

Kids on Wheels

Tricycles, bikes, skateboards, rollerblades, skates and scooters are all popular with kids. They allow kids to go fast, try new tricks and impress friends and siblings. Many children take risks particularly when learning new skills which may result in an increased chance of falls and injuries. All adults have an important role in ensuring kids can have fun in a safe environment with the least likelihood of injury.

Skateboards and Rollerblades

These are very popular for older children and young teenagers. As with all wheeled toys, the correct fit and use of safety equipment is vitally important for keeping riders and bladers safe.

The most common injuries result from falls, although there can be serious injuries from collisions with vehicles and pedestrians.

Rollerblades need to be a comfortable, firm fit on the child's feet.

Ensure learners have a relatively level, large and smooth area on which to develop their skills. Insist that safety equipment is worn every time.

As skills develop, make use of community skate parks for skateboarders and find a park that allows rollerblades. A good place to develop rollerblading skills is the local roller skating rink.

Young teenagers who feel they are skilled enough to use their skateboards to get around their local community are required to observe road rules when riding on public streets.

Skateboards and rollerblades may be used on the footpath regardless of the rider's age, unless specifically prohibited by signs.

Skateboard riders can only use minor roads (those with no lines marked) and can only do so between dawn and dusk.

Helmets should always be worn, along with other safety equipment such as knee pads and elbow pads.



Scooters

Scooters are increasingly popular for all ages, including adults. There are a variety of styles available that are suitable for a wide range of ages.

Most injuries to children using scooters are from falls.

As with the purchase of bicycles, ensure the scooter suits the child's size and ability. Check its construction and the performance of safety equipment such as brakes and locking nuts.

Scooters with large wheels are much more stable for smaller children. Some come equipped with two wheels at the back and/or the front for added stability. Make sure the child knows how to operate the braking system and