

3 WAYS to Avoid Being Hit by a Car

BY THOMAS HENSON

Every cyclist dreads the possibility of a collision with a car. Although accidents happen, you can greatly reduce your risk of a wreck by knowing some common car-bike crash scenarios and the road dynamics that make them so dangerous.



- 1. THE DOOR JAM:** You are cycling next to a row of parked cars when a driver opens a car door in front of you, leaving you no time or space to stop or swerve. To avoid the “door jam,” be aware of any upcoming cars that have people in the driver’s seat. In addition, ride a little farther to the left if traffic permits, even to the center of the lane for a brief time, if necessary. Better to suffer the honks of drivers behind you than to flip over an open door.
- 2. THE WRONG RIGHT TURN:** You are following rules of the road, riding on the right side of the road with traffic in the lane next to you. You continue going straight, but the driver next to you makes a right turn, crushing you in a direct hit. This happens because drivers aren’t trained to watch for cyclists ... or you are in a blind spot ... or a driver thinks he or she can outrun you. To

avoid the “wrong right turn,” slow down and check your rear mirror before crossing the intersection to see who is on your tail, avoid stopping in a car’s blind spot, don’t try to pass cars on the right in the intersection, and remember that large trucks sometimes make right turns from the left lane.

- 3. THE SIDE SLAM:** You are cycling straight when you are hit from the side, either by a vehicle pulling out of a side street or parking lot on the right, or by a vehicle that makes a left turn in front of you. (In both scenarios, the car may hit you, or you could slam into the car.) Left or right, the direct hit will do more damage to you than to the other vehicle. To avoid the “side slam,” slow down in an intersection, use a headlight anytime other than during a bright day, try to make eye contact with drivers, wave your arm if you think you have not been seen, and ride in the center of the lane in intersections – the place where drivers look for other vehicles, and where they are more likely to see you.

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