

Which equipment does my child need to be safer while cycling?

Which equipment does my child need to stay safe while cycling?

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As well as having the right bike, children also need or can have different equipment which can keep them safe or enhance their cycling experience. This factsheet sets out the different equipment your child should have or can have. Please note: any reputable bike shop should stock all of the equipment mentioned within this factsheet.

Bike helmets

Wearing a helmet when out cycling on the roads is incredibly important. RoSPA would encourage all parents to ensure that their children are wearing a helmet when cycling. The helmet must fit the child's head properly. To ensure that the helmet fits, a parent or carer should measure the circumference of the head a couple of centimetres above the eyebrows. The measurement in centimetres will give you the appropriate measurement for the bike helmet.

The helmet should be a snug fit under the chin, with the straps on both sides forming a V-shape under the ears. If the helmet is not worn correctly it won't be effective. If the helmet is too loose or tight, it can be adjusted in different ways, including a dial on the back (which some helmets may have) as well as using the adjustment straps on the sides.

There are different types of helmet for different types of cycling your child is doing. Mountain biking helmets will have additional protection for the back of the head, and there are even helmets which are light versions of motorbike helmets for this type of cycling. Road bike helmets will tend to have more ventilation to help cyclists cool down. In addition, some helmets will come with a visor, which can protect eyes from the sun as well as from branches when off-road cycling. Helmets can also double up for other activities, such as skating or skateboarding, and may also provide more protection for the back of the head. Even though there are different styles available, the most important thing is that the helmet fits well and is comfortable for the child to wear.

Reflectors and bike lights

Even though your child may not be riding their bike at night, RoSPA would still recommend ensuring that your child's bike has front and rear reflectors and lights. It is a requirement of the Highway Code lights and rear reflectors. During winter it can get dark by 4pm, so there is always a chance that it could be dark enough for your child to need them.

Hi-vis clothing

Similar to having bike lights, wearing hi-vis or fluorescent clothes will help any child be seen when they are on the road. Fluorescent clothing is much more effective in daytime in helping cyclists to be seen, including children, but much less effective in poor light and the dark than Hi-vis clothing. Rule 59 of the Highway Code states that cyclists should 'wear light-coloured or fluorescent clothing which helps other road users to see

accidents don't have to happen

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them in daylight and poor light. To help keep children safe, RoSPA would recommend fluorescent clothing for day cycling and hi-vis for evening and night cycling for children.

Gloves

Wearing gloves is an option to help with cycling. They are great to help with comfort in colder and wet weather, providing additional layers and grip, respectively. Gloves for kids when cycling in winter are recommended, so that children are able to control their bikes with better grip

Bike clips

Bike clips are a simple and cheap option to stop trouser legs getting caught in the bike chain or get oil on them, and are particularly helpful where children are cycling in school uniform and there is no chain guard on their bike. Some clips are covered in fluorescent or hi viz providing an additional way to be seen by vehicle drivers on the road, in low light.

Bike cleats

Some children may be using road or race bikes with clip on mounts, known as cleats. These require a twist of the foot to decouple the foot from the pedal. Using cleats is only recommended after children have had some practice at clipping-in to the pedal and clipping out, so that children do not injure themselves when stopping their bike. Using cleats is a much more efficient way of cycling as the force applied by the foot is used much more effectively than simple pedalling, as well as providing a better grip, which is more useful when cycling in wet weather. It is unlikely children would use cleats unless they are on a cycling holiday or racing bikes, which may be from the age of 9 or 10.

Panniers

Panniers are a great option for carrying equipment and possessions with you on your bike, using panniers requires a pannier bar mounted over the rear wheel, with pannier bags clipped onto one side and/or the other. Using panniers means not having to carry a backpack on your back. They could be used for the school journey or for leisure trips such as cycling holidays.