KIDS LEARN TO RIDE

Ready for Fun!

Cycling & Walking
Sit on a balance bike and walk forward with it

Use feet to slow down a balance bike

Glide with both feet off the ground on a balance bike

Ride around obstacles and change speed on a balance bike

Ride a pedal bike with assistance

Stop a pedal bike using the hand and/or pedal brakes

Start from stationary

Ride on your own

Ride around obstacles at different speeds
What to wear

Always wear your helmet: it helps protect your head.

Get a new helmet if the inside of your helmet is cracked or broken.

Wear your helmet next to your head: no hats or beanies inbetween.

As well as being the law in New Zealand, it’s a great idea for everyone to wear an undamaged, well fitting helmet. The helmet must be a certified bike helmet and not one designed for other things like horse riding or cricket.

Check the helmet is in good condition. It doesn’t matter if the plastic shell of the helmet is scratched, but it’s important to check the polystyrene.

Hold the helmet so the inside faces up. Work your way around the edges, gently trying to pull it apart to see if any cracks appear. If the helmet is dropped, check it before wearing it again. If it is cracked, it will need to be replaced.

Fitting a helmet:

1. Place the helmet so that it sits flat with a two finger width gap between the eyebrows and the helmet rim. If the helmet has an adjustable cage at the back, tighten it so that the helmet is snug.

2. Adjust the side straps, checking that there is no fraying or twists. On each side there is a buckle which should sit right beneath the earlobe, forming a ‘Y’ shape on each side.

3. Tighten up the chin strap. The chin strap should not be able to be pulled up and over your chin.

Anything goes for clothes but keep loose bits well tucked in.

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Choosing the Right Size

Get onto the bike to make sure it is the right size. If it’s too big or too small it’s going to be hard to ride.

To check a bike for size, make sure your child can comfortably reach the handlebars. They should also be able to stand over the frame with their feet flat on the ground without touching the top of the bike frame, and safely operate the brakes. Some kids bikes have child sized brake levers and you can adjust the reach on them, making them easier to pull in.

On a balance bike, make sure your child’s feet can touch and push off the ground while they are sitting comfortably with just a slight bend in their knees.

Take into consideration the weight of the bike, make sure it is not too heavy for your child to control. Added features like gears and suspension add to the overall weight and may not be necessary if your child is starting out.

Kids bikes don’t differ in design for boys and girls. It’s just a case of what they like the look of and feel excited to ride.

Try a few bikes out for size.

Heels are just off the ground when sitting

Stand comfortably over the bike frame

Handlebars are easy to reach and turn
There are lots of styles of bikes to choose from. Check out the range at your local bike shop. It’s important to choose a bike your child likes, feels comfortable and confident on and wants to ride!

**BALANCE BIKES**

Once your child is walking confidently and tall enough, they can try a balance bike. They are fun and allow them to practice their balance, steering skills, and coordination. The child should be able to place their feet on the ground when seated. Find a safe area to have a try and off they go.

**KIDS BIKES**

Kids bikes now come in a variety of styles and there are lots to choose from. Most bikes under 20” have no gears. They come with a pedal brake and some also have a hand brake.

Pedal brakes are good for young children while they build up their strength to use hand brakes.

Gears and suspension on kids bikes are optional features and not necessary when learning to ride.

Once they are riding confidently, these features can be considered, depending on the type of riding they are doing.

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**SIZE** | **HEIGHT** | **AGE (APPROX)**
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Balance bike | 85–110cm | 2–5 YEARS
12 inch wheel | 85–100cm | 2–4 YEARS
16 inch wheel | 100–120cm | 5–7 YEARS
20 inch wheel | 115–135cm | 7–9 YEARS
24 inch wheel | 130–145cm | 9–11 YEARS
26/27.5 inch wheel | 145cm+ | 11 YEARS+

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**Bike Size Chart**

Use the chart, to check the bike size, or use our AT height chart as a guide.

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**WHAT’S YOUR BIKE SIZE?**

Attach at floor level. Use the chart, to check the bike size, or use our AT height chart as a guide.

