



HOW TO DO A SUCCESSFUL BIKE LIGHT GIVEAWAY

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A light giveaway program buys or receives donated bicycle lights and gives them away to people who need them. With lessons learned from programs around the country, we've figured out what works best. Please share this information with those who can use it. If you have advice from your own light giveaway programs, I'd love to hear from you at jay@planetbike.com.

WHY LIGHTS ARE IMPORTANT:

Riding without lights after dark is dangerous and illegal. Cyclists who ride unilluminated are a danger to themselves as well as to pedestrians and other road users.

In most communities, bike light laws are lightly enforced by police departments. This means lots of cyclists are riding unlighted and unsafely, and they need someone to shed light on this issue.

This is where you come in! Get the word out on the safety and legal issues around night riding. Light giveaways don't just strap lights on bikes, they give you opportunities to share information and to develop and strengthen community partnerships.

WHAT TO DO:

Give lights away at dusk. As the sun goes down, it's easier to see who needs lights — and easier for those who need lights to see that they need them. Dusk has the advantage (over dawn) that people will be in less of a hurry on the way home than on the way to work.

Spring forward into safety, fall back into good lighting habits. The shorter the days, the greater the need for lights. With the days getting shorter, and especially with the sudden one hour change, Fall is an excellent time to run these programs. Some riders may plan on riding through the darkness without lights, and others may plan on stopping riding until the evenings are light again. Both types of riders are great targets for your giveaway. Pick a time that works best for your community.

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Give away a set of front and rear lights. Both lights are important for safety.

Mount the lights on bikes, don't just hand them over. Insist on it. Then the lights are on the bike, not in someone's backpack or drawer. While installing the lights, you also get the chance to discuss bicycle safety and advocacy in your community.

Talk bike safety while mounting lights. You have three to five minutes of the rider's attention while you mount the lights. Use this time to educate the rider on safety and advocacy issues.

Distribute a bike safety/group identity card. Create a small business card or postcard-sized info sheet with basic bike safety information that includes your group's name, logo and website. It can also provide a web link to more safety info.

Accept donations to cover the cost of the lights. Use your judgement on how to do this and if it is appropriate in the location where you are doing the giveaway. We've seen programs that have covered a third of their costs with donations, so don't be shy about asking.

Work with local police departments. Though it can take a bit of work to involve local police in your giveaway, that extra work can pay off in better connections and visibility for your program. Make sure to communicate that this is about education rather than enforcement. The police are there as partners in your giveaway, to help share tools and ideas for better road safety for all.

Bring in the local media. There are lots of opportunities to interview bikers and for the bike advocacy group to get media face time.

Invite the media. This is a very media-friendly event. There are lots of good opportunities to interview bikers and for the bike advocacy group to get media face time. Ask media to embargo the date and location prior to the event.

Find a sponsor. A non-profit sponsor can raise money (or find a grant) to buy lights. A local business sponsor will be happy to provide some or all of the funds to be associated with such a great event.

Prep the lights in advance. Remove lights from packaging, install batteries, etc. Place front lights and brackets in one box and rear lights and brackets in a second box.

Build your volunteer database. Take names when giving out lights. It's a great source of volunteers who are enthusiastic to help.

Bring Supplies: Have Phillips and flat-head screwdrivers and scissors (to cut rubber gaskets when using smaller clamp for rear light) on hand. Make signs to hang on posts or trees advertising your free bike lights.

Always show people how to take off the lights in order to prevent theft. It's the #1 reason lights go missing.

Bike maps and other resources. Use this chance to put bike maps and other resources in light-receivers' hands: how-to-commute guides, lists of local bike laws and anything a curious biker may want to know will help them ride more safely and remind them of the work you do.