

RIDING MY BIKE

Learning to ride a bike is a very difficult skill to master as it involves the use of a number of different skills including:

- Coordination of both sides of the body together ([Being able to use both sides of my body](#))
- Coordination of arms and legs doing very different actions
- Good core strength and stability of the hips and other joints of the body which all impact on balance ([Coordinating my body for play and activities](#))
- Planning and sequencing of movements
- Processing of visual information and the ability to react with a motor action
- Body awareness and awareness of the environment and its dangers
- Confidence, motivation and determination as it involves a lot of practice!

Please see the appropriate advice sheet for further information on how each skill can be developed.

Many children benefit from starting to learn to ride using a balance bike or with a standard bike with the pedals removed and the seat at a low setting so their feet can reach the floor. The following table describes the stages of learning to ride a bike so children who are having difficulty can be supported more specifically at the appropriate stage:

SKILL PROGRESSION	TEACHING TIPS
Able to put helmet on independently	Practice fastening the buckle before putting the helmet on. Start with longer strap initially to avoid catching the skin (but tighten up before cycling). Use of a mirror may help to locate the buckle if this is hard when wearing the helmet.
Able to hold both handlebars and push bike <i>in a straight line</i> while walking beside it. Standing on the left hand side (no chain this side) Looking ahead and around to check route is clear	This is important in terms of safety for crossing roads. It helps to start with this to learn to handle the bike. Children sometimes stand and walk too close to the bike and fall into it, so give hints to stand further away. Emphasise the need to LOOK around and listen for safety.
Able to hold handlebars and push bike round a corner while walking beside it	Give guidance to turn a large enough circle so that the bike does not lean excessively while turning the circle. As children become more confident, or if space is limited they may be able to hold under the saddle with one hand to lift the back wheel into position.

Able to stop bike using both brakes (walking beside it) to sudden verbal command.	It is important in terms of safety to learn how to use the brakes before learning how to ride.
Able to mount bike. Placing both hands on the handle bars and brakes if necessary	Practice getting on and off the bike from the left side, holding both handle bars. Use the brakes if the bike moves or you are on a slope.
Able to dismount. Keeping both hands on the handlebars, holding the brakes	Take a right leg over the back wheel, to end up standing on the left hand side.
Able to scoot on bike sitting on the saddle, not standing up, taking “walking steps” Pedals removed • In a straight line • Round a corner	Removing the pedals makes scooting easier. This is the start of learning how to balance on a bike. Encourage sitting on the saddle (not standing) while scooting. Continue to encourage safe stopping as above.
Able to scoot on bike, lifting 2 feet together, to balance briefly (pedals removed)	Encourage LOOKING ahead just in front of the wheel, but also checking if the route is safe and clear.
Able to scoot on bike, lifting 2 feet together, gaining speed by tapping one or other foot on the ground (pedals removed)	Continue to promote safe stopping.
Able to stop bike safely if starting to lose control while scooting. Both brakes on, both feet down	Prompt child with – what do you do if you wobble?
Able to prepare pedal position ready to push off	Your child will probably choose the foot that feels easiest for them to use to push off. Explain or demonstrate how to lift the pedal into position by placing toes underneath the pedal. Making sure the opposite leg is not blocking the pedals from turning.
Able to “push off” using pedal with support to balance and to keep moving, while placing second foot onto pedal	The helper should hold the bike underneath the back of the saddle & will need to keep the bike upright. Some help may be needed initially to steer, by placing a hand on the handlebars briefly.

Able to pedal bike with constant support to balance	Encourage the child to stop if they are leaning over too far or losing control, otherwise they will start to rely too much on help to balance.
Able to stop bike safely using both brakes, & placing both feet down if losing control	Keep encouraging brakes & feet down if control is lost or if your child leans the bike too far.
Able to pedal bike with intermittent support to balance	As balance & steering improves and if your child is reliably stopping when overbalancing or losing control, start to let go of the saddle briefly. At this stage it may help if you move up from holding the saddle to hold your child's trunk on either side. This way you can help them to feel how to adjust their posture if the bike starts to lean.
Able to cycle in a straight line without stabilisers/support.	Encourage child to look in front of wheel & up. Focusing vision will help with balance and steering.
Able to push off using pedal and place second foot up without help to balance	Encourage keeping the handlebars straight. The right amount of momentum will be needed to give time to lift the 2nd foot onto the pedal. It is a matter of trial & error and lots of practice.
Able to cycle round a corner without stabilisers or support	Start with large gentle corners where visibility is good. Keep encouraging looking ahead & up.
Able to cycle between a visual marker e.g. two poles or flat lines on the floor	This will help to develop looking & steering and increased control of the bike.
Able to dismount and let go.	Be able to draw to a stop safely, dismount to the left side and walk bike to most appropriate parking space.
Able to cycle with awareness of others avoiding obstacles or stopping suddenly if necessary.	These are higher level skills which can be developed once the basics have been mastered.
Able to cope with bumpy surfaces when cycling.	
Store bike safely. Clean if necessary.	