

# Choosing the Ideal Bike

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## CHOOSING THE RIGHT BIKE FOR YOUR CHILD

There are many styles of bikes and the choices can be overwhelming. For some children, the style of bike won't matter. If your child has difficulties with balance or coordination, choosing the right bike will certainly make mastering the skill of cycling much easier. Your local bike store is a great resource for finding that perfect fit.

**SIZE:** Do not make the mistake of purchasing a bike that your child will grow into. This is particularly important for children with balance or coordination issues.

- With the seat at its lowest setting, your child **MUST** be able to put both feet flat on the ground.
- When the seat is at it's highest, your child's heels should not be able to touch the ground.
- Your child's knees should never hit the handlebars, or go much further than the level of their waist

**SEAT:** In general, the most important part of a seat is its comfort. For children who require a bit of extra help with balance, consider the following:

- Try to avoid banana seats because it forces children to get on their bikes by moving their foot in front of the seat. This method can be more challenging for some children.
- Ensure you are able to firmly grasp the back of your child's seat when they are sitting on it. Some styles of seats are hard to hold onto.

**BRAKES:** Not all brakes are created equal! If your child is over the age of 7 and has trouble with coordination, try to avoid bikes with coaster (pedal) brakes. The only time coaster brakes are helpful is when hand strength is significantly limited.

- V-brakes or disc brakes (less common on kids' bikes) are preferred.



- Cantilever brakes, often found on older bikes, are also ok.



- If at all possible, avoid long caliper brake as they are ineffective (very hard to generate enough force to stop the bike, which can affect stopping distance).
- For children with strength or coordination issues affecting one side, consider moving the rear wheel brake to the stronger side



- Whatever style you decide on, make sure your child's hands are big enough to reach the lever and effectively squeeze the brake. Distance between the handles bars and brake handles can often be changed by adjusting the Reach Adjuster Screw to decrease the distance for smaller hands

**BIKE GEOMETRY**

**CROSSBAR/ TOP TUBE:** This is the piece of the bike that runs from under the seat to the handlebar column. There are a number of bikes with lower or slanted tube tops. This makes it easier to get onto and off of the seat, particularly if children have difficulty getting onto and off of the bike.

- Lower or slanted tube tops make it easier to get onto and off of the seat
- There are no advantages to having a straight crossbar. Consider other styles if your child has balance challenges.

**BOTTOM BRACKET:** This is where the pedals attach to the frame of the bike.

- Choose a bike where the bottom bracket is in line or below the height of the rear wheel axle (this allows kids to bike with a lower centre of gravity and improves balance, control, and makes pedalling easier)
- Some bikes, such as BMX, have a bottom bracket that is higher than the rear wheel axle. Avoid these bikes because it will make pedalling more difficult (knees will be very high when pedalling)

**HANDLEBARS:**

- Your child should not have to stretch forward to reach the handlebars.
- In general, flat or low rise handlebars are preferred because the steering inputs are more straightforward. Avoid long, sweeping handlebars (cruiser style).
- Handlebars should not be too narrow to steer effectively.



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