

GO BY BIKE

A Parent's Guide to Bike Safety

Bicycling is fun, it provides exercise, and helps us get around. For kids, the bicycle is their first vehicle—a source of pride, and an important way for them to get around independently. Teaching your child to ride safely is the best way to get them off to a good start and help keep them safe.

Safety Tips

- ◆ Kids riding bicycles on streets should ride with traffic, not facing it. Wrong-way bicycling is a big cause of crashes, and it's illegal.
- ◆ Kids have trouble controlling bicycles that are too big, so pick one that is the right size.



How Old Is Old Enough?

Children under age 10 have trouble understanding how traffic works. They are likely to misjudge how fast a car is approaching. Teaching them the laws and how to stay safe will help, but they may still have trouble in confusing situations.

Car/Bicycle Crashes

Serious crashes are rare, but it's important to talk to your child about safety in order to avoid them. The most common causes of crashes among children are:

The ride-out.

Scenario: A child rides out into the street from a driveway or in the middle of a block and is hit.

Solution: Teach your child to always stop before entering the street and look left, right, then left again before crossing or entering the street.

Running a stop sign

This is very common among kids under 10. Teach your child to always stop at stop signs.

Left turn in front of traffic

Teach your child to walk his/her bike across busy streets. On neighborhood streets, kids 10 and older can be taught to safely make left turns by looking back for traffic, signaling a left turn, and moving to the left side of the lane before turning left.

Three Important Bicycle Skills

#1 Riding in a straight line.

This skill is basic, but very important. Take your child to an empty parking lot and find a straight paint stripe. Have your child practice riding on the stripe without swerving. It will take some practice, but your child will get better at it each time.

TIP: To ride straight, don't look down at the stripe. Look ahead to see where you're going!



#2 Looking back without swerving.

Have your child ride the same stripe while you stand behind him/her. As your child rides away, hold up your hand and say “Look!” Your child will look back and say “Open” or “Closed” (depending on whether you are making a fist or not). Your child should practice being able to do this without swerving.

#3 Controlling the bicycle and speed.

Bring a soft, small object, like a sponge, to the parking lot and have your child practice riding slowly toward it and stopping just before hitting it. Gradually increase speeds and watch for skidding (not a good thing, even though kids love to do it). As your child speeds up, he/she will need to start using brakes sooner.

RIDING AFTER DARK

Some serious crashes happen around dusk and in the dark. People driving cars have trouble seeing children on bicycles, especially when the children have on dark clothing. We recommend that children not be allowed to ride after dark. *If you absolutely must allow it, make sure your child's bike has front and rear lights, and your child wears bright or reflective clothing.*



More info, including bike classes, at
www.ibikeknx.com

Helmets!!!!

In a word—YES! Your child should always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. Helmets save lives and prevent major head injuries. Three important tips:

#1 Let your child pick out his/her own helmet, because it makes it more likely to be worn.

#2 Make sure the helmet fits properly, because it doesn't work if it doesn't stay on.

#3 Wear one when you ride your bicycle!

Fitting

Eyes—the helmet should be level over your eyes, with just one or two finger widths between eyes and helmet.

Ears—the strap should form a “V” under your ear.

Mouth—the strap should be tight enough that you feel it when you open your mouth wide.