

## Bike skills

*Learning to ride a bike is a complex skill that requires many different aspects of motor function to work together. Lots of children find it difficult to ride a bike; the following stages of learning bike riding will allow you to help progress your child to being independent with their bike. It's important to start at the beginning with balance before progressing onto learning pedalling.*

**Start with no stabilisers and pedals off the bike- place the pedals back on once your child can successfully scoot. Never go back to stabilisers once your child has learnt to balance independently.**



**Helmet-** Practice fastening the buckle before putting helmet on. Start with longer strap initially to avoid catching the skin (but tighten this before cycling). Use of a mirror may help to locate the buckle if this is hard when wearing the helmet.

**Push bike along-** Start at this stage to gain basic skills of balancing with a bike, make sure the pedals are off. Pushing the bike is important in terms of safety for crossing roads. Children sometimes stand and walk too close to the bike and fall into it or stand too far away and lean the bike towards them- give hints to stand at an appropriate distance. Emphasise the need to look around and listen for safety.

**Push bike around a corner-** 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.



**Stop bike with brakes-** It is important in terms of safety to learn how to use the brakes before learning how to ride. Play musical brakes- ask your child to walk in a circle with their bike, say 'stop' and make sure your child brakes with two hands.

**Getting on and off -** Practice getting on and off the bike from the left side holding both handlebars. Always hold onto the brakes so the bike is steady. Make sure your child takes their right leg over the back wheel, to end up standing on the left hand side.



**Scooting along-** This enables children to learn how to balance on a bike. Make sure your child is sitting with their weight on their seat and their feet are at tiptoes to the floor. Start with walking along and then practice scooting with lifting two feet off the floor together. Count how many seconds your child can keep their feet off the floor for.

**At this point you need to place your child's pedals back on their bike**

**Getting ready-** Show your child how to prepare their pedals to a 1 o' clock position with their dominant foot whilst leaning on their other leg. Ask your child to put their foot ready on the pedal and see if they can keep balanced. Hold the front of your child's bike and keep the bike steady, ask your child to look at you and practice jumping the foot they are leaning on onto the second pedal. Practice on and off until your child can do this quickly and without looking.

**Pushing off-** Once your child can jump their feet practice pushing with their dominant leg and jumping their second foot onto the pedal. Stay at the front of your child's bike to help them practice and allow the bike to move forward as your child pushes their pedals.

**Peddalling with support-** Learning to pedal will take time and practice. The most important thing to remember is to hold onto your child by the back of their top or a handling belt rather than holding onto the bike. Always holding onto your child helps them to continue practicing maintaining their balance on the bike. If you hold the bike they are likely to lean on you. Emphasise to your child that their bike will go where they look- encourage them to look straight ahead and not at their feet.

**Peddalling with little support-** When your child becomes confident at pedalling with support start off by holding them and helping push them as they push off. Once they are pedalling and appear to be balanced try loosening your grip and then letting go for short periods of time.

**Becoming independent-** Play the musical brakes game to encourage your child to use their brakes independently. As your child is becoming independent help them practice going in a straight line down a slight decline to make it easier. Once they can easily go in a straight line add obstacles to practice turning corners.

