

CYCLING WITH CHILDREN

Learning to ride for school and leisure



WHO WE ARE

The London Cycling Campaign is a volunteer-led, community based organisation working to make London a world-class cycling city. Since 1978, we've been improving facilities, providing information and raising the profile of cycling across London. With over 10,000 members, we are the largest urban cycling organisation in the world.

WHAT WE DO

We bring about real improvements for cyclists in London. Among our key campaigning issues are better conditions for cycling in London, increased provision of cycle parking, and more cycle training in schools and communities. See www.lcc.org.uk/campaigns for more information.

Our **local groups** are made up of LCC members who campaign on a borough level, as well as organising rides and events and providing expert advice to local authorities on routes and facilities.

The **Community Cycling Fund for London (in which LCC is a partner)** allows community groups to apply for up to £5,000 for cycling projects that will

encourage, support and promote cycling in their community: see www.lcc.org.uk/community for more information.

Our **free public enquiry line** staffed by cyclists, comprehensive website and information leaflets on everything from bike maintenance to cycling with children means new and experienced cyclists alike have access to useful advice.

We help people start and keep cycling through our membership package which includes free third party insurance, discounts in over 90 bike shops across London, free delivery of our bi-monthly magazine *London Cyclist* and more. Join today: www.lcc.org.uk/join

London Cycling Campaign is a registered charitable company.
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This leaflet provides information on how to cycle with your kids, whether they're of an age to be carried on your bike or to cycle independently. You can find out how to get cycle training and ways to encourage your school to be more cycle-friendly, as well as read about schools which have implemented cycling projects to get their kids on bikes.

By teaching your children to cycle they'll not only be healthier, but by showing them there's an alternative to cars and public transport you'll be cutting carbon emissions in the future as well. Climate change is already having an effect on our lives, and cycling is the perfect way to do something about it.



Debbie Humphrey

EQUIPMENT

Using a bike is a practical, economical and environmentally friendly way to travel with children. Whether you're looking for the fun of a family ride, or an alternative way of getting the kids to school, cycling helps you to teach your children to be healthier, happier, more confident and independent.

Trailers

child trailers as a legal requirement of sale in the UK. Trailers may be CE marked but this is not currently a requirement. Remember that if you are using the trailer at night, it must have its own rear red light or lights.

Most trailers are designed for one or two children. Maximum capacity for a two seater trailer is usually two children up to about six years old, though this will be hard work up hills.

The trailer you choose will connect to your bike using a hitch. Hitches vary, and can mount to the seat post, bike rack, axle or frame, so you'll need to work out which hitch fits your bike. Beware of heavy steel frames – alloy frames and quality fabric that won't tear easily are best. Alternatively ask someone carrying children in a trailer for their experiences.

6 months to 6 years approx

Trailers may not be appropriate for heavy traffic in central London, but they can be great for less busy areas. They don't affect your centre of balance, and if the bike falls over, a good trailer won't. They also allow you to carry extra belongings with you, and shelter the child from weather. It's advisable to fix a tall flag to the trailer to make it easier for cars to see it.

There is no specific safety standard for

Child seat

9 months to 3 years approx

A baby should be able to hold its head up unsupported, and with a helmet on, before s/he is carried in a child seat. This is usually between 9 to 18 months; you may wish to consult your GP if you're feeling unsure. You will need to choose between a front or rear mounting child seat.

The British Standard for child seats is BS EN 14344:2004; look for a seat that conforms to this. These include seats which are designed for children between 9 and 22kg (9 months – 5 years) and seats designed for children between 9 and 15kg. Make sure your child is within the weight range of the seat you choose. These seats should all come with a good restraint system (harness) with a child-proof quick release buckle.

Front mounting seats make setting off easier than rear mounting seats, as you can get on the bike and then lift the child up, rather than having to hold the bike and the weight of the child upright as you climb on. They also make conversation with the child easier and increase awareness of the environment and the cycling experience. However, front mounting seats can reduce the bicycle's manoeuvrability and can affect steering and balance, and the child may be thrown forwards when the rider brakes. If you do choose a front-mounting seat, make sure it fits between the rider and the handlebars rather than in front of the handlebars.

Always make sure the seat is suitable for use with your type of bicycle before buying it, and if the seat is designed to be mounted on a carrier, make sure that the carrier can take the weight of the seat and the child. If you are unsure about mounting the seat yourself, ask your cycle dealer about seat fitting. When your child is in the seat, always make sure the harness is fastened, and every time you use the seat check that the fastenings are all tight, yet comfortable.

