

## Skills

In the UK, there has since the 1990s been a focus on equipping cyclists with the skills they need to navigate challenging mixed traffic road environments.

Most training takes place in schools, but individual and group adult training are also promoted (and subsidised).

In order to attract government funding, training must meet the National Standard for Cycle Training, which is based on the book *Cyclecraft* by John Franklin (a prominent and long-time opponent of segregated cycle infrastructure).

In this passage Franklin describes the skills needed to turn right at a large, multi-lane roundabout in the UK: *'It needs great care, confidence and, preferably, the ability to attain a sprint speed of about 32 km/h (20 mph). Approach the roundabout in the middle of the right hand lane [...] During any roundabout manoeuvre, you must keep your eyes and ears alert, monitoring other traffic all the time.'*

## Context

This interview extract comes from an interview in Hackney (London) with Catherine, a school travel officer. Hackney, like other London boroughs, has implemented school cycle training on a large scale with a view to increasing the number of children cycling, including to school. (Cycling to school rates across London are stable around 1% of children.)

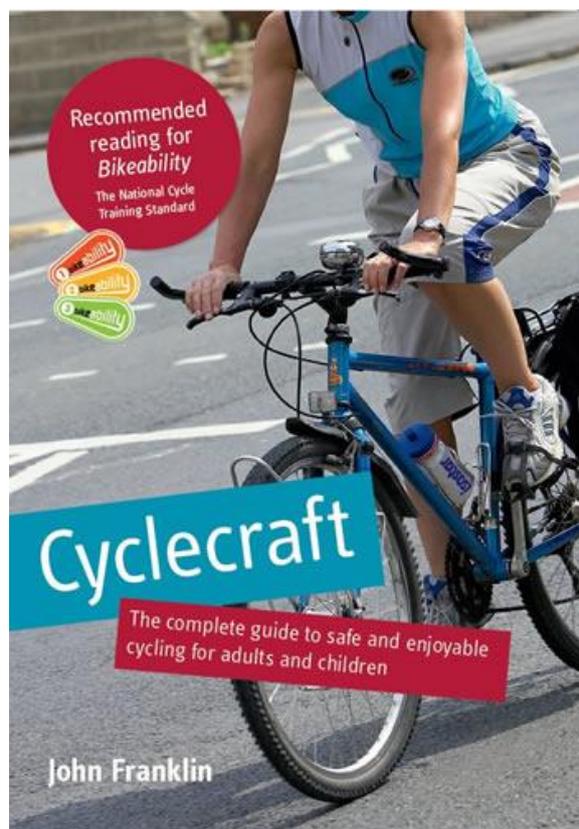
*'I suppose it's trying to steer away from that idea of we need segregated paths we need this, really everyone just needs, they need cycling training to level two [level one is riding a bicycle off road, level two is riding on quiet streets, level three is riding in busier conditions such as the roundabout mentioned by Franklin] ... at least up to level two, complete cycle training and that's what will give them the confidence and ability to ride on the roads ... not to say that improvements can't be made you know 20 mph zones and traffic calming where appropriate but cycle training is the main thing that you know we do to address safety concerns.'* (Catherine, Hackney, London)

## Other Skills

As well as skills in actually cycling, other skills are seen as important for cyclists in the UK.

### Maintenance:

One is the skill to maintain one's bicycle. The Cycling Cultures research found that people in many parts of the UK feel that they ought to be able to fix punctures, and perhaps to carry out more

