

Learning to Ride a Bike

Information for parents and carers



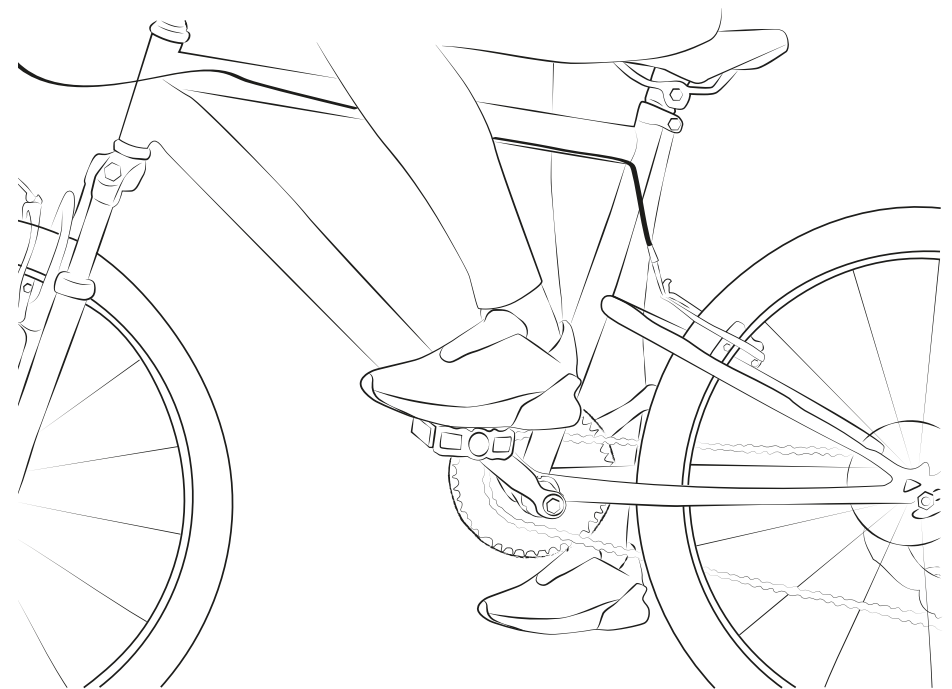
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Learning to cycle is a great achievement in a child's life and it is fun to master the many skills involved. Learning to cycle is difficult for most children and requires a lot of parental patience. Children who have difficulty with balance and coordination can find learning these skills overwhelming and can be reluctant to try. It helps to break down the skills into achievable chunks and learn them one at a time.

Learning can be hard work for some children so have plenty of breaks to avoid frustration. Children should learn at their own pace and enjoy each success. Learning to cycle can have a positive impact on children's self-esteem.

Step 6 - Cycling independently

- Let them start unaided with one foot on the ground and the other on the pedal in the 2 o'clock position (see image). The child should push on the pedal and the ground at the same time. When moving they need to find the pedal with their other foot while looking ahead - this takes practice. Start the child on a slight downward slope to let them get some momentum
- The child should learn to stop at a marker so they get used to using the brakes
- When they are confident, raise the saddle slightly
- Encourage them to practice a lot and have lots of fun



Step 5 - Pedals on

- Hold the back of the child's jacket or put your arm around their torso, stand to one side and slightly behind - ready to keep the child safe
- Do not hold the bike (handlebars or saddle) as the child needs to learn how the bike moves
- If the child can turn the pedals in a full circle, allow them to cycle in an open space, keeping hold of their back
- Gradually reduce your support but stay close and support the child as necessary
- Direction of travel is not important at this stage.

Note: If the child is unable to turn the pedals, they should try pedalling on a static bike or tricycle. If the child is very fearful then take the pedals off and try another time.



1 - Before you start

- Get the bike ready
- Check the brakes are working and ensure your child can reach the brakes
- Check the tyres are fully inflated
- Adjust the saddle, when your child is seated both feet should be flat on the ground
- Take the pedals off and remove any stabilisers, pedals are marked Right and Left.

Note: There are many YouTube videos which demonstrate how to make adjustments.

2 - Get your child ready

- A Helmet must always be worn and must fit well
- Clothes should be comfortable, ensure trousers and shoe laces are clear of the bike chain
- Cycling gloves are useful for some children as their hands can become uncomfortable if your child is not used to handlebars
- Knee and elbow pads are helpful for some children
- If your child wears foot and ankle splints, they should wear them to cycle
- Choose a good time, when your child is calm and not tired.

3 - Find a good space to practise

- A safe, open space with no traffic
- A park or school playground is ideal
- A flat smooth surface is best initially
- Although grass would provide a soft landing, it is not the best surface to learn on as more effort is required for the wheels to turn

4 - Learning must be fun

- Keep the sessions short
- Praise every small success
- Learn one skill at a time until confident
- Give plenty of time to master each skill
- Keep instructions short and simple
- Slowly build up skills.

Step 4 - Learn to scoot on the bike pushing with feet

- The child should stand the bike upright (step 1) and get on the bike as in step 3
- You will need to stay close, ready to support
- The child should sit on the saddle and push the ground with alternate feet
- They should look ahead
- They must remain seated - often children stand up and start to walk with the bike
- Give them time to master this stage
- The child should aim to gain speed and lift both of their legs up together to freewheel and balance
- Count how long they can balance with both feet up
- A small slope helps to gain speed and momentum
- They need to look out for obstacles and other people
- Give them time to master this stage to ensure they can balance and steer before moving to step 5.



Step 3 - Learn how to get on and off the bike

- The child should stand the bike upright as in Step 1
- They should hold both handlebars and apply the brakes
- They should face the front and lean the bike a bit towards them
- They need to lift their leg backwards and over the saddle
- They should sit on the saddle with both feet flat on the ground
- To get off the bike, they should do the same in reverse.



Get Started

The following steps teach your child how to handle their bike and understand how the bike moves. Go through the steps in this order to enable your child to gain confidence with easier tasks before learning to cycle independently. Don't move on to the next step until your child is confident and ready for the next challenge.

Note: Some children may have a preferred side for some of the skills. Try both and ask your child which feels better.

Step 1 - Learn how to get the bike upright from the ground

- Place the bike on the ground
- The child stands with their feet on the side of the saddle and handle bars, facing the front of the bike
- The child puts their hands on the handlebars and lifts the bike upright
- You should demonstrate how standing on the wrong side of the bike requires a big stretch over to reach the handlebars
- The child should put the bike back down on the ground the same way, finishing safely with the handle bars near their feet.



Step 2 - Learn how to walk with the bike

- The child should stand the bike upright as in Step 1
- Ask the child to walk forwards, pushing the bike holding both handlebars
- They should keep the bike a little distance away from their feet with the bike slightly leaning towards them
- They should look ahead
- Ask them to walk in straight lines and then they can try turning corners
- They can try using the brakes. You can prompt “start” and “stop” to encourage quick reactions