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**What’s Your Bike Size?**

Use the chart, to check the bike size, or use our AT height chart as a guide.
Colour in your dream bike!
BIKE TRAILERS

Bike trailers are great for transporting kids from nine months to six years. The kids are out of the elements, you can carry extra things and most are fitted with seat belts. If you want to tackle a hilly path, you’ll need a bike with gears to make it to the top.

CHILD SEATS

Kids from nine months to four years (maximum weight up to 18-20kg) get a great view from either a front or rear child seat. The position of the seat affects how the bike handles and how you get your child in and out, so try before you buy.

TRAILER BIKE

Make the fun last longer for kids that can ride but get tired easily, with a trailer bike. A trailer bike is great for four to nine year olds. The bike has a towing arm instead of a front wheel.

CARGO BIKE

A cargo bike will get you, the kids and your stuff around town. Many cargo bikes have a large compartment at the front of the bike which often has seat belts and offers your small passengers a great view.

Good brakes are essential to control the bike and trailer coming down a hill. Many trailers convert into strollers so you can get more use out of them.

Make sure to check all hands and other loose items are inside the seat or tucked away and buckle up tight.

Trailer bikes are able to go almost anywhere and they get your child used to pedalling.

You can buy a bike to suit your load and many have electric assist options.
Check your bike before you ride!

**TYRES**
Keep the tyres pumped to the pressure printed on the side wall of the tyre which should make them feel firm when you squeeze them. This protects the rim and makes the bike easy to control. Replace tyres that have no tread or if patches have appeared.

**BRAKES**
Test each brake individually to make sure they are able to stop each wheel. For any rim brake systems, when the brake is engaged, the whole brake pad should be aligned onto the wheel rim. Check the pads are not too worn and that the brake lever is adjusted correctly and does not pull all the way into the handle bar.

**WHEELS**
On most kids bikes the wheels are secured by wheel nuts. These can come loose over time, and if they are left, they can become so loose that the wheel may fall off. If it has a quick release lever, tighten it up and fold the lever over so it reads ‘closed’. It doesn’t need to be so tight that it needs a lot of force to undo it. Tighten up any wheel nuts using a spanner.

**CHAIN**
Lube bike chains regularly with specific bike chain lubes to keep them running smoothly. If the chain becomes rusty, or warped in any way, you should replace it.
Get riding a balance bike.

1. Focus on a point in front of you.

If you fall, brush it off and get right back up for another go!

2. Use your feet to walk or roll the bike forward and keep looking ahead.

3. When you feel good, start going faster and lift up your feet so you glide.

Get riding – Balance bikes

Kids as young as 18 months can get started on a balance bike. How they progress to a pedal bike will depend on their confidence and coordination. The most important part of learning to ride is that it’s fun and a chance for freedom and independence. Falling off is part of the process!

Balance bikes are a great way for kids to learn to ride. Because the child doesn’t need to pedal they can focus on balancing and steering the bike which help to build confidence. Balance bikes offer independence, and most of the time kids can ride further and for longer than they could on a pedal bike at this age.

If you don’t have a balance bike, you can use a regular bike with the pedals taken off. You can start to raise the seat as the child becomes more comfortable. Start on a flat surface and avoid long grass. Encourage the child to start off at a walk and then as they get faster and more confident they can run and glide.

You won’t need to steady them with your hands as they can use their feet to take off and stop. You’ll know they are confident and ready to progress to a pedal bike when they can glide. Gliding is when they coast along with their feet off the ground.

4. Keep your head up and stay on the seat.
1. Use your feet to walk or glide the bike, just like you did with no pedals.

2. Get gliding and lift your feet up onto the pedals – don’t look down!

3. Push your feet down onto the pedals and keep going.

4. Squeeze brakes gently to stop and put one foot down.

Once you’ve got the hang of your balance bike, GET GOING ON YOUR PEDAL BIKE!

Find an open, flat and safe space without too many obstacles. Raise the seat for pedalling so they can still touch the ground comfortably. Once they are confident move the seat up to a more efficient pedalling position. Your child will be on the balls of their feet when seated with only a slight bend in their knees.

The hardest thing is to start pedalling from a stop so help them for a while to get started.

Encourage them to ‘pedal faster’ or ‘keep pedalling’. This will help them balance and keep momentum.

