BIKE RODEO STATION GUIDE

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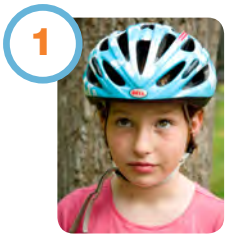
Bike rodeos are a great way for kids and their parents to learn about biking safety with practice. Kids bring their bikes and practice and develop skills that will help them to become better bicyclists and avoid typical crashes. Some rodeos are designed as large municipal events with skills activities, exhibits and games, while others are much smaller, requiring less space, fewer resources and a smaller number of volunteers.

Station 1: Helmet Check

Before a child participates in this event, you want to be sure he or she has a helmet that fits and meets the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's standards (indicated by presence of a CPSC label). The coalition should determine in advance the policies for providing free or low-cost helmets and replacing helmets that are outgrown or damaged. No child should participate in this program without a helmet.

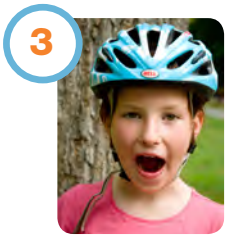
Once the child has a CPSC-approved helmet that is the proper size, teach the easy three-step Eyes-Ears-Mouth process to make sure the helmet fits and is worn correctly every time.

Eyes: Put the helmet on the child's head and have him/her look up. The child should see the bottom rim of the helmet. The rim should be two fingers above the child's eyebrows and level on her head.



Ears: Adjust the straps of the helmet so that they form a "V" right under each ear lobe. Make a "V" to measure with your index and middle fingers.

Mouth: Once the straps are adjusted in a "V," buckle them. They should be snug, but not too tight. Adjust until you can put one finger between the strap and the child's chin. Now, have the child open her mouth as wide as possible. She should feel the helmet hug her head and the strap should feel snug to her chin.



Station 2: Bike Fit

The next stop is to adjust the bike to fit the child. Invite bicycle shop employees to help you.

For a bike, a child should be able to sit on the seat and touch both feet to the ground. As the child develops more confidence, the seat can be raised so that he or she can just touch the toes of both feet or only one foot to the ground.

Station 3: Wheel Shop

Teach children how to adjust their bicycles or scooters and to make simple repairs.

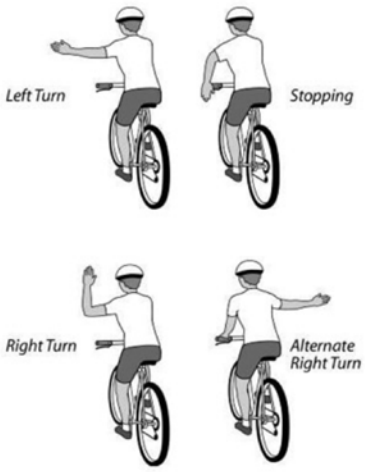
- Fill tires with air.
- Tighten all spokes and replace broken spokes.
- Adjust the handlebars and the seat.
- Replace flat tires.
- Replace worn brake pads.
- Tighten all screws, nuts and bolts on the bike frame.
- Check the chain to be sure it is secure.
- Secure and clean the reflectors, mirrors and lights.

Station 4: Following Rules

At this station, it is important to explain to kids how traffic works. Talk to them about what different road signs mean, showing examples of each sign (stop, yield, etc.). Teach them about yielding, passing, predicting traffic flow and the traffic laws that relate to cyclists. Bicycle riders have to obey the same rules as cars and buses. Be sure to mention the importance of riding with traffic.

Teach children the hand signals they should use to alert drivers to their actions:

- Left turn – extend your left arm out straight from your side.
- Right turn – extend your left arm out from your side, bent at a 90-degree angle at the elbow, hand pointing upward and the palm of your hand facing forward. Another option is to put your right arm out straight from your side.



- Stopping or slowing – extend your left arm out from your side, bent at a 90-degree angle at the elbow, hand pointing downward and the palm of your hand facing backward.

