

# Is your child ready for a two-wheeler?

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Your four year old loves to ride his tricycle. The only problem is his knees are hitting the handlebars. But is he ready to move up to a two-wheeler?

According to experts, he probably is. If your child can climb on and off a bike well, then he is probably coordinated enough to handle a two-wheeler. Here are some tips for buying that first bike.

## The right fit

When purchasing a bike, make sure it is the correct size for your child. Don't buy a bike that is too big hoping your child will grow into it. A bike that is too large will be hard for your child to handle and could cause injuries.

A bike is the correct size for your child if he can sit on the seat with his knees slightly bent and his feet flat on the ground. The handlebars should be no higher than his shoulders when seated or steering will be difficult. The bike should be equipped with coaster, or foot, brakes, which enable your child to stop more easily and more quickly than hand brakes. Also, limit the number of accessories, such as bells or streamers, for beginners.

## Helmets save lives

A bicycle helmet can save your child's life. In the United States, 75 percent of deaths from bicycle accidents are the result of a head injury. Bicycle helmets reduce that risk by 85 percent. So make a sure your child wears a helmet every time he rides his bike.

When buying a bicycle helmet, look for one that has been approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or **Snell Memorial Foundation**. You should find a sticker on the box or helmet. Make sure your child tries on the helmet before you buy it. The helmet should fit comfortably but be snug enough so that it does not move. Most come with foam pads that can be placed inside for a better fit and then removed as your child grows. Consider buying a brightly colored helmet; it will be easier for motorists to see.

Once your child is equipped with the cycling gear he'll need, take family bike rides. Bicycling is a great form of exercise and a fun activity the family can enjoy together.

RELATED ARTICLE: Teach your young cyclist these safety tips

- \* Ride only in the daytime. Most accidents occur at dusk or after dark.
- \* Ride on the right side of the road in the same direction as traffic.
- \* Obey traffic laws. Stop at all stop signs and stoplights.
- \* Always stop before entering a street.
- \* At a busy intersection, get off the bike and walk it across the street.
- \* Always keep your hands on the handlebars while you are riding.
- \* When riding in a group, ride single file.
- \* Always wear a helmet.
- \* Wear light-colored clothes when you ride.
- \* Use proper hand signals when turning.
- \* Slow down for walkers. When riding on a path, trail, or sidewalk, keep your speed down.
- \* Don't ride too close to parked cars. The driver might suddenly open the door.
- \* Never hitch a ride on a moving vehicle or do stunts or wheelies.
- \* Do not take passengers on your bike.

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