If you've never ridden with a child on board before, practise riding off-road or on quiet roads to get used to the effect the extra load has on steering and stopping. The seat should have a footguard or rest to prevent feet from getting caught in the spokes, and make sure hands can't get caught in any parts. Make sure to take care when getting on and off the bike. Pay particular attention to supporting the cycle when you are not riding it but while your child is still in the bike seat: the weight of a child can unbalance the bike and cause it to fall.





Trailer cycles and tandems

Trailer cycles, also known as 'Rann trailers' after the Mr Rann who invented them in the 1930s, are 'half bikes' which attach to the back of another bicycle. They can be useful space-savers, as well as encouraging your child to learn to pedal while not requiring them to if they get tired. However, they aren't as stable as tandems and it's recommended that the rider on the trailer cycle is less than half the weight (maximum two thirds) of the leader.

Trailer cycles will usually hitch either to the seatpost, which can cause the trailer to cut corners, or to a rear rack. It's also possible to get trailer cycles with two parallel wheels, making them more stable than conventional models; and tandem trailer cycles.

Conventional tandems are great for family cycling, and a standard tandem can be adapted for use by a child by fitting "kiddiebars" to extend the handlebars, a small saddle and adding some "Kiddie cranks" or the simpler "crank adaptors". "Kiddie cranks" are a small set of cranks and pedals which fit onto the tandems rear seat tube and are linked by a chain to a freewheel sprocket at the bottom bracket which allows the child to pedal. "Crank adaptors" simply fit onto existing cranks to shorten the length needed to reach to pedal: they can easily be removed when your child grows taller. A good bike shop should stock these and be able to help you fit them. You can also buy tandems which are specially sized to fit children. By adding a child trailer to your tandem you will be able to carry all ages for family excursions, or on the school run.

As with child trailers you will need to be aware that your bike is longer than normal and will manoeuvre differently. Having a flag at the end of the bike will alert others that your cycle is longer than normal. Indeed anything that will increase your visibility is a good thing, such as wearing bright or reflective clothing.

Child-carrying tricycles

Some child-carrying tricycles come with seats on the back, which are a good means of carrying children without the traditional problems associated with mounting and dismounting the bike. However, these tricycles can be very wide and are not suitable for using on busy roads, and some come without harnesses and may not be suitable for younger children. Other tricycles will have a large box on the front, such as the Christiana trike.

It's also possible to buy four wheeled sheltered pedal cars but these require investment.



Kids' bikes

At some point your child will be ready for their own bike – usually from 4 years upwards. This might be a tricycle, a bicycle with stabilizers or a bicycle without. Many parents now opt for first bikes that have no pedals (like the PUKY or a wooden one), but simply allow the child to scoot along learning the technique of balance. It is then easier for the child to progress to a bike with pedals but without stabilisers. First bikes with pedals will usually have 12 inch wheels and are suitable for 3 to 5 year olds, but a larger child of this age may benefit from 14" wheels.

Getting the right size is essential – a bike shouldn't be thought of as something that your child can grow into. A bike that is too



big will be hard for them to control and they may not be able to dismount safely. Similarly, it's important to replace the bike once the child has grown out of it, as riding a cramped bike can be very uncomfortable and cause knee pain.

The child should be able to stand astride the bike with both feet on the ground and be able to touch the ground with the toes of one foot when sitting on the seat. As with any bike, you should make sure it's in good working order and fitted with reflectors.

Kids' gear

If you choose to buy a helmet for your child, it's important to make sure they understand that helmets do not make them invulnerable, do not prevent collisions and are only designed to withstand low speed impacts. Your child is likely to grow out of the helmet, so make sure it fits well every time the child uses it. Only buy a helmet if it carries a CE mark and a recognised safety

standard such as BS EN 1078, ANSI Z90-4, or SNELL AS 2063. If you choose to use a helmet for your child, please ensure it is fitted correctly!

When the child is learning to ride, it's a good idea to get them to wear long sleeves and trousers to protect them while they learn to balance and gain confidence. Make sure they are warmly dressed in winter (especially if they are not riding themselves) and protected against the sun in summer. It's not as easy to ride in flip flops so comfortable shoes help too. It's also sensible to encourage them to wear bright colours and ideally high visibility clothing such as reflective vests and armbands.

