

Buying a suitable bike

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- Which kind of bicycle? Deciding what's important
- Making sure your bike fits
- Leasing bikes to try before you buy
- Children's bikes
- Transporting children

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Which kind of bike? Deciding what's important

Whether you are borrowing or buying a bike, the most important thing is to make sure it fits you well. Just like shoes for walking, a bike should be comfortable and safe to ride.

Any bike can be used for short trips or family rides, but different bikes suit different purposes. Think about how you plan to use your bike to help you choose the right one.

Things to consider when choosing a bike	
Where and why are you riding?	Are you riding for recreation (perhaps with family or friends) or for transport (e.g. to work or the shops)? It might be a bit of both. Do you ride more on roads and paths or off-road trails? Is it hilly or flat? Do you like speed or comfort?
How far and how often?	If you aim to ride longer distances or travel regularly by bike, comfort and quality are more important.
Performance versus versatility	If you want to do a specific type of riding, such as mountain biking or long road rides, choose a bike designed for that purpose

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Comfort	Some bikes are designed for comfort rather than speed. They may have an upright riding position, a padded seat, or a frame made for longer rides. Power-assisted (e-bikes) or bikes with a wide range of gears can make riding easier. These features can be helpful if you ride longer distances, go up hills, carry a child, or ride in everyday clothes.
Carrying things	You may need to carry things on your bike (either small or large loads) by: • Panniers – Bags that attach to a rear rack. They carry heavy loads well and are often waterproof. • Basket – Fits on the front or back of the bike. Good for small items you want to reach easily. • Seat bag – A small bag under the seat for tools, keys or snacks. • Backpack – Easy to use but can become hot and uncomfortable if it is heavy. Lower gears or an e-bike can make it easier to ride with heavy loads. You can also add racks to your bike or choose a cargo bike that is made for carrying loads (including young children).
Budget	Price often reflects the quality, strength, and weight of a bike. Lighter bikes usually cost more but are easier to ride. A higher price can also mean better parts, such as gears that last longer, and features like quick-release levers that make it easier to adjust the seat or remove a wheel. If your budget is limited, a second-hand bike may be a good option.
Ease of alterations and additions	Check whether the bike is designed to allow accessories such as a basket, rear rack, child seat, mudguards, or wider tyres. Not all bikes can take these extras, so if they are important, check with the bike shop before you buy.

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Features of different bikes

Type of bike	Riding uses and benefits	Features	Consider
Commuter/ step through	• Everyday riding, commuting, on-street and paths • Easy to ride in usual clothes • More upright, comfortable	• Handlebars may curve towards rider for an upright riding position • Usually comes with a rack for a basket or panniers • Mudguards for clean riding	• May be less suited to non-paved paths/trails • May not have enough gears for steeper riding.
Road bike	• Road riding and commuting • Long distance rides • Light – designed for speed	• Drop handlebars for aerodynamic riding position • High pressure tyres, firm ride	• Forward riding position (lower handlebars) can be less stable for beginners • Limited on-bike storage • Doesn't handle as well on gravel trails • Generally, a narrower range of gears • Tends to start at a higher price point
Mountain bike	• Off-road trails and tracks dirt and gravel • Recreational riding • Handles well on a variety of surfaces	• Most have front suspension; some have front and rear suspension for a softer ride on bumpy ground • Wide, chunky tyres for traction.	• May not be able to attach a carry rack on bikes with rear suspension • Wide tyres make mountain bikes less efficient on paved roads. Changing to a smoother-tread tyre improves on-street riding ease and speed.

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Type of bike	Riding uses and benefits	Features	Consider
		• Wide range of gears for varied terrain	• Enormous price range, from entry level to high-end dual suspension and e-bikes
Hybrid bike	• Versatile – more upright • Rides well on a variety of surfaces • Good for longer distances	• Flat handlebars, more upright ride • Usually wider tyres than road bikes • Wide range of gears for varied terrain • Some hybrids have front suspension	• Able to handle paved and non-paved surfaces but not suited to rough and rocky terrain. • Durable and comfortable
Cargo bike	• Able to carry heavy loads – including children, shopping and more • Versatile but more suited to urban riding	• Low gears or power-assisted so it's easier to pedal with heavy loads • Variety of designs	• Requires space to store the bike at home and at destinations • Higher cost (renting may be an option to try before buying) • Check battery life and riding distance on power-assisted models • You may need to get used to different manoeuvrability and weight.
E-bike (electric bike)	• Less effort to ride hilly terrain • It's possible to ride without getting too sweaty	• Rechargeable battery power-assisted pedal bike max assisted speed 25km/hr	• Check battery life and riding distance • The battery makes e-bikes heavier

