



**WISCONSIN  
BIKE FED**



# **Youth Bicycle Safety:** *What Every Caregiver Should Know*

Riding a bicycle is fun, healthy, and gives children independent transportation opportunities. Bicycling is a generally safe activity, but there is important information to understand for both kids and caregivers. Small mistakes can lead to larger consequences and children need guidance and support to learn and develop new skills.

People driving need to be aware of their surroundings, especially when in areas children may be biking. Discussing and practicing safe biking skills can help the child in your life avoid many dangers. While crashes with people driving cars can be more severe, many crashes on a bike occur that do not involve a driver. Helping children to learn to avoid crashes will provide them lifelong skills to enjoy and benefit from riding a bicycle.

# WHERE TO RIDE

Bicycles are legal and intended users of the road. According to Wisconsin state statutes “Bicycle” means every vehicle propelled by feet or hands acting upon pedals or cranks and having wheels any 2 of which are not less than 14 inches in diameter.

Obey all traffic signs and signals.

Young children under 10 generally do not possess the developmental skills to ride in the street. Until the child can demonstrate proper safety skills and awareness, sidewalk riding may be the safest option. According to Wisconsin state statute, adult caregivers may ride along with them where local municipalities permit. The adult may also ride in the roadway adjacent to the child on the sidewalk when adult sidewalk riding is not permitted. When operating a bicycle on a sidewalk both adult and child must give an audible signal when passing and yield the right-of-way to people walking or using assistive mobility devices. For the legal status of riding on the sidewalk in your community refer to your local municipal ordinance.

Children should be extra aware of crossing at driveways and alleys. Stop at the curb. Look around. Cross when safe and clear.

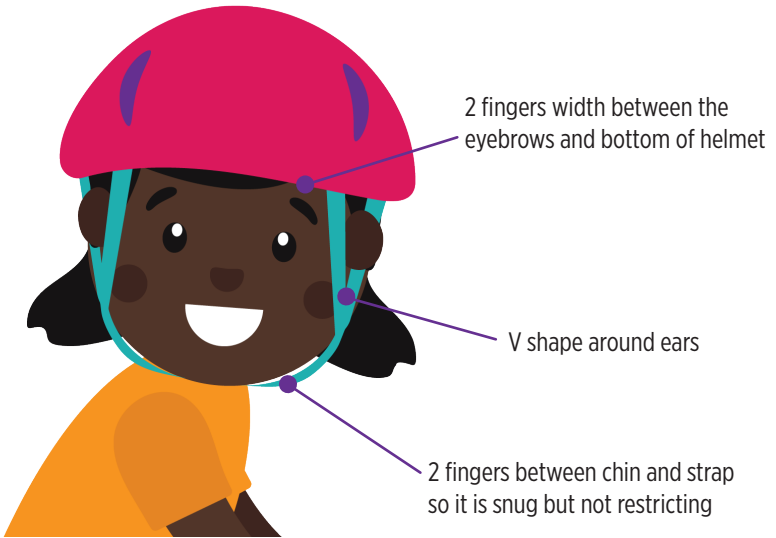
Caregivers should practice this skill with the child until they can proceed safely. Adult drivers need to go slow and be aware when exiting and entering or crossing sidewalks or paths.



# HELMETS & LEARN TO RIDE

Helmets reduce the risk of major injury should a fall or crash occur. They do not prevent crashes. It is recommended to wear one on every ride. Pick one out with your child. There are many colors and styles and if kids like the look they are more likely to wear it. Wear one yourself and be a positive “Roll Model”.

## Helmet Fit Tips



## Learn to Ride

Bike Fed highly recommends the balance bike method for learning to ride. Each child develops on their own timeline. Practice and patience are key for both caregiver and child. There are specially made balance bikes or you can remove pedals from a bike you already have access to. When seated on a bike, the child’s feet should be flat on the ground with their knees slightly bent. Watch this video for more information:



# FITTING A CHILD FOR A BIKE

Children grow quickly! Nowadays there are many styles of bikes that are made to fit young bodies. A proper fit helps the child control the bike, stop effectively, and avoid falls all while enjoying riding even more. If you have any questions consult your local bike shop staff.

## 1. Find the Right Wheel Size

**Measure Inseam and Standing Clearance:** Have your child stand with their back against a wall and measure the distance from their crotch to the floor.

**Straddle the Bike:** Have the child stand over the bike with both feet flat on the ground.

**Clearance:** There should be 1-2 inches of clearance between their crotch and the top tube of the bike.

**Use a Size Chart:** Use their inseam measurement and height to find the correct wheel size.

**12" wheel:** typically for ages 2-4 with an inseam of 14-17 inches.

**16" wheel:** generally for ages 3-6 with an inseam of 18-22 inches.

**20" wheel:** suited for ages 5-9 with an inseam of 22-25 inches.

**24" wheel:** fits children ages 6-12 with an inseam of 24-28 inches.

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## 2. Check for Proper Seat Height

**For Pedal Bikes:** At the bottom of a pedal stroke, the child's knee should have a slight bend. If their legs are fully extended, the seat is too high.

