

NO PROBLEM!

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Standing Safely

What's the matter? You're tucked behind another rider at the beginning of a hill, riding about a foot behind his rear wheel. As the grade steepens, he stands abruptly and your wheels nearly collide. It's as if his bike stopped momentarily and the gap evaporated. You're lucky he didn't nail your front wheel and take you down.

This is a common scenario on hills. It's also scary and dangerous. It happens if a rider lurches forward as he stands. Pedaling action is interrupted and, because of the grade, the bike slows abruptly. Some riders make matters worse by pulling back on the handlebar to lever themselves out of the saddle.

Here's help:

---**Anticipate a rider standing up.** Many riders stand on short hills to maintain momentum and avoid shifting gears. On longer climbs, it's common to stay in the saddle on the lower slope but stand part way up or when the grade steepens. In both cases, be ready for bikes to come back at you.

To improve safety, increase the distance between you and the rider ahead when starting a hill. It's smart, too, to move several inches to one side. Keep your eyes up the road because the riders in front of him may cause a problem he has to react to.

---**Don't panic if your front wheel is bumped.** A knock on the front wheel doesn't mean an automatic trip to the pavement. Steer *into* the offending wheel, not away from it, to keep your balance. That's counterintuitive, so it's effective to practice bumping wheels at slow speed on a grass field. Develop the reflexes to save your skin when your front wheel is hit.

It's important to keep your upper-body relaxed. That's not easy during the strain of climbing, but you're much more likely to fall if you're tense. A front-wheel bump is transmitted to your handlebar, where rigid arms send it right back down, upsetting your balance. Relaxed, flexed elbows absorb the shock. You'll waver but you won't lose control.

---**Stand smoothly.** What if a rider is behind you? Make sure you don't ruin her day. The key is to push your bike forward when you stand. The opposite -- pulling it back when you make the transitional pedal stroke -- is just like hitting the brakes.

Instead, have your hands on the brake lever hoods and extend your arms as you rise. This isn't natural, which is why so many riders do it wrong. It takes a conscious effort that's helped by practice. Best results come when standing coincides with a pedal passing over the top. This prevents a short, weak stroke that slows the bike.

Tip: Extend your arms again as you sit to gain several "free" inches of roadway.

---**Sound a warning.** Some riders say "Standing!" just before they get out of the saddle. This can save the day for daydreaming riders behind. But it isn't a substitute for standing correctly.