



Buying your child a **Bicycle**

A Guide For Parents

Types Of Bicycles

When selecting a bike for your child, keep in mind these characteristics about the several basic types of bikes that are manufactured.

Single-speed, middleweight or cruiser: Includes coaster brakes and comes in various sizes.

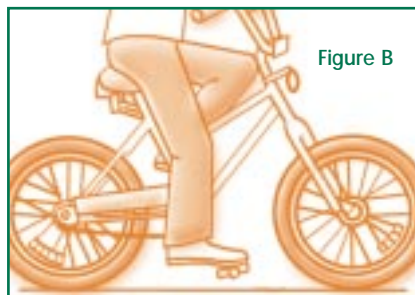
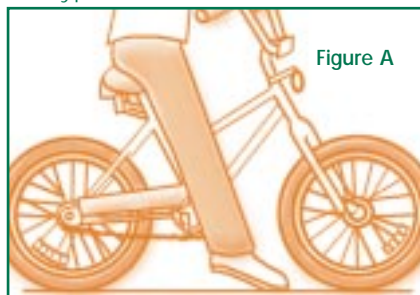
High-rise: Features a small wheel, short wheelbase, high handlebars and a banana seat.

BMX: A modified frame, special wheel, competition handlebars and seat.

Multi-speed lightweight (10 – 27 gear combinations): For long distance cycling, hill climbing and racing. Comes equipped with hand brakes and requires extra maintenance.

All-terrain or Mountain: A sturdy, multi-speed, wide-tired bike with upright handlebars, hand brakes and off-road capabilities.

Note: Young children should be careful when riding a bike with hand brakes. Greater strength in the hands and wrists is required before riding a bike of this type.



A bike will be safest for your child to ride if it is neither too large or too small. To determine the best fit for the rider, keep these things in mind.

(Figure A) When sitting on the seat, a child should be able to balance the bike with the tips of his or her toes. The bike should not lean to one side or the other. Adjust the seat to achieve this.

(Figure B) When sitting on the seat, a child should be able to reach the pedal at its lowest position with the tips of his or her toes.

Additionally, standard handlebars should be set with grips at seat level. The upper part of dropped-down style handlebars on multi-speed lightweight

bikes should also be level with, or slightly below, the seat. Tilt the grips down at approximately a 10-degree angle. High-rise handlebars should be lower than the rider's shoulder.

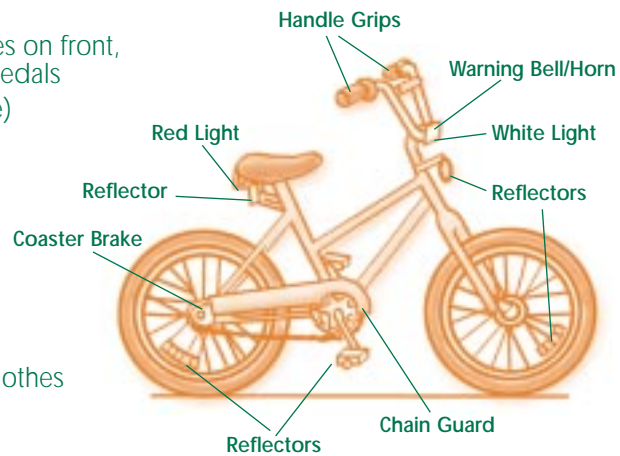
Basic Safety Equipment

To ensure your child enjoys a bicycling experience that is as safe as possible, make sure his or her bike is equipped with the following:

- Warning bell or horn
- Chain guard
- Coaster brake
- Reflective devices on front, rear, sides and pedals
- Front light (white)
- Rear light (red)
- Handlebars

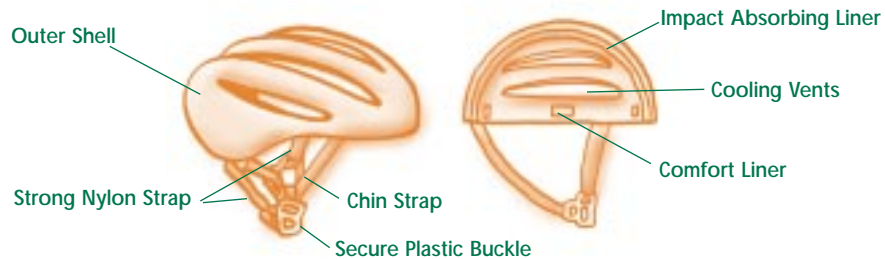
Additional equipment:

- Helmet
- Pants leg clips
- Bright-colored clothes



Helmets

Head injuries are the leading cause of death in 80 percent of bicycle accidents. You can help cut the risk of injury to your child by 75 percent by ensuring he or she wears a bicycle helmet each time they ride. Purchase a helmet that has been approved by ASTM, CPSC, or the Snell Foundation. A sticker on the helmet will indicate this approval. A helmet should fit snugly and level. It should not cover your child's eyes, or ears.



Teaching Your Child To Ride

Instructing your child on how to ride a bike should be done away from traffic. Your first task will be helping him or her learn to maintain their balance and stay on the bike. Next, you can move to basic maneuvers including

starting, stopping, turning, signaling, and going up and down hills and around curves and braking. It will take many hours of practice and ideally you should test your child's mastery by asking him or her to demonstrate these basic maneuvers in a safe area before allowing to ride on public streets. While teaching your child to ride, focus on the following:

- Stopping and checking for traffic before entering a roadway
- Riding with — not against — traffic
- Riding to the right side of traffic
- Obeying all traffic signs and signals
- Staying cautious around parked vehicles, watching especially for opening doors
- Observing local rules and regulations
- Never carrying a passenger on a bike
- Restrict young children from riding their bikes at night. If your child must be out after dark, teach them to walk their bike home, preferably away from streets and roadways.
- If a bike must be operated after dark, make sure it has both a white front light, and a red rear light.
- Always using hand signals

Right Turn



Left Turn



Stop



Give Your Child A Fun, Safe Bicycling Experience

Most every child will eventually ask their parents for a bicycle. As a parent, you want to make your child happy but also keep them safe, particularly when it comes to buying them a bike and teaching them to ride it correctly. The following is a checklist of things to keep in mind when planning for both a fun, and safe, cycling experience for your child.

1. Is my child mature enough, both physically and psychologically, to ride a bicycle in neighborhood traffic?
2. Cyclists are governed by the same traffic laws as motor vehicle drivers, will your child be able to comprehend and apply these?
3. Is the area in which your child will be cycling relatively free of motor vehicle traffic?
4. Are you willing to ensure your child receives the appropriate instruction about how to safely ride a bicycle before allowing them to do so?

When you have determined that your child is ready to have a bike, the next step is choosing the right bike. There are several considerations to keep in mind as you shop for a bicycle for your child.

Fit The Bike To The Child

The following are the typical sizes of bike for the average-size child.

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Under 5 years* | 12" or 16" wheel |
| 5 to 7 years* | 20" wheel |
| 8 to 10 years | 24" wheel |
| 11 and over | 26" or 27" wheel |

*Note: At this age, children require close supervision while operating a bicycle, even on quiet neighborhood streets.

For more bicycling safety information,
visit our website at njcommuter.com



New Jersey Department of Transportation
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