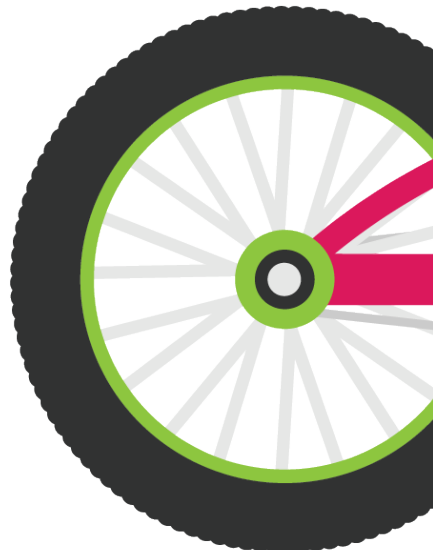
**Minimum Insertion Mark:** Ensure the seat post is not extended beyond this mark for safety.

## 3. Test Handlebar Reach

When sitting on the seat, the child's arms should have a slight bend at the elbows to reach the handlebars comfortably. If their arms are fully extended, the bike is likely too big.

## 4. Do a Test Ride

**Confidence and Control:** A test ride is the best way to ensure the bike fits well and the child feels comfortable and confident.





## E-BIKE ALERT

Bike Fed does not suggest young children ride e-bikes. Wisconsin law states that you must be over 16 to ride and operate a Class 3 (28mph max) e-bike. E-bikes are heavy and go faster than acoustic bikes, potentially causing a dangerous situation for the rider or other road users. Children must have an opportunity to learn on a self powered bike while they develop skills and experience riding in a variety of settings establishing a strong bike-body connection. Lower powered e-assist bikes may be good for some older youth. If your child has access to an e-bike make sure that they are not making modifications to it; hacking an e-bike may increase speed and impact braking controls as well as making it illegal to operate.

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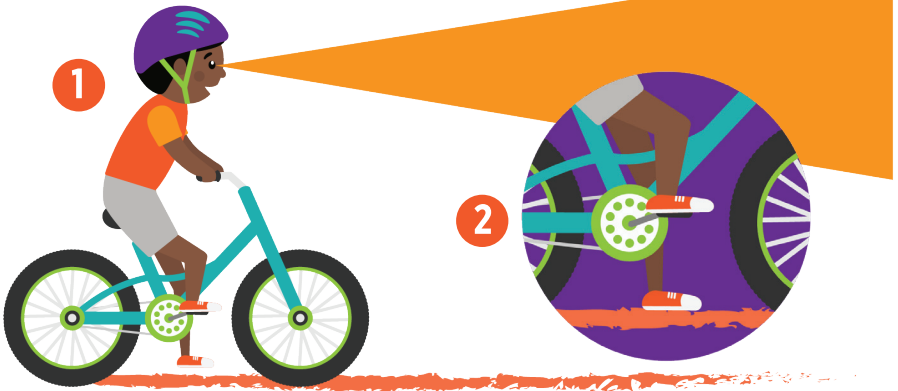
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# RIDING SKILLS

**Straight Line Riding:** Take the child to a safe and open paved area to practice. Find a straight line on the pavement or tape/chalk one out. Have the child practice riding on the line without veering off.

**TIP #1:** Look ahead, not down at the wheel or ground.

**TIP #2:** Pedal Power Positions: To start from a stand still position, put one foot up at 2 o'clock and one foot on the ground.



**Stopping and Speed Control:** Using the same open space, have the child practice riding and stopping. Stop pedaling. Slowly apply brakes. Right hand is the back brake. Left hand is the front brake.

**TIP #1:** Put a piece of colored tape on the back brake lever to identify it. Pull both gradually at first, then harder to apply a more forceful stop. Try this drill at different speeds. Try to apply brakes at the same line on the ground each time and place a chalk line at the point the bike stopped at different speeds to see how speed and amount of brake pull affects the stopping distance.

**TIP #2:** When riding downhill gently pull brakes often to control speed.

**TIP #3:** Tire skidding is dangerous. It wears out tires and causes loss of control. Practice braking without skidding.

**Looking Back/Scanning:** Have the child ride the same straight line path. Stand 3 feet left of the line and as they get 50 feet away shout “LOOK” as you hold up 1 or 2 arms in the air. While riding they will look back over their left shoulder and report the number of arms held up. You know they have passed the skill when they can look back, identify the number of arms held up, and correctly report to you the arms count all while staying straight along the line they were riding on.

# PREDICTABLE & VISIBLE

**Be Predictable:** Use your Signals! Communication with other road users can help keep everyone safe.

RIGHT



RIGHT



LEFT



STOP



## Be Visible:

Most bicycle crashes with motor vehicles occur close to sunset times. Sun angles, the amount of cars on the road, and other factors affect this trend. If riding in low light situations, ensure the child has functioning front and rear lights on their bike. Adding reflective ankle bands, pedal reflectors, or bright or reflective clothing increases their visibility and reduces the chances of being hit by a driver.



Rainy, wet, cold, and windy weather all have an impact on visibility, stopping distances, and ability to control all vehicles. Discuss with the child a plan of what to do if they encounter unplanned poor weather or must ride somewhere in poor weather. Being prepared and having proper clothing, shoes, lights, fenders, etc. can allow for all weather riding.

**Bike Fed Skill  
Development Videos**



**Bike Fed Bike Rodeo  
Training Videos**



**Walk/Bike To  
School Day**



**Safe Routes to School  
National Partnership**



**Traffic Gardens**



**League of American Bicyclists**



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