

Which bike is right for my child?

Which bike is right for my child?

February 2023

Picking the right bike for your child is important, as this will ensure that the child is safer and more comfortable when riding. If you are picking a bike that you want them to have for a longer time, it is possible to pick a larger wheel size, as long as the saddle is lowered, so that the child's feet can touch the floor, allowing the child control of the bike if they are stopped, and also providing a more comfortable experience when pedalling. Also the type of bike will also have an effect. Your child may prefer a BMX or as a teenager a hybrid/road bike if they are travelling on the road. Your pre-school child may need a balance bike to help them prepare for riding a proper bike when they're older. Information on choosing the right size and type of bike can be found below.

Choosing the right size of bike

Children may start riding a bike from 18 months (a balance bike) with the average age between 3 and 8 years old for a normal bike with pedals. Once a child reaches 1.5m in height/11 years old they are likely to be able to cycle comfortably using standard bike wheels (26 - 29" in size). From this age or height, frame size becomes more important, and create a better cycling experience. Height can also be adjusted by using the saddle, which is important to provide comfort and control, while stationary, for cyclists who find themselves between set wheel and frame sizes. Below is a table advising size of frame and wheel by age and height, as a guide for knowing which bike size will be the right one for your child. Also, remember that if a child is excited by a bike that they are more likely to ride it. And that choosing a bike that you hope a child can grow into is a mistake. A bike must fit the child for it to be safe and usable.

NB: Bike wheels and frame sizes are usually measured in inches in the UK, whereas children's height is shown here in centimetres.

Child's height	Age	Wheel size (in inches) and frames (age 11+)	Frame size (where relevant)
88 - 97cm	Up to 3 years old (first bike)	9" - 10" Bikes + Balance Bikes	
98 - 104cm	<u>3 - 5</u> years old	10" - 12" Bikes	

Which bike is right for my child?

105 - 111cm	<u>4 - 6</u> years old	12" - 14" Bikes	
112 - 116cm	<u>5 - 7</u> years old	14" - 16" Bikes	
117 - 126cm	<u>6 - 9</u> years old	16" - 20" Bikes	
127 - 135cm	<u>8 - 11</u> years old	20" - 24" Bikes	
136 - 144cm	<u>9 - 12</u> years old	24" - 26" Bikes	
148 - 154cm	11 - 12 years old	Standard size -26"	14" frame
154 - 174cm	13 - 15 years old	Standard size -26" - 29"	14" or 17" frame
160 - 178cm	16+ years old	Standard size -26" - 29"	17" frame

Choosing the right type of bike

There are a number of different types of bike that children can use, some are dependent on their abilities and age. Picking the right bike is very important and could be the difference between a child being safe or a child wanting to use the bike. The different types are outlined in the table below:

Type of Bike	Age	Characteristics	Additional information
Balance Bike	1 - 4 years old	Bike with no pedals - cyclists use their feet to move the bike along. Bike will include handlebar and saddle, and sometimes a back brake	Allows young cyclists to develop balance skills before moving onto bikes with pedals
Pedal bike for new cyclists	3 - 6 years old	Bike will have pedals, brakes and handlebars. Small sized for use by young children (up to 14" wheels). This bike may have a chainguard to reduce risk of oil getting on clothes	These bikes are the often the first pedal bike for children. They don't come with gears to allow children to focus on cycling
BMX bike	Aged 4+	BMX bikes are bikes that have been created to allow tricks and stunts. These bikes are single speed and low	These bikes are great for practising manoeuvres and can help develop children's coordination as they continue to learn cycling

Which bike is right for my child?

		maintenance, which makes them great for kids	
Hybrid bikes	Aged 6+	Halfway between a mountain and a road bike, allowing use in different terrains, such as paths and carriageways. These bikes come with gears to allow easier uphill cycling for all journeys	Useful as an all purpose bike for children and adults. These bikes tend to be more comfortable to ride than road bikes, and are great for the school run and for leisure trips that are not too challenging
Road Bikes	Aged 6+	These bikes come with drop handlebars, quick shift gears, and thinner wheels and are lighter, allowing a more efficient ride on roads.	Great for those aspiring to join their own Tour de France and cycle long distances. These bikes are more streamlined and lighter meaning that you can go faster and further on-road.
Mountain Bikes	Aged 8+	Bikes that allow more challenging off-road cycling and are more robust (wider and better gripping wheels, better suspension)	These bikes are heavier than road bikes and can take a lot more punishment than the hybrid or the road bikes. You can take a mountain bike on a steep trail, where you wouldn't take a hybrid or road bike