



Bike riding with your kids

Riding with your kids

There are many ways to enjoy cycling with your family even before your kid is old enough to ride on their own. Mounted child seats and bike trailers are your choices for tots over the age of one. Babies under 12 months old cannot safely be transported inside bike trailers. Make sure your little one can sit unassisted and support their head while wearing an approved and properly fitting lightweight helmet. Choose a bike seat with a high back, shoulder harness and lap belt so your child remains supported even if they fall asleep. For older kids who can cycle independently but can't handle a longer ride, consider a tow bar or rope, which hitches their bike to yours; they can pedal but you still do the heavy lifting.

Choosing a bike

Balance bikes are a great way to introduce your child to their first set of wheels at around 18 months, when they are walking and running confidently. These bikes don't have pedals or training wheels, but they teach important skills like balance and steering. Once they've mastered those, moving to a two-wheeler will be much easier. If your kid doesn't take to a balance bike, a traditional trike might be more their speed.

When shopping around for a two-wheeler, visit your local bike store and have your kid test out different options. You'll know the size is right when your child can straddle the bike and have both feet firmly planted on the ground. Make sure that they can easily reach the handlebars and that the seat can be adjusted; it's important that they feel comfortable on the bike and that it isn't too heavy for them. (Tip: Kids' bikes are measured by the wheel diameter. If you have to shop online, use a size chart to help figure out what size wheel they'll need based on their age and height.)

You may be tempted to buy a bigger bike for your child to "grow into," but this can make it harder for them to learn. Having a bike that's too big to control can be frustrating for skill-building and could actually turn kids away from learning to enjoy cycling as an activity. For their first two-wheeler, kids don't need anything fancy like shocks, gear speeds or suspension. You can choose a bike with either pedal or hand breaks, depending on how comfortable your child is peddling. A beginner bike can run you anywhere between \$100 to \$300.

Where to ride

Children under the age of 10 shouldn't be riding on roads; stick to trails and the sidewalk. Always stay in single-file; it's best to ride behind your kids so you can keep pace with them and watch for oncoming traffic, such as pedestrians or other cyclists. Once kids are old enough to ride on the road, make sure that everyone understands how to read road signs, knows the hand signals for changing directions and stopping, and stays on the right side.

Stay visible

Wearing bright colors and attaching a flag to your bike or trailer is an easy way to help you stand out. To increase visibility, flashing lights and reflectors are recommended. In some places, lights and bells are the law; check your local rules to see what's required.

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Bicycle Helmet Safety for kids

For kids and kids at heart, bicycles are a fun way to travel and get some fresh air. But when you have to share the road with motorists, bicycles can lead to dangerous accidents and injuries.

As your kids grow more comfortable with their new wheels, teach them essential bicycle safety. Good habits for adult bicycle safety start young, so share these tips with your kids on your next family ride.

Before buying a helmet, measure your child's head all the way around. Find the fit closest to their head size and give it a try.

Take measurements in centimeters and inches because many bike helmets use metric measurements. You can also find half sizes in between if your child doesn't fit any of the measurements below.

Helmet size range:

XXXXS: 18 inches or 46 centimeters

XXS: 18.5 inches or 47 centimeters

Size 6: 19 inches or 48.3 centimeters

Size 7: 22 inches or 55.9 centimeters

Size 8: 25 inches or 63.5 centimeters

The right bicycle helmet won't wiggle on their head and should sit comfortably an inch above their eyebrows. They should be able to see the edge of the helmet when they look up. The best bike helmets for kids will have plenty of adjustment options to fit them as they grow, offer durable protection, and make your kids more visible to traffic around them.



Why are bicycle helmets important?

Every year, roughly 260,000 children enter emergency rooms due to bicycle-related traumatic brain injuries. Bike helmets reduce head injuries by at least 45%. A bicycle crash can be caused by a pedestrian, parked car, potholes, or other hazards your child may not be aware of. So it's always best to wear a helmet just in case.

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