



Cycling is one of the great joys of life. It is important that an adult (usually a parent) take the time to teach a child how to ride in a safe, caring, patient and encouraging

environment. Remember to let the child learn at his/her own natural pace. Pushing too hard can take all the fun of the experience!

Age - a child will usually be ready to ride when he/she can master basic balancing. On average, this will be about 6 to 7 years of age but the normal range is between 4 and 9 years.

Tricycles, scooters, and bikes with training wheels - cycling involves the basic skills of balancing, pedaling, steering, and braking. On tricycles, children learn how to pedal and steer. On scooters they learn how to steer, and balance and brake while on their feet. On bikes with training wheels, children learn how to pedal, steer and brake. However, a kid who has not used a trike, scooter or bike with training wheels can still learn how to ride a bike - it might just take a little longer.

The traditional, and perhaps, best, way to teach a child is outlined below:

- Make sure the child is wearing a bike helmet and that the helmet is properly adjusted - in Australia, all commercially-sold helmets have to meet the relevant safety standards. (AS/NZS 2063)
- Adjust the saddle so that the child can reach the ground easily with his/her feet.
- Go somewhere quiet with no traffic.
- Have the child stand astride the bike. If the child does not know, show him/her how to steer and brake, steadily. Then have the child sit in the saddle and walk/scoot the bike around to get a bit of a feel for balancing, steering, and braking. If you wish, you can take the pedals off to make it easier for the child. Let the child continue doing this until he/she feels comfortable and appears ready for a new step.
- With the pedals back on, show the child how to "push off" on the bike by moving the left pedal to the 10 o'clock position or the right pedal to the 2 o'clock position. Then have the child

push off a few times with you holding on to the back of the saddle to keep the child upright, and walking/running along. Some people find that holding onto the child's shoulders, rather than the back of the saddle, works better. Assure the child that you will hold them up and tell him/her to just concentrate on steering and pedaling. Keep encouraging the child and tell him/her how well they are going.

- When the child is comfortable pushing off, steering and pedaling with you holding on, take him/her to a gentle slope and have him/her ride or coast down a few times, with you still holding on and running behind. At this point, also teach the child to brake in a nice and steady way while keeping the bike straight.
- When the child shows signs of being able to ride and balance on their own, you can try letting go. Be sure to warn the child beforehand that you will be letting go for a little while and make sure that they are comfortable with the idea. If so, tell the child when you do let go and, after letting go, continue to run along with them, ready to catch them if they fall. Continue to run along with the child, ready to catch him/her until the child can ride on his/her own.