

RIDING AND SAFETY TIPS

If a bicycle is going to be operated in low-light conditions, such as inclement weather or after dark, make certain that it has a white light mounted on the front and a red light visible to the rear. The rider should also wear bright, reflective clothing. This is good advice for adult riders too!

When possible, children should avoid riding after dark. If your child is out after dark, remind him or her to walk the bike home, and keep away from the street or roadway if possible.



PURCHASING A BICYCLE HELMET

Head injuries are the leading cause of death in 80 percent of bicycle crashes. To ensure your young rider is off to a good start, provide a properly fitting helmet.

- ▶ Select a helmet approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), as noted on a sticker inside the helmet.
- ▶ Helmets should sit level and low on the forehead, so you see the front of the helmet when you look up.
- ▶ If the helmet is slightly large, insert extra padding provided with the helmet and adjust the helmet using the fit ring on the back.
- ▶ Straps should be adjusted to center the buckle under the chin, with side straps forming a “V” shape under and slightly in front of the ears, and provide a snug fit with only one or two fingers able to fit under the chin strap.
- ▶ Be a good role model and wear your helmet on every single ride. According to Safe Kids USA, a child who rides with an adult wearing a helmet is more likely to wear one, too.

WHEN TO REPLACE A HELMET

- ▶ Involved in a crash? **Replace immediately.**
- ▶ Was the helmet dropped hard enough to crack the foam? **Replace.**
- ▶ Is the outside just foam or cloth instead of plastic? **Replace.**
- ▶ Does it lack a CPSC, ASTM or Snell sticker inside? **Replace.**
- ▶ Can you not adjust it to fit correctly? **Replace!**

TRAINING YOUR YOUNG CYCLIST

With helmet secured, it's now time to provide basic bicycle instructions. The first task is learning to stay on the bicycle. Next, skills such as starting, stopping, turning, signaling and going up and down hills and around curves should be learned. Braking quickly must then be mastered. Young children should demonstrate these basic skills in a safe area before being allowed on public streets. It takes many hours of practice! In fact, children younger than 6 years old need close supervision even when they are permitted to ride on quiet neighborhood streets.

Ride and work with your child until you are certain he or she is capable of riding on lightly traveled roads. During this time, emphasize the following:

- ▶ Always wear a helmet
- ▶ Stop and check for traffic before entering the roadway
- ▶ Ride on the right, in the same direction as traffic
- ▶ Obey all traffic signs and signals
- ▶ Be cautious around parked cars; especially watch for opening doors
- ▶ Use appropriate hand signals to communicate your intention to turn or stop
- ▶ Learn vehicle rules and regulations
- ▶ Never carry a passenger

At last . . . you've bought the bike, it's in perfect condition, the cyclist has been trained and is now capable of riding on the street. Is your job complete?

Not yet! Continue to observe your child's riding habits and restrict cycling, if necessary. Establish limits or designate specific areas where your child is permitted to ride. Your continued supervision is always necessary.

Remember, it could mean your child's life.

SHARING THE ROAD

When driving around children on bikes, in the road or on sidewalks, it's good practice to slow down and give them a little extra room for error. They don't have the same judgment as adults, so children tend to behave unexpectedly. The same rules apply when driving around adult cyclists, too! Motorists should always be on the lookout for bicyclists, and bicyclists should always be cautious when riding near motor vehicles.



More than half a million collisions between motor vehicles and bicycles occur in the United States each year. Many of these incidents are the result of motorists' failure to properly yield to bicyclists. Motorists need to increase their overall awareness of bicyclists—especially when making turns, and remember to look for bicyclists who are turning or continuing straight. Check for bicyclists riding along the edge of the traffic lane before opening car doors, too. And don't forget to give bicyclists **at least** three feet of clearance when passing—more at higher speeds!

Bicyclists should be alert and watch for both turning and parked motor vehicles. Bicyclists should also clearly communicate their intentions to motorists by using proper signals. Using helmets, visible clothing, lights and designated bike lanes and paths are all key factors for increasing safety and ensuring a pleasurable biking adventure.

Remember—we all have places to go—let's get there safely and respect one another when sharing the road. Contact your local AAA club regarding the availability of bike safety and other traffic safety materials.



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SO YOUR CHILD WANTS A BIKE— NOW WHAT?





FIT THE BICYCLE TO THE CHILD

Typical size of bike for average child

Under 6 years*	12"–16" wheel
6 to 9 years*	20" wheel
9 to 11 years	24" wheel
12 and older	26" or larger wheel

* Children age 6 and under need close supervision—even on quiet neighborhood streets.



TYPES OF BICYCLES

Bicycles are manufactured in four basic types:

Single-speed middleweight—Coaster brakes; recommended for young cyclists

BMX—Modified frame, special wheels, competition handlebars and seat, and hand brakes

Multi-speed lightweight—For long-distance cycling, hill climbing and racing; equipped with hand brakes and requires maintenance

All-terrain or mountain—Sturdy, multi-speed, wide tires, upright handlebars, hand brakes and off-road capabilities

Coaster brakes are recommended over hand brakes for young children. Wait until your child has developed greater strength in the hands and wrists before buying a bike with hand brakes. This may not occur until the child has reached the age of 10.

Bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product besides the automobile. (Consumer Products Safety Commission)

618 cyclists were killed in traffic crashes in 2010. Cyclists under age 16 accounted for 11 percent (79) of those fatalities, with males accounting for 53 of the 79. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

In 2010, an estimated 52,000 cyclists were injured in motor vehicle crashes, with 19 percent (an estimated 10,000) of them under the age of 16. (NHTSA)

BASIC SAFETY EQUIPMENT

For maximum safety, bicycles should be equipped with:

- ▶ Working brakes
- ▶ Front light (white)
- ▶ Rear light (red)
- ▶ Reflective devices on front, rear, sides and pedals
- ▶ Warning bell or horn
- ▶ Safety flag
- ▶ Chain guard
- ▶ Hand grips



For additional safety, riders should always wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet, wear bright colors and avoid loose fitting clothing.

SO ... YOUR CHILD WANTS A BIKE

Bikes are great fun, and most children want one. Before buying your child a bike, ask yourself the following questions:

Is my child mentally and physically ready to ride a bicycle in neighborhood traffic? And has my child received proper instructions on how to safely operate a bicycle?

A bicycle is not a toy! In fact, bicycles are considered vehicles, and cyclists must generally follow the same traffic laws as automobile drivers. Make sure your child is mature enough to handle this responsibility.

Do we live in an area with minimal traffic? If the answer is no, are there safe places to operate a bicycle near my home—such as empty lots, parks or bicycle paths?

If you answered “no” and your child is not old enough to ride on the street, it may be a good idea to postpone a bicycle purchase. Doing so could save your child from serious injury or death.

A PROPER FIT

To determine if a bike is the proper size, the rider should be able to sit on the seat and balance the bicycle with both feet just touching the ground. The bicycle should not lean to one side. The seat may require some adjustments to accomplish this.

If the seat is in the lowest position and the child cannot touch both feet to the ground, the bicycle is too large. Avoid the dangerous practice of buying a large bicycle with the assumption that your child will grow into it.

