bus part way.* If bus service is an option, ride to the nearest stop, load your bike onto the rack (it's easy to do) and ride from the bus stop to work.
- *Split the commute.* Drive to work with your bike (and perhaps some extra clothes). Then ride home at the end of the day and ride back in the next morning.

#8) My Bike's Not Good Enough.



You don't need a super-expensive, ultra-lightweight racing bike to get to work and back. The old one that's gathering dust in your garage is probably fine. A hybrid or mountain bike makes just as effective a commuter as a road bike.

Any bike that hasn't been ridden in a long time should be checked out by a mechanic to verify its road-worthiness. A good bike shop can also recommend useful upgrades such as bags, racks, or easy-rolling tires.

#7) Riding Will Mess up My Clothes (or My Hair)



If you're one of the few whose job still requires conservative business attire, you probably ought to leave a change of clothes at work, or carry them in panniers on the bike. If you wear casual clothes to work, especially those made of breathable synthetic fabrics, they should be able to endure a short (5-10 mile) commute without looking like a rumpled mess.

Helmet hair is caused by the air vents. The best way to prevent this unsightly hairdo is to don a head scarf (in the summer) or a balaclava (in the winter); and keep a hairbrush at work.

#6) It's Too Cold.



If you participate in winter sports, you know how to stay warm on a bike ride: Dress in layers, cover exposed skin, and block the wind. A lot of ski equipment (especially cross-country) works perfectly well for bike riding. If you're using clip-in pedals and bike shoes, you can invest in shoe covers, or put on flat pedals and wear your winter boots.

Word of advice: The challenge of winter riding is to avoid overheating as much as to prevent freezing. Morning rides usually get warmer over time and evening rides get colder. Plan accordingly.

#5) There's No Safe Place to Leave My Bike.



Many employers will allow you to bring the bike inside and leave it in a storeroom during the day. If you work in an office, or even a cubicle, you might also be able to get permission to clamp a hook to the wall and hang the bike in your workspace (or don't ask permission and just apologize later).

If you must leave the bike outside in a sketchy neighborhood, cover it with tape to make it look like a beater, remove the wheels and secure it with a heavy-duty chain and lock (then leave the lock in place for the next day).

#4) I Won't Ride in the Dark.



Years ago, riding at night was a terrifying proposition, especially on rural roads. But modern technology can make a bicyclist even more visible in the dark than under the midday sun. For less than \$50, your local shop can set you up with powerful blinking lights (front and back) and reflective stickers that will make you and your bike impossible to miss. Another \$100 buys a powerful front light that can light up the road as effectively as any car's headlight.

#3) It Might Rain.



If widespread precipitation were enough to discourage bicycling, Seattle and Portland would not be among the most bike-friendly American cities. An inexpensive plastic rain cape, along with a clip-on fender, can make the occasional wet ride more bearable. But a rain suit (jacket and pants) and a full set of fenders on the bike will keep you dry through a monsoon.

After riding in heavy rain, it's a good idea to wash the bike, re-lube the chain, and pivot points (brakes and derailleurs).

#2) There's No Shower at Work.



Biking to work doesn't have to be as drenching as a spin class. If you dress appropriately and ride slow and easy, you probably won't break a sweat. But if you must find a way to clean up before work, options include:

- The YMCA downtown is opening up their showers to Bike to Work participants for free!
- You could take a sponge bath in the company washroom.
- Stocking your office with a case of Costco wet wipes and taking a "shower in a box" (wait a few minutes until you stop sweating before you clean up).

#1) My Butt Hurts.



Everybody's butt hurts at first. Make sure your seat height is correct (when your leg is fully extended, your knee should be slightly bent). If the pain doesn't go away after a few rides, you might need a different saddle. Many bike shops will allow you to try a variety of loaner saddles before you settle on the style that fits best.

So stop worrying about your fitness, your bike, your clothes, your hair, or your aching backside, and ride to work. You won't regret it.