Principles of Traffic Law

Core Principle:
Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles.

First Come First Serve
The first principle is that each driver on the road is entitled to the space they are using. This includes room behind, to each side and reasonable stopping distance in front. Drivers who want to use this space must first yield to the vehicle that is using it. This also applies both between intersections and at intersections.

Ride on the Right
As with motorists, bicyclists must ride on the right. Ride with the flow of traffic and never against as this puts you in a position where drivers do not expect you to be.

Yield to Crossing Traffic
Drivers on less important roads, including driveways and alleys, must yield to traffic on more important roads. Yielding means looking until you see that no traffic is so close as to be a danger.

Yield When Changing Lanes
Drivers who want to move laterally on the roadway must yield to traffic in their new line of travel. Yielding means looking behind until you see that no traffic is coming and looking in front until you see that there is nobody to run into.

Intersection Positioning
At intersections, there is a certain position drivers need to place themselves. In most cases, those turning right should be in the right most position (whether lane the left turners are near the center line, straight through drivers are between these positions.

Speed Positioning
When looking at speed positioning, the slowest vehicle should be to the right most position and the fastest on the left. That puts parked drivers at the curb, slow drivers are next to them, and fast drivers next to them. Passing should take place on the left. There are few exceptions, such as a vehicle ahead turning left, when passing happens on the right.

Lane Positioning
Because bikes are narrow, it is often possible for a bike and a motor vehicle to safely share the same lane. Where this is possible, the bicyclist must keep as far right as practicable, so fast drivers can overtake. When overtaking is not safe for either driver, the bicyclist is legally entitled to use the entire lane.

When there is a lane that is used for more than one direction, the bicyclist uses the side of the lane that is appropriate for their direction. If the lane allows for the driver to go straight through or turn left, the bicyclist should move to the left side of the lane if they are making a left turn.

Good News About Crashes
With Smart Cycling training and practice, 90% of bicycle crashes can be avoided.

Source: League of American Bicyclists, Smart Cycling