

## SO...YOUR CHILD WANTS A BIKE

That is reasonable - bikes are great fun. Most children want one. But before rushing out and buying your child a bike, ask yourself the following questions:

**Is my child old enough and mentally and physically ready to ride a bicycle in neighborhood traffic?**

A bicycle is not a toy when it is ridden in traffic. The cyclist is governed by the same traffic laws as automobile drivers.

**Do we live in an area that is not congested with vehicular traffic? Am I willing to see that my child receives proper instructions on how to safely operate a bicycle before being permitted to ride on the street?**

If your child is not ready to ride a bicycle on public streets and still wants a bicycle, consider the following:

**Are there safe places to operate a bicycle near my home - places such as empty lots, parks or bicycle paths?**

If your answer is no and your child is not old enough to ride on the street, the answer to the question of whether to buy your child a bike must also be no. You may be saving your child from serious injury or even death by taking a firm stand.

Bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product besides the Automobile. (Consumer Products Safety Commission)

630 cyclists were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2009. Cyclists 14 and under accounted for 12 percent (74) of those fatalities, and males accounted for 76 percent (56) of the fatalities among cyclists age 14 and younger. (NHTSA)

In 2009 an estimated 51,000 cyclists were injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes with 17 percent (an estimated 8,000) of them age 14 or younger. (NHTSA)

When you and your child determine that he or she is ready to have a bike, what's next? Buy the bicycle? Before you do, there are several major considerations to keep in mind.

## FIT THE BICYCLE TO THE CHILD

Typical size of bike for average child

<b>Under 6 years *</b>	.....	<b>12"-16" wheel</b>
<b>6 to 9 years *</b>	.....	<b>20" wheel</b>
<b>9 to 11 years</b>	.....	<b>24" wheel</b>
<b>12 and over</b>	.....	<b>26" or 27" wheel</b>

\*Need close supervision even on quiet neighborhood streets.

### TYPES OF BICYCLES:

Bicycles are manufactured in four basic types:

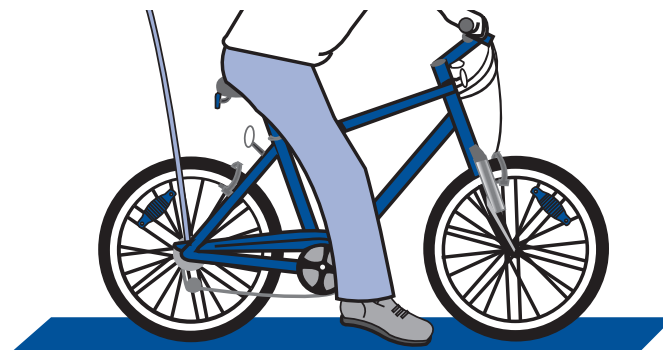
**SINGLE-SPEED MIDDLEWEIGHT** - Coaster brakes; recommended for young cyclists.

**BMX** - Modified frame, special wheels, competition handlebars and seat.

**MULTI-SPEED LIGHTWEIGHT** - For long-distance cycling, hill climbing and racing; equipped with hand brakes and requires maintenance.

**ALL-TERRAIN OR MOUNTAIN** - Sturdy, multi-speed, wide tires, upright handlebars, hand brakes and off-road capabilities.

Young children may not be ready for hand brakes. Wait until they have developed greater strength in the hands and wrists before buying a bike of this type. This may not occur until the child has reached the age of 10.

