

CHILDREN

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Bicycles are an economical and practical means of transportation from an early age. Statistics show that sixty percent of all bicycle crashes and deaths involve children from ages five to fourteen. Of these, seventy-five percent are the fault of the child and might have been prevented had these children been taught some important safety skills. With proper training, bicycle riding can be a safe, healthful, fun activity for the whole family to share through the years.



In most instances, the only bicycle safety education children will receive is from their parents. Since children perceive traffic situations differently than adults, it is important for parents to help them understand the dangers of traffic. Here are some things to keep in mind when educating your children about bicycle and pedestrian safety:

- Young children lack well developed peripheral vision
- Children often have trouble determining the source of a sound. They may hear a car coming, but look the wrong way.
- Until about eight years of age, children typically lack a sense of danger and they don't really understand how vulnerable they are.
- Children have trouble evaluating cause and effect. It's hard for them to determine a dangerous situation.
- Children have trouble judging the speed and distance of oncoming vehicles.
- Children are often restless and eager to go. It's hard for them to stop and wait for traffic lights.
- Children focus on things that are most interesting to them. An ice cream truck may take their attention from another approaching vehicle.
- Children often mix fantasy with reality. They may see cars as friendly creatures or think they can go 90 mph on their bicycles.
- Children often believe grown-ups will look out for them. They may think that because they can see the car, the motorist will see them.
- Children are very vulnerable to peer pressure and follow the lead of their friends. Many crashes happen when one child takes a risk and a second follows and is hit by a vehicle.

WHEN SHOULD A CHILD START RIDING A BICYCLE?

Let the child's motivation and motor coordination be your guide. Schedule this event when you can provide the necessary time to train your child. Training wheels only support the rider. Balance and leaning in the turns are learned on two wheels.



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If you need help in teaching your child how to ride a bike, you might consider the help of Pedal Magic, a video showing you a patent pending technique for teaching anyone to ride a bike in five minutes. If your local bike shop doesn't have a copy, you can purchase it from:

Reginald's Pedal Magic, Inc.
 PO Box 2995
 Littleton CO.80161-2995

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

In sizing bicycles for children, they should be able to **comfortably straddle the top bar of the frame while standing flat footed**. This should provide a size for good control yet large enough to allow for growth.



Learning to ride on a traditional girl's bike is a choice to consider for both girls and boys as the sloping top tube reduces the risk of injury to the groin. When the child is just learning to ride, they should be able to sit **on the seat and put both feet flat on the ground**.



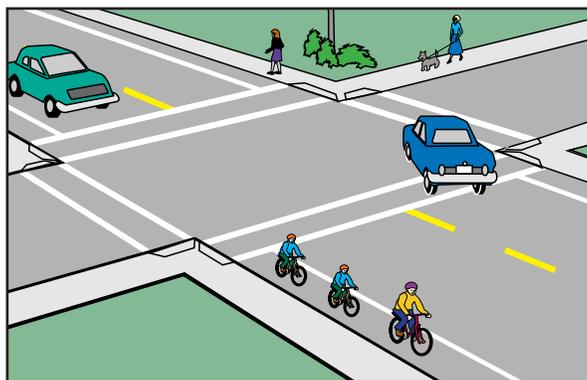
WHEN SHOULD A CHILD BEGIN TO RIDE IN THE STREET?

In most instances, when they can demonstrate the necessary cycling skills, alertness to traffic, and appropriate decision making skills, they're ready. Until that time, bicycle driving should be limited to sidewalks, parks and bike paths. The most effective and fun way to teach your children safe riding habits is to ride with them. At first, let them follow you as in ***follow the leader***. As they become more able, let them lead while you observe and instruct.

When training your child, give special attention to children's high-risk behaviors.

Make sure they:

- Ride on the right in the same direction as traffic. Riding on the left puts cyclists where motorists least expect to see them.
- Stop before riding out of the driveway into the street. Help your child understand that your own driveway is dangerous when used as a launching pad for a bike ride.
- Stop at all stop signs and red traffic lights. Children need to understand that they must stop every time, so that it becomes a habit.
- Ride predictably. They need to signal all turns. Teach children to use hand signals, look to the rear and then turn.



TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

The two most common methods of transporting children by bicycle include a bicycle-mounted child seat, and a bicycle trailer. Bicycle trailers are a better choice for a number of reasons:

- Children have room to shift position and play while being protected from bugs and weather.
- Bicycle trailers are more stable than child seats and tend to remain upright if the bicycle falls over. If the trailer does go over, the child is already close to the ground and is well contained and protected.
- Trailers are usually brightly colored and much more visible than a bicycle with a child seat and have ample space for diaper bags, toys or cargo from errand-running. For night or bad weather riding, a trailer should be well reflectorized on the back and sides. An orange flag and two rear mounted red flashing lights will make it even more visible in traffic.
- Motorists tend to give trailers a much wider berth.



When using a child seat, a bicycle becomes harder to manage because of the extra weight of the child and the higher center of gravity. Children risk having their feet caught in the rear spokes and must be taught to hold still because rocking back and forth in the seat makes balancing the bicycle difficult. Always load and unload the child by leaning your bicycle against a fixed object such as a wall. When stopped with a child on board, remember to hold on to the bicycle firmly even when straddling the bicycle.