Lots of children struggle to understand that they need to keep moving the pedals forward to keep their balance. Often they back pedal which applies the brakes and they fall off. Sometimes, installing training wheels for a short time, helps with this as they put the focus back on learning to pedal to move forward.

Training wheels can be fitted to most 12” and 16” bikes. For some kids, especially if they have coordination challenges, they are a good part of the learning to ride process.

However training wheels often slow down learning the skill of balance. If you do use training wheels, they should be set off the ground and ensure the rear wheel brake works properly.
The next step is to get going from a stand still.

1. Put one foot on the pedal and one foot on the ground
2. Make sure the pedal is in this position
3. Push down hard with your lead foot and off your go!

If the child needs a bit of help, support them lightly on the back or the bike seat. Don’t grab the handlebars as this will interfere with their balance. Encourage your child to push down really hard with their pedal foot as this will give them momentum to get the bike moving.

CYCLING GAMES

Braking game – Pick a crack or line in the concrete and the aim is to stop exactly on the line.

Slow Race – Mark out a section and ride through it as slow as possible. Keep your feet on the pedals and the bike going straight. Last one to the end is the winner.

Zig Zag Course – Set up obstacles like cones in a straight line spread about a metre apart. The challenge is to weave through the course without hitting any of the cones. The obstacles can be bought closer together to make it harder as the game progresses.

Create an obstacle course – Use chalk and cones to create a path, ride under a pool noodle arch, ride through a lawn sprinkler or hose.

Pop the Bubble – Set out a large area and blow bubbles into it. Riders try and pop as many as they can using their arms, feet and bike.
Once your child has learnt to ride by themselves, they still need support. Local schools and playgrounds offer safe environments for your child to continue practising and improving their bike handling skills. It is good to get them practising how to ride at different speeds, coasting, stopping on a given target such as a line on the ground and slowing down without having to put their foot down.

**RIDING ON SHARED PATHS**

Once they have mastered these skills, you can move to riding on shared paths. When riding on a shared path, stay left and ride at a controlled speed.

On shared paths you will come across other users such as walkers, strollers and dogs. It’s important to give way to others, which is why they are low-speed environments.

Before you take your child out into a shared path or footpath, ensure that they are comfortable on the bike and no longer wobble as they ride. They need to listen and be able to control their speed. They also need to stop when required and be aware of their surrounding, including looking down driveways.

Another useful skill is to look back, which allows the rider to glance behind them whilst maintaining a nice straight line.
STAND & WATCH

Avondale Central Reserve
Greville Reserve, Forrest Hill
Sir Barry Curtis Park, Flat Bush
Onepoto Reserve

RIDE AS A FAMILY

Waterview Shared Path
Twin Streams, Henderson
Keith Hay Park
Westhaven Boardwalk
Pakuranga Rotary Path
Mangere Bridge to Ambury Farm
Orewa Cycleway

SKILLS PRACTICE

Grey Lynn Pump Track
Birkenhead Pump Track
Sanders Reserve, Paremoremo
Totara Park Mountain Bike Track, Manukau

Local and school playgrounds are a good place to practice skills.

GET EXPLORING

When riding as one adult with children, our suggestion would be for the child to ride at the front of the group. This allows the adult behind them to continually talk to the child about what is coming up, what they should be looking out for and where they should stop. Riding with the child in front does require trust of their skills and listening ability but it does allow the adult to be able to continually watch them.

Riding with the child behind the adult means the child may easily unintentionally get left behind or they could become distracted without the adult realising. This requires the adult to be continually look behind them but it does prevent the child from taking off down the path.

If riding with multiple adults, then having one at the front and back of the group is ideal.
Auckland now has lots of great places for bike riding and many of these are well suited for children and families. Lots of shared paths now connect and offer many kilometres of bike riding fun around local areas and link up communities.
Bike riding is great for kids. It’s fun, builds confidence and coordination and is great exercise. Bike riding is an awesome family pastime and something kids can do with friends for fun, or for travel to school and around the neighbourhood.

This booklet is a step by step guide for getting kids riding. Once they have learnt to ride, there are many places around Auckland for fun family rides where the kids can build confidence and burn off some energy.

Find out more at AT.govt.nz/cycling
Follow us on Facebook and share your cycling adventures at #AKLBikeLife

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