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Type of bike	Riding uses and benefits	Features	Consider
	- E-bike users can travel further and more often compared to people riding push bikes - Appealing to a wide variety of people	Power on demand (throttle) bikes limited to 200watts, assisted pedalling speed limited by wattage.	- How easy is it to remove/charge the battery? - Higher cost (renting may be an option to try before buying) - Where will you store it?
Folding bike	- Can be carried onto any public transport when folded - You can combine bike riding and public transport, which enables longer-distance travel	Compact, small wheels and folding frame but extendable seat means folding bikes can fit most riders	- How easy it is to fold and unfold? - How big it is when folded? - How heavy it is to carry? - Is there space to carry things? - Folding bikes may not be as comfortable as a large-frame bike
Bike trailers	- Versatile - Can be particularly effective in inner city and metro settings	Bike trailers usually carry one or two young children. Many also have room for shopping or bags	- Requires space to store additional equipment - Consider purchasing a second-hand model as this equipment will not be needed for long term

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Type of bike	Riding uses and benefits	Features	Consider
Tag-along bikes	- Helps to build confidence in beginning riders - Can be the best option for longer rides with younger children that are beginning to ride	A tag-along is a child-sized bike that attaches to the back of an adult's bike. The child can pedal while the adult pedals and steers.	- Requires space to store additional equipment - Consider purchasing a second-hand model as this equipment will not be needed for long term

Making sure your bike fits

A bike that fits you is more comfortable, easier to control and safer to ride. You should be able to reach the handlebars and brake levers comfortably when sitting on the seat.

Adjust the seat so your leg is almost straight when the pedal is at its lowest point. If you're learning to ride, lower the seat so both feet can rest flat on the ground. If you are not sure how to lower the seat, see our **Basic Bike Maintenance** guide.

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When you buy a bike from a bike shop, it will be assembled by a qualified mechanic. The staff can help you choose the right bike for your needs, budget, and size, and adjust it so it fits you properly. Before you buy, test ride a few bikes and ask the shop to adjust the seat, handlebars, and brake levers. Check that you can add accessories, such as a rack or basket, if you need them. It's also a good time to buy essentials like a helmet, lights, a bell, a lock, and a pump.

If you buy from a department store, you may need to assemble the bike yourself, and there is usually no help with choosing the right size or style. If possible, take someone who knows about bikes with you.

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If you have a limited budget, a second-hand bike may be a good option. Make sure it is the right size and take someone knowledgeable with you if you can. Always get a second-hand bicycle maintained by a professional bicycle mechanic before use.

Leasing bikes to try before you buy

Some e-bikes and cargo bikes can be hired from suppliers or local councils for a test period. This is a great option to work out whether it's the right bike for you. Ask the bike retailer or your council if they offer lease arrangements to try before you buy.

Children's bikes

Choose a bike that fits your child. A bike that is too big can be hard to control and is not safe. A bike that is too small can be uncomfortable and harder to ride.

As children grow, they will need bigger bikes every few years. You can adjust the seat height to help the bike fit for longer.

Many children's bikes come with training wheels, but many riding instructors recommend learning without them. Children often learn to balance more quickly on a balance bike (a bike with no pedals) or a bike without training wheels.

For more information about choosing a child's bike, visit AusBike's [What to consider when buying a bike for your child](#) | [AusBike](#).

Transporting children

Children can be carried on a bicycle once they are able to support their own head while wearing a helmet, which is usually from around 12 months of age. By law, children must ride in a purpose-built passenger seat, and only riders aged 16 years or older may tow a bicycle trailer. Children travelling in trailers must be under 10 years of age and wear a securely fitted helmet. When choosing a child carrier, consider your child's age, size and weight, how easy it is to use, the impact on the bike's balance and handling, whether there is still room for bags or shopping, and protection from the weather. Front-mounted child seats are best suited to younger or smaller children, while rear-mounted child seats are designed for toddlers and preschool-aged children.