

Biking is a fun, enjoyable activity, but it is also a complex skill that requires balance, co-ordination, and awareness of surroundings. It can be easier to practice parts of this task separately, before bringing it all together.

#### Before you start

- A small-sized children's bike. The bike must be small enough so that your child can reach the ground with the saddle adjusted all the way down.
- Child needs to be wearing a helmet.
- Make sure everything is in good working order.
- An open smooth sealed surface is the easiest ground to learn on. Grass can also be fine, but more strength and propulsion is needed to ride over this.

#### Balancing

- Push the seat all the way down so that the child can touch the ground with their feet.
- Remove both pedals
- Have your child sit on the bike and push along the ground using their feet. Once your child becomes used to this and is comfortable with the speed, get them to lift their feet off the ground. See how long they can 'glide' for before they put their feet back down.
- Alternatively a 'glider' bike can be used to practice this particular skill (a bike frame designed without pedals.)
- Find a gentle slope where your child can coast downhill at a safe speed, as this will help the child get used to the feeling of balancing the bike when it is in motion.

#### Steering

- This can be worked on at any stage, from using the 'glide' bike, bikes with training wheels, and once these have been removed.
- Place items on the ground your child has to steer around. Space them widely to begin with and decrease the distance as they become more confident.
- Follow the leader. Have them follow someone walking or riding in front of them. Switch so they lead and others follow.
- Draw a path on the ground to follow.
- Treasure Hunt. Spread items out on the ground, and have your child retrieve them and bring them back to a central point. Use a bag/basket to carry the items.
- Raising the saddle and pedaling will often improve steering, especially if the bike is small for your child.



#### Getting Going

- Hold the back of their seat while your child is riding so they are balanced. Gently push to get enough speed for your child to place their feet and start pedalling. Gradually reduce the support you give, as your child learns to push off by themselves.
- Pedalling can also be practiced with training wheels on.
- Let your child develop a *leading* foot when they push off at the start.
- Once the child is comfortable with propelling forward by pedalling, they will usually figure out very quickly how to start pedalling from a stationary position without the need for someone to hold the bike upright for them.
- Braking is important and children will start by automatically putting their feet down.
- Practice using the hand brakes at a standstill, before trying with movement.



#### Practicing

Your child will be unsteady to begin with, but with practice will improve. Keep challenging their biking skills using games, or cycling longer distances with the family.

- Play games like 'Red light, Green Light', when children have to pedal forward if 'Green light' is called and stop if 'Red light' is called.
- Have a 'slow' bike race (only done without training wheels). The winner is the last person to cross the finish line, without putting their feet on the ground.
- Road cycling requires a higher level of awareness and understanding of road rules. Schools will often have road safety classes for cyclists.
- Look on line for more advice including [www.bikewise.co.nz](http://www.bikewise.co.nz)
- Stop the bike on a target or within a marked area.



## Practice, Practice, Practice and Make it

# FUN!!

