

BICYCLE SAFETY

Riding a bike is a fun and healthy activity that our kids can do from a young age. Up until about the age of 10, parental supervision is important to keep kids safe.

As they get more confident and their bike skills increase, the daredevil in them emerges - they may want to go faster, jump over things and take up bike activities such as mountain bike riding, with various degrees of risk.

Starting out

Kids start to ride bikes at all different ages, but experience shows that 3 to 4 years old is a good age to start – often on a balance bike (without pedals).

Mum and dad or a friend can help with a steadying hand, while encouraging them with their steering and balancing skills. With a bit of practice, it doesn't take long to gain confidence and coordination – by the time they're 5 or 6 it's time for pedals and brakes – a real bike.

Where to ride starting out

Tasmania has some great bike riding locations for beginners - shared pathways, trails and public open spaces.

This includes some purpose-built bicycle learning facilities with traffic lights, road signs and a small network of pathways for young kids to safely improve their skills and confidence (eg Wentworth Park and Tynwald Park).

Many shared pathways are wide and safe – the straighter sections with good visibility are great for beginners. And there's always the back yard.

Essential to get started:

- **Helmet** – good quality and properly fitted.
- **Bike** – well equipped and maintained.

- **Brightly coloured clothing** to increase their visibility
- **Closed-toe shoes** are the safest
- **Basic awareness** of safety and road rules.
- **Parents/friends support.** If they have bikes, also with helmet and well equipped.

Bike – types of bike and features when buying

Size of bike: The bike needs to be the right size for the child – when sitting on the bike, the toes should touch the ground on both sides. The child should feel comfortable in the riding position.

Tyres. If most riding will be on pavements, smooth tires with only a small amount of tread pattern will be ideal – and give a quiet smooth ride.

If going on dirt trails or offroad, tyres with knobbly tread will be better, but keeping in mind they are noisy and inefficient on paved surfaces.

Choosing the bike – single gear bikes such as a small BMX or similar size child's bike with a single gear are possible options. They usually have foot brakes (or coaster brakes) on the rear wheel and rim brakes on the front wheel.

Essential safety equipment includes a bell (or horn) and reflectors.



Second-Hand Bikes

If buying a **second-hand bike**, there are a number of things that need checking:

- That the **brakes** work properly and are adjusted.
- The **tyres are in good condition** – no bald spots, cracks due to age, bulges or cuts.
- **The chain** is not rusty and rotates smoothly
- **The pedals** spin freely, the crank (the pedals attach to it) is not rattly or loose.
- The **wheels are secure**, don't wobble or rattle, the tyres are pumped up.

Pre-ride check of the bike

- Tire pressure – around 35 PSI for general use. Pump them up if necessary.
- Condition of tyres.
- Handlebar end plugs fitted.
- Test the brakes to ensure they are working properly.
- Check that peddling is smooth, and not impeded at all.
- Check the wheels are on tight, and not wobbly.
- Check the seat is in the proper position for the child.
- The chain and other moving parts are lubricated.
- They have their helmet on.

The aim is for good bike handling, concentration and awareness skills

child safety is no accident