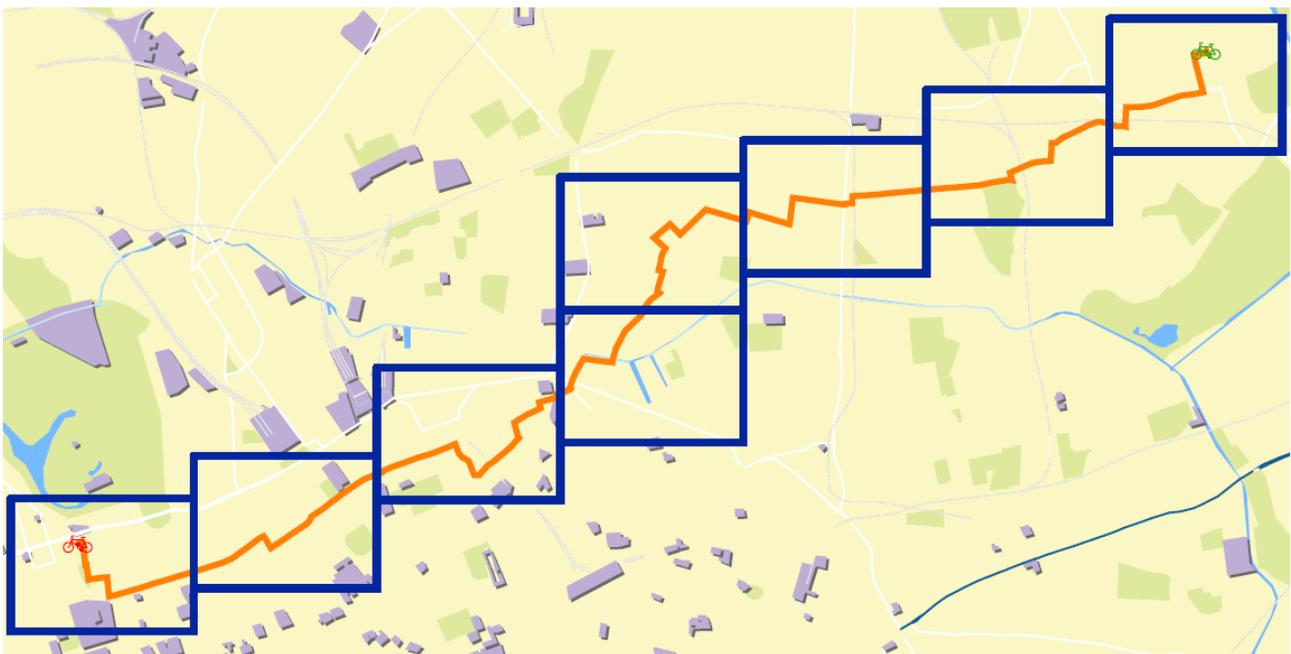


complicated repairs, such as fine-tuning gears or changing brake blocks. However, the perceived pressure to mend punctures and perhaps do more in the way of maintenance did make some interviewees stressed, and potentially put them off cycling. Johnny, from Bristol, could afford to pay to get punctures repaired, but felt that he ought to fix them himself. In some cases, people don't have local bike shops, or can't afford the cost.

'[P]unctures, I'm much calmer about those these days [...] rather than just going, "Oh, fucking arrrrgh!" I do think that a little bit but it pretty much, it doesn't last long. I just get on and mend them now rather than sort of taking it over to my dad to do which is what I used to do or just leave the bike and not use it for weeks because it's got a puncture. I just get on and mend it and I'll do it by the side of the road if I need to, you know. I always carry puncture stuff with me.' (Johnny, male, fifties, Bristol)

### Navigation

A third type of skill is the skills required to navigate a sometimes complex and confusing network. In the UK, cycle routes are often not well signed and recommended (quieter) routes will often twist and turn. A commute is a journey repeated regularly so an apparently complicated route can be learnt. This could be one reason why, in cities like London, people are more likely to commute by bicycle than to cycle for other trips.



Rachel's recommended route from home to work

### Questions:

1. What's your reaction to the material about cycling skills, bike maintenance skills, and route finding skills?
2. What kinds of skills (either these types of skills, and/or other skills) do cyclists need in your context/s? Does any of this put off some people from cycling, do you think?
3. Do you think this has changed in the past? Do you expect it to change in the future?
4. Compare the skills needed to cycle in your context/s with those that are discussed here.