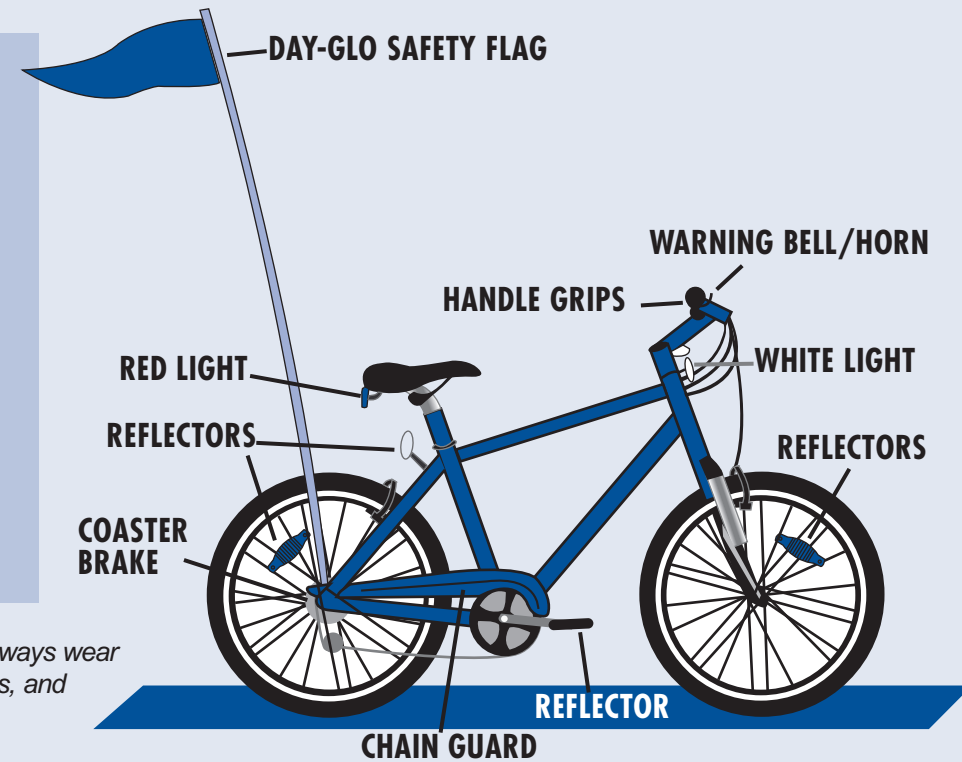


For proper fit, the child should be able to sit on the seat and balance the bicycle with both feet resting comfortably on the ground.

## BASIC SAFETY EQUIPMENT

For maximum safety, bicycles should be equipped with:

- Warning bell or horn
- Chain guard
- Coaster brake
- Reflective devices on front, sides and pedals
- Day-glo safety flag
- Front light (white)
- Rear light (red)
- Handle grips



For additional safety, riders should always wear approved helmets, use pants leg clips, and wear bright-colored or white clothing.

A bicycle that is too large or too small is dangerous and uncomfortable to ride. Avoid buying a large bicycle with the assumption that a child will grow into it. To determine the proper size bike, the cyclist should be able to sit on the seat and balance the bicycle with both feet resting comfortably on the ground. The bicycle should not lean to one side or the other. The seat may require some adjustments to accomplish this.

**If the seat is in the lowest position and the child cannot touch both feet to the ground, the bicycle is too large to be ridden safely. Parents should avoid the dangerous practice of buying a large bicycle with the assumption that the child will grow into it.**

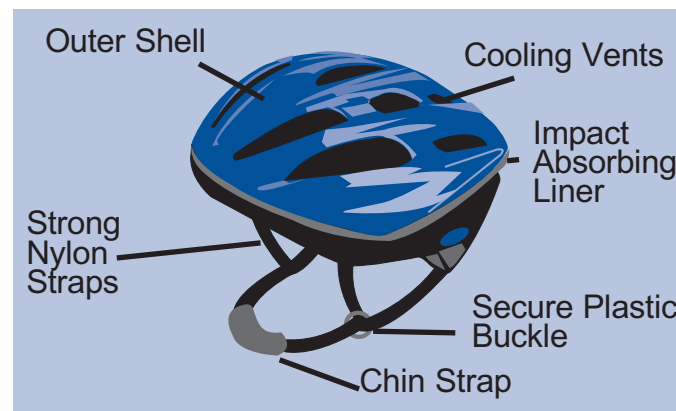


## RIDING AND SAFETY TIPS

If a bicycle must be operated after dark, make certain that it has a white light mounted in front and a red light visible in the rear. The rider also should wear retro-reflective clothing.

It is recommended that children not be allowed to ride their bikes at night. If your child is out after dark, remind him or her to walk the bike home. If possible, keep away from the street or roadway.

You now have a properly equipped bicycle fitted to an excited son or daughter... what else is needed?