Lionel Shapiro



LEARNING TO RIDE

Bikeability

The new standard for cycle training is the Bikeability award scheme. To get their Bikeability award, children and adults are instructed on how to ride their bikes to the Government-approved National Standard for Cycle Training, which sets out the training and skills essential for making cycling trips in today's conditions. This national standard means young people wanting to cycle are taught the essential procedures and skills they need to cycle safely. The standard has been developed by over 20 organisations and is maintained by the professional body for cycle training, the Cycle Training Reference Group.

Children and adults are instructed over three levels to get their Bikeability award:

Level 1 usually takes places in a traffic free environment, teaching the skills necessary to make a trip and undertake activities safely without cars, and as a pre-requisite to a road trip.

Before your child starts cycling on the road, they should have some road safety training.



Lionel Shapiro

Level 2 takes place on quiet roads, with real traffic conditions, teaching students the skills necessary to make a trip safely to school, work or leisure on quiet roads.

Level 3 is covered on busy roads incorporating real traffic conditions and advanced road features, teaching the skills necessary to make a trip safely to school, work or leisure on busy roads using complex junctions and road features.

If you want to arrange cycle training for your child or child's school, first contact your local council's cycling officer. Cycle training is often funded by the local authority for schools in the area and it may be possible for you to arrange individual training from this funding. Cycle training organisations such as Cycle Training UK will usually provide training for schools. Cycle training can now be taught as part of physical education lessons.

You can find a list of cycle training contacts in each borough at www.tfl.gov.uk.

Funding

Current local authority provision for cycle training provides lessons for around a third of school children during years 5 and 6, mainly coming from road safety budgets but also supported by additional funds from grants, health budgets, schools budgets and other sources. Additional funding from the Department of Transport may also be available: contact your local authority for more information, or see www.bikeability.org.uk.

CYCLING TO SCHOOL

Studies have shown that the heavy traffic around schools when parents are dropping off and collecting children makes them especially dangerous for all students, including those being delivered by car. By leaving the car at home you will help improve the safety of roads around schools, as well as reducing traffic congestion and pollution.

School travel plans

Increasingly schools are promoting cycling for children over 9 years old according to the Government's 'Travelling to school' action plan. By cycling to school, children and parents are taking daily exercise. This has both immediate benefits, as children will



be more alert for the day ahead, and long term benefits as both parents and children become healthier. Whilst cycling to and from school children are able to socialise with other children who live locally and form connections within their community.



Bike buses

Bike buses are an excellent way for children to start cycling to school. These are normally organised by schools together with parents. A bike bus is simply a group of children cycling to and from school supervised by parents. They will follow an agreed quiet route and collect and drop children off at a regular time each day, preferably with a number of parents sharing the duty over the week. By cycling in larger groups, children are safer as they are more visible on the road. It is still important that some training in road safety should be given to all children before they start cycling on the roads. If you are interested in starting a bike bus you should contact your child's school and other parents who are interested in encouraging their children to cycle to school.

Finding a route

Whether there is a bike bus for your child to join, you will be cycling with them, or they are at an age where they can cycle on their own, it is a good idea to find a quiet route to travel on. This may include back streets, be through parks or on cycle paths. A quiet, slightly longer route will be much more enjoyable and safer than a short busy route.

The comprehensive series of London Cycle Guides devised by LCC and Transport for London show both quiet and off-road cycle routes, and can be ordered via www.lcc.org.uk, www.tfl.gov.uk or by calling 020 722 1234.



Adrian Lewis

MAKING
YOUR
SCHOOL
BETTER FOR
CYCLING

Many children would like to cycle to school, but are worried about safety, or that their school lacks secure parking. By taking steps to encourage your child's school to become more cycle-friendly, you can make real changes that will help get kids on their bikes.

Setting up a school travel plan and action group

Many local authorities and schools will already have safe routes to schools which have been developed as part of travel plans. Travel plans aim to reduce car use and improve safety on the school journey. If your local authority does not have a safe routes to school travel plan, it is still worth getting in contact with them if you have particular suggestions. You may wish to point out a particularly dangerous junction or suggest they impose lower speed limits on particular residential streets. You may also wish to become a member of LCC and become involved with your local group who will be campaigning on local cycling issues.

For further information on Safe Routes to Schools, travel plans and creating improved cycle provision for the school journey, visit www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk or call 0117 915 0100.