Once you tell children about all of these rules, quiz them orally. To further teach these lessons, set up a mini-road using masking tape, traffic cones or sidewalk chalk. Ask children to volunteer to serve as "signage" or obstacles, such as parked cars. Have each cyclist ride through the course as a volunteer calls out directions to him or her, such as "turn left," "slow down," "turn right." The child cyclist should also remember to comply with the directions of all "signage."

Station 5: Ride Right

At this station, children learn how to balance, start and stop, ride straight, ride slowly and scan and signal. Set up a mini-road and have each child practice these skills on the road.

1. Balance

- Have children practice riding in circles as well as a straight line.
- Show them how to use the brakes; get them to skid the rear wheels.
- Have them ride as slowly as possible without touching the ground.

2. Starting and stopping

- Children should learn to stop before entering a roadway.
- Teach them to look left, then right, then left again before proceeding.
- Remind them that driveways, sidewalks and crosswalks are potential danger zones.
- Practice starting and stopping over and over until it seems easy.

3. Riding straight

- Have children ride on a painted line in a parking lot.
- Teach them that straight-line riding will allow drivers to predict what they will do.
- Remind them that predictability is important in any traffic situation; kids don't know this.

4. Scanning and signaling

- Have children ride straight and look back at you without swerving.
- Teach them that they must scan for traffic in front of and behind them before signaling.
- Have them incorporate the signals they learned at Station 4.

Bike control skills may also include the following activities:

- Zig-zag – use sponges or traffic cones to set up a pattern that children must weave through
- Slow race – mark start and finish lines. You may need a stopwatch. Children are challenged to ride as slowly as possible from the start to the finish line without touching a foot to the ground. The slowest rider wins.
- Figure 8 – use sidewalk chalk or tape to outline a figure 8 that children must follow with their bikes. Make it large enough to allow children to safely make turns.
- Driveway ride-out – use cones to create a "driveway" with a fence or bush as a sight obstruction at the end. Create cardboard cars and ask for children to volunteer to "drive." Instruct children on bicycles to enter the roadway from the driveway. Be sure they stop and look both ways, check again before going and take off smoothly, with good pedal position (front pedal higher than rear pedal).
- Scanning – teach children to look behind for traffic and be aware of their surroundings. Draw a straight line between two cones. Children on bicycles will ride straight along the line. Volunteers holding cardboard cars act as traffic. Cyclists should be able to look behind without veering left or right.

Station 6: Safe Places to Wheel

It is often hard for drivers to see bicyclists and skaters. "I didn't see him." That is one of the most frequent reasons a driver gives after crashing into a cyclist. That's why children should know what they can do to see and be seen.

First, be sure parents and children know how to incorporate equipment for visibility.

- Incorporate retroreflective material on their clothing, accessories and shoes when riding
- Equip the wheeled vehicle with reflectors on the front, the rear, the wheels and the pedals
- Add a front light to a scooter or bike
- Do not ride when it's dark

Teach children about different types of things they need to watch for as drivers of wheeled vehicles. Be sure they understand the following types of hazards:

- Moving hazards – cars, pedestrians, dogs, other cyclists, trains, trucks, buses, motorcycles or anything else that could cross their paths.
- Stationary hazards – parked cars, utility poles, park benches, fire hydrants, fences, parked bicycles or anything else that would be in the way.
- Surface hazards – potholes, sand, rocks, drain grates, concrete joints, raised manhole covers, broken glass, cans, other roadway litter and anything else that could cause a fall or loss of control.
- Visual hazards – bushes and shrubs, fences, parked cars, buildings, large or flashing signs and other things that either block the view or distract attention.

Set up a course that is often referred to as the "Rock Dodge." Use chalk or masking tape to create a narrow lane for bicyclists to remain in. Then, use soft sponges to serve as "obstacles" for children to avoid. Tell the riders to travel straight toward the "obstacles" and steer around them at the last minute. They must remain in the narrow space (3 to 6 feet for kids 10 or older and 6 to 12 feet for kids under 10). The children must steer by turning their handlebars one way (to avoid the object), turning back the other way (to keep from falling) and then turning straight ahead (to continue).