To ensure your child is off to a good start, be certain that you provide your child with a bicycle helmet. Head injuries are the leading cause of death in 80 percent of bicycle crashes. Purchase a helmet that has been approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). This will be noted by a sticker inside of the helmet. Before children take off on their bikes, helmets must be fitted properly to their heads. Helmets should sit level and low on the forehead so the child can see the front of the helmet. If the helmet is slightly larger, insert the extra padding provided with the helmet. Straps should be adjusted to center the left buckle under the chin, have the side straps form a "V" shape under and slightly in front of the ears and provide a snug fit with only one or two fingers able to fit under the chin strap.

Now it is time to provide basic bicycle instructions. This should be done away from traffic. The first major task is learning to stay on the bicycle. Then come maneuvers such as starting, stopping, turning, signaling, and going

up and down hills and around curves. Braking quickly must then be mastered. Young children should demonstrate these basic maneuvers in a safe area before being allowed on public streets. It takes many hours of practice! In fact, children younger than 7 years of age need close supervision even when they are permitted to ride on quiet neighborhood streets.

Ride and work with your child until you are certain he or she is capable of riding on lightly traveled roads. During this time, emphasize the following:

- Always wear a helmet.
- Stop and check for traffic before entering the roadway.
- Ride on the right side of traffic.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Be cautious around parked cars; especially watch for opening doors!
- Use hand signals for any movement that is to be made within traffic.
- Learn vehicle rules and regulations.
- Never carry a passenger.



At last ... you've bought the bike, it's in perfect condition, the cyclist has been trained and is now capable of riding on the street. Is your job complete?

Sorry, not yet!

Riding a bicycle can be dangerous if too many risks are taken. Continue to observe your child's riding habits and, if necessary, restrict cycling. Establish limits or designate specific areas where your child is permitted to ride. Your continued supervision is always necessary.

Remember, it could mean your child's life.

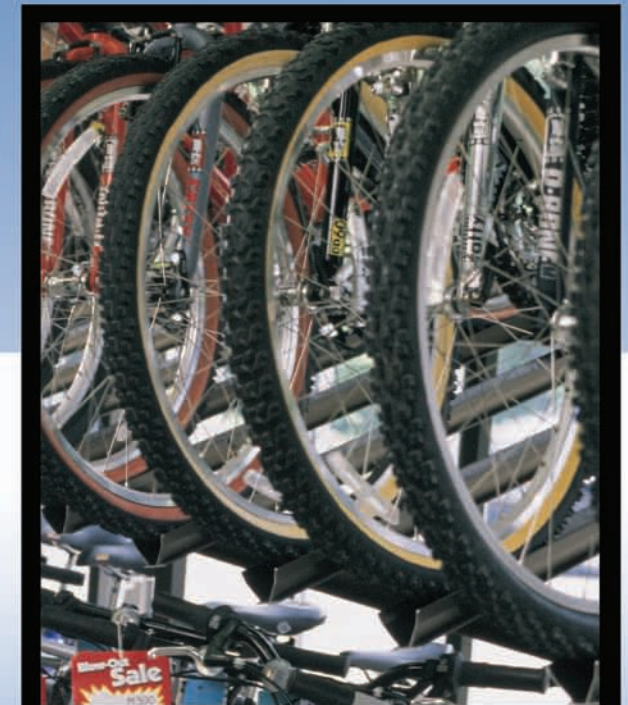
## Sharing the Road



More than a half-million collisions between motor vehicles and bicycles occur in the United States each year. Many of these incidents are the result of the motorists' failure to properly yield to bicyclists. Motorists need to increase their awareness of bicyclists when making turns and remember to look for bicyclists going straight. Checking for bicyclists riding along the edge of the traffic lane before opening car doors also is a way for motorist to help keep bicyclists safe.

Bicyclists also should watch for turning and parked motor vehicles; and clearly communicate their intentions to motorists by using proper signals. Wearing helmets, visible clothing and using bike paths when available are key factors to ensuring a safe, pleasurable biking adventure.

# Parents, BUYING YOUR



So... Your child  
wants a bike

# CHILD A BIKE?

Contact your local AAA club regarding the availability of bike safety and other traffic safety materials.



## Traffic Safety Programs

1000 AAA Drive • Heathrow, FL 32746  
www.aaapublicaffairs.com