

How to Fit a Child's Bike and Helmet for Safe Riding

Summer is here, and it can be a shock to realize how much your children have grown through the winter! Bikes are expensive, so families and child care centers often choose to buy bikes for their children that will “fit them for the next few years.”

Unfortunately, such a decision could end up being a big mistake. The hazards of riding an ill-fitting bike are loss of balance, loss of control, and consequent injury. Numerous children are injured each year when they are not able to stop, turn, or control their oversized or outgrown bikes.

Children need bikes and helmets properly fitted for their size at the start of the season. Safe bike riding involves fitting the bike, the seat, the handlebars, and the helmet.

Fit the bike. Bike seats and handlebars are designed to adjust to a certain amount of growth, not to meet the growth demands of children over numerous years. Fit your child's bike in the early spring with the bars and seat lowered, and then you are guaranteed one or perhaps two years of safe riding.

Fit the seat. A properly fitted bike should allow cyclists to stand on the balls of their feet and straddle the seat with it meeting their crotch.

- Cyclists should not be able to place both feet flat on the ground while straddling the seat. If the seat clears the crotch area, then the bike is too small. If straddling a bike in this manner forces the cyclist to lean onto one foot while the other hangs over the seat, then the bike is too big.
- The seat may be raised or lowered simply by using a wrench. Make sure it is tightened to prevent it from dropping while riding. Follow the manufacturer's directions, as many new bikes have a large clamp adjustment to ensure ease and security during fitting.

Fit the handlebars. When seated on the bike, the cyclist's back should be at a 45 degree angle to the ground. By raising or lowering the handlebars, you will quickly be able to meet this requirement to ensure control and safe riding.

Fit the helmet. Make sure the helmet has a certification sticker from organizations such as CSA, CPSC, ASTM, or Snell B90/B95.

- The helmet should be snug, sitting low on the forehead, one or two finger-widths above the eyebrow. Use the sizing pads or universal fit ring to ensure it does not wobble.
- The chin strap should be buckled and tightened so that no more than one finger can fit underneath.

“Prevention Is the Key to Safety”

Child Safe Canada
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