

# Bike Safety Tips

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe when biking.

There are so many great reasons to ride your bike: It offers fun, freedom and exercise, and it's good for the environment. Here are a few tips so that you will be as safe as possible while you're doing it.

## Wear a Helmet

- We have a simple saying: "Use your head, wear a helmet." It is the single most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from bicycle crashes.



## Find the Right Helmet Fit

- Make sure your child has the right size helmet and wears it every time when riding, skating or scooting. Your children's helmet should meet the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) standards. When it's time to buy a new helmet, let your children pick out their own; they'll be more likely to wear them for every ride.



**More children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to biking than any other sport. Helmets can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries by 88 percent – yet only 45 percent of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet.**

- [Make sure the helmet fits and your child knows how to put it on correctly.](#) A helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position, and should not rock forward, backward or side to side. The helmet straps must always be buckled, but not too tightly. Safe Kids recommends kids take the [Helmet Fit Test](#).
- **EYES** check: Position the helmet on your head. Look up and you should see the bottom rim of the helmet. The rim should be one to two finger-widths above the eyebrows.
- **EARS** check: Make sure the straps of the helmet form a "V" under your ears when buckled. The strap should be snug but comfortable.
- **MOUTH** check: Open your mouth as wide as you can. Do you feel the helmet hug your head? If not, tighten those straps and make sure the buckle is flat against your skin.



## Use Appropriate Helmets for Different Activities

- Children should always wear a helmet for all wheeled sports activities.
- A properly-fitted bike helmet is just as effective when riding a scooter, roller skating or in-line skating.
- When skateboarding and long boarding, make sure your child wears a CPSC certified skateboarding helmet.

## Proper Equipment and Maintenance Are Important

- Ensure proper bike fit by bringing the child along when shopping for a bike. Select one that is the right size for the child, not one he or she will grow into.
- When children are sitting on the seat of the bicycle, their feet should be able to touch the ground.
- Before the ride, make sure the reflectors are secure, brakes work properly, gears shift smoothly, and tires are tightly secured and properly inflated.
- Long or loose clothing can get caught in bike chains or wheel spokes. Dress young kids appropriately to ensure a safe ride.

## Keep an Eye Out

- Actively supervise children until you're comfortable that they are responsible to ride on their own.
- Every child is different, but developmentally, it can be hard for kids to judge speed and distance of cars until age 10, so limit riding to sidewalks (although be careful for vehicles in driveways), parks or bike paths until age 10. No matter where you ride, teach your child to stay alert and watch for cars and trucks.
- Children should be able to demonstrate riding competence and knowledge of the rules of the road before cycling with traffic.

## Model and Teach Good Behavior

- You'd be surprised how much kids learn from watching you, so it's important for parents to model proper behavior. Wear a helmet, even if you didn't when you were a kid.
- Teach your kids to make eye contact with drivers. Bikers should make sure drivers are paying attention and are going to stop before they cross the street.
- Tell your kids to ride on the right side of the road, with traffic, not against it. Stay as far to the right as possible. Use appropriate hand signals and respect traffic signals, stopping at all stop signs and stoplights. Be predictable when riding.
- Stop and look left, right and left again before entering a street or crossing an intersection. Look back and yield to traffic coming from behind before turning left.



## Be Bright, Use Lights

- When riding at dusk, dawn or in the evening, be bright and use lights – and make sure your bike has reflectors as well. It's also smart to wear clothes and accessories that have retro-reflective materials to improve biker visibility to motorists.
- Most states require a front light but allow the use of a rear reflector. Headlights aren't so much for bicyclists to see where they are going but for others to see them. Riding without a headlight means drivers won't see you, and surprising motorists is never a good idea.

