



BICYCLE SAFETY

What Every Parent Should Know

Bicycling is fun, it helps us keep fit, and it gives us mobility. For kids, the bicycle is their first vehicle, a source of pride — and an important way to get around. In addition, bicycling is generally a safe activity. But, when bicyclists make basic mistakes, they're the ones most likely to get hurt.

For this reason, the attitudes you instill in your child *now* will determine how he or she will ride for years to come. If your child gets a good grounding in safe riding techniques, he or she will be able to enjoy the benefits of bicycling for many years.



Active
Living RESOURCE
CENTER

THREE IMPORTANT BICYCLING SKILLS

Everyone should learn the following skills.

SKILL #1: RIDING A STRAIGHT LINE



This skill is basic but very important. Take your child to a park, playground, or empty parking lot for practice and find a straight paint stripe on the pavement. Have your child practice riding on the stripe without veering to one side or another. It may take some practice but your child will get better at it each time he or she tries, and that's good!

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

SKILL #2: LOOKING BACK WITHOUT SWERVING



Have your child ride the same stripe while you hold a cardboard picture of a car. As he or she rides past, hold the "car" up or hide it behind your back and say "LOOK!" Your child should look back and say "CAR!" or "NO CAR!"

SKILL #3: STOPPING AND SPEED CONTROL

On the playground, have your child practice riding slowly toward a wet sponge and stopping just before hitting it. Gradually increase the speed and watch for skidding (not good). As your child speeds up, he or she will need to start using the brakes sooner.

Tip: Going downhill, a bicyclist should brake gently and often to keep from going too fast and losing control. Stick to level ground until your child is ready for a bike with hand brakes.



RIDING AFTER DARK

Some serious crashes happen when it's dark. Example: a motorist comes up from behind and hits a bicyclist. These crashes often involve higher car speeds and make up about 25% of all fatal car/bike collisions.

Rule out riding after dark for your youngster. It requires special skills and equipment that few kids have. If your child gets caught out after dark, he or she should call you for a ride home. *For more info on riding at night, contact your local bicycle club or bike shop.*

WHAT ABOUT HELMETS?



In a word: **YES!** Your child should use one every time he or she rides. Helmets can prevent head injuries and save lives. And, about 75% of all bicyclists killed each year die from head injuries. Many more are injured seriously.

The cost (\$20-30) is very small, compared to the medical bills and grief caused by a head injury.

Go with a "CPSC-approved" helmet; there are many available in different styles and colors.

THREE IMPORTANT TIPS

1. Let your child pick out his or her helmet.
2. Follow the helmet instructions for a proper fit.
3. Wear one yourself!

This brochure was developed by the Active Living Resource Center, a program supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Additional materials for child education and making your neighborhood more bicycle friendly and walkable are available through the ALRC at: www.activelivingresources.org.

