

Riding with children and young people

What's included in this fact sheet:

- Tips to make riding safe and enjoyable
- Transporting children - riding with babies and toddlers
- Learning to ride
- Moving from off-street to on-street riding
- Preparing for independent riding

Other fact sheets in this series:

- Getting started
- Buying a suitable bike
- Finding places to ride and people to ride with
- Basic bike maintenance

Bike riding is fun for the whole family and helps young people learn safe habits early, including skills that can support future driving. This guide covers riding with children at every stage, from babies and toddlers through to older children and young people, supporting them as they build the skills and confidence to ride and travel independently.

Riding with children and young people is also an opportunity to teach them about road safety – even before you get near the road. Skills and behaviour they learn in off-street settings lay the foundations for using roads safely later.

Here are some tips to make riding with children a positive experience for everyone:

- **Be safe and be seen:** Make sure your bike and helmet are in good condition. Use lights day and night as needed, and wear light-coloured or reflective clothing to help others see you. A reflective ankle band on your right ankle is particularly effective for night time riding. [Bicycle road rules and safety tips for cycling in Victoria - Transport Victoria](#)
- Make sure all helmets are adjusted correctly – teach your child how to adjust their own helmet.
- Start easy and keep it fun. Don't ride too far to begin with – build up to longer distances as your child develops more stamina.
- Expect to go slowly (let the slowest person set the pace) and plan to have stops along the way.

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- Plan ahead: pack snacks, water and weather protection, and choose a route that includes public toilets or a café.
- Have options to cut the ride short to keep everyone happy, using public transport if available. [Transport Victoria | Start here. Journey Anywhere. - Transport Victoria](#)
- Model good riding behaviour to children: ride on the left, give way to people walking on footpaths and shared paths, ring your bell and slow down as you approach others.
- When riding on footpaths, teach your children to be aware of hazards like cars coming into and out of driveways.
Adults and those who are 13 and over are allowed to ride on the footpath when riding with children who are 12 years and under.
- The best way to build children's bike skills and confidence is to make riding a regular activity.

Transporting children - riding with babies and toddlers

Before being carried on a bike or in a bike trailer, children need to be able to support their own head while wearing a helmet, including when riding over bumps, around corners, and during braking. Most children develop the strength needed for this at around 12 months of age, although this can vary between individuals.

By law:

- Children must ride in a seat made for passengers.
- Riders aged 16 years and over can tow a bike trailer.
- Children in trailers must be under 10 years old and wear a securely fitted helmet.

When choosing how to carry a child, think about:

- your child's age, size and weight
- how easy it is to get them in and out
- how the carrier affects the bike's balance and handling
- whether you can still carry bags or shopping
- protection from sun, wind and rain

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Type of child seats

- Front child seat – Fits between the rider and the handlebars. Best for younger or smaller children.
- Rear child seat – Fits behind the rider. Suitable for toddlers and preschool-aged children.

Starting to ride on their own

Balance bikes (bikes without pedals) are a great choice for toddlers. They are light and easy to use. Children can sit on the seat and push themselves along with their feet. Balance bikes help children learn how to balance. This makes it easier for them to ride a pedal bike later.

You can also turn a regular bike into a balance bike by taking off the pedals and lowering the seat.

Start in a safe place such as a quiet path, empty car park or basketball court so children can build confidence before riding in busier areas.

Once the child can balance confidently, encourage them to practise starting and stopping, riding slowly around obstacles, and doing basic safety skills like hand signals and looking over their shoulder.

The Bike Ed units of work include many useful activities to help beginner riders learn and build confidence. [Bike Ed Units of work | Road Safety Education](#)

Moving from off-street to on-street riding

When you ride with your child/ren on streets, you can teach them safe riding behaviour – and you'll be able to see when they are ready to ride independently.

- Choose low-stress routes that are appropriate for their skill level, confidence and maturity: use quieter local streets and ride in bike lanes where available.
- Use the footpath to avoid any stressful or complex sections along the route, such as crossing a busy road.

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- If there are two adults, have one ride in front and one at the rear, with children in between.
- If there's one adult, ride at the rear to keep an eye on the child (or group). Ride slightly to the right of the group so that vehicles pass further away.
- Anticipate and call out any instructions well in advance so children have plenty of time to respond.
- Be predictable: ride in a straight line away from parked cars or one metre out from the kerb.
- Be aware: anticipate what is happening, scan around you, look for obstacles.
- Communicate: use your bell and hand signals.
- Be in control: be able to stop even if you have right of way.
- Make sure all helmets are adjusted correctly – teach your child how to adjust their own helmet.

Preparing for independent riding

Every child and young person is different. When deciding if they are ready to ride independently, consider:

- their age and maturity
- their riding skills
- their understanding of road safety
- how safe the local area is (including traffic levels, crossings and quiet streets)

You can help prepare them by:

- encouraging Bike Ed at school
- modelling safe riding and talking about what you are doing (for example, checking driveways and giving way to people walking)
- talking about road rules and safe riding from a young age
- practising safe riding together
- riding and planning routes they may later use independently
- starting with short local trips (for example, to the playground, shops or school)
- building on-road skills gradually while riding together

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- talking through the full trip, including where to lock the bike and any tricky sections
- discussing what to do if something goes wrong, such as a flat tyre

In Victoria, you may only ride on a footpath if you are aged 12 years or under, are riding with a child aged 12 years or under or have a medical exemption. Teenagers who do not meet these conditions must ride on the road or shared paths, so preparing early can help build the skills and confidence needed for this transition.