Mayor's School Cycle Parking Programme

Schools are eligible to receive cycle parking through the Mayor's Programme if they have an approved travel plan which demonstrates the need for cycle parking. Contact your local School Travel Advisor for more information and guidance on setting up a travel plan: your council should be able to advise you.



Classroom activities

Cycle training is not currently part of the National Curriculum, but under the Government's 'Travelling to school' action plan teachers are encouraged to use geography, personal, social and health education and other lessons to explain the benefits of sustainable travel including cycling. If your school is actively trying to promote cycling, speak to staff about whether cycling is covered in any of these lessons.

After-school club

If a lot of kids in your area want to cycle, you may consider setting up a club where they can learn basic road skills and maintenance. You may be eligible for a grant to take this further: see www.lcc.org.uk/community for more information.

Case Study

Sir Thomas Abney Primary School (STA bikes)

Sir Thomas Abney primary school in Hackney has been running a project to increase cycling among pupils, parents and teachers through a programme of cycle training.

Starting with the reception class of keen four-and-a-half-year olds, STA Bikes offers a progressive programme of cycle training across ability groups, rather than lumping all children together in year groups. Cycle training has proved so popular that projects have spread to numerous other Hackney primary schools.

There is now a federation of Hackney schools who provide cycle training, comprising eleven other primary schools which are joining or aspiring to join the scheme. Four of these schools recently won a combined £40,000 from the Department for Transport's Cycle Projects Fund, a success unparalleled anywhere in the country.

Sally Haywill, one of the parents who helped organise the project wrote "Last year a total of 80 children were trained, and 15 parents or members of staff, including the Headteacher, and several complete beginners parents. Three years ago not one child cycled to school. Now the cycle racks are almost full on a daily basis; several mothers cycle with their children to school, and several families now use cycling as their primary mode of transport. Whereas initially cycling in school was viewed with misapprehension and fear, it is now an accepted - and indeed demanded!, part of school routine."

CONTACTS

London Cycling Campaign

Find all this information and more on our website, including a list of children's cycling products suppliers.

t: 020 7234 9310

w: www.lcc.org.uk

Sustrans

Pioneer of the 'Safe Routes to school' concept in the UK.

t: 0117 915 0100

w: www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk

Cycle Training UK

Cycle Training UK is a not-for-profit workers' co-operative promoting cycling for all.

t: 020 7231 6005

w: www.ctuk.co.uk

Islabikes

High quality lightweight children's bikes for cycling families.

t: 01746 710835

w: www.islabikes.co.uk

Helemill

Up to the minute children's activity products including wooden trainer bikes.

t: 01288 361168

w: www.helemill.com

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Free London Cyclist magazines

For all the news affecting cyclists in the city plus features, reviews, maintenance tips, great rides and offers.

Free third party insurance

Covers you for up to £2million worth of damages if you injure someone or damage their property.

Up to 10% off bike gear

You'll get great discounts at bike shops throughout London where you can save money on everything from a new bike to a puncture repair kit.

Free legal advice

If you ever find yourself involved in an accident you can call any one of our cyclist-friendly solicitors for free advice.

A world class cycling city

LCC is the only organisation campaigning and lobbying exclusively to ensure the best possible routes, facilities and services for people who cycle in London.

PLUS special deals on theft insurance, discounts on cycle maintenance training, free leisure rides, events and campaigns in and around your borough.

ABOUT THESE LEAFLETS

There are 13 information booklets in this series.

Getting started

Buying a bike

Getting started on a bicycle

Cycling for people with disabilities

Cycle Sense

Workplace

Cycling to work

A guide for employers

Parking and storage

Leisure

Leisure rides

Cycling with children

Travelling with your bicycle

Practical

Cycle maintenance

Bike security

Protection: insurance and incidents

These leaflets can be downloaded from www.lcc.org.uk/info or ordered from the LCC office by calling 020 7234 9310.

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Lionel Shapiro

Get more out of cycling in London

Join the London Cycling Campaign to save money and get all the support you need to cycle in London - from free and specialised insurance, updates on the latest cycle routes and social rides, to London Cyclist magazine, the essential read for everyone who cycles in London.

Add to this the discounts you'll get in bike shops and on cycle training and you'll see why LCC membership is as necessary to you as your pedals.

In turn your membership will help us to make your cycling safer, quicker and more pleasant around London: we are constantly lobbying and campaigning on your behalf to win real improvements that affect us all.



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cycling... good for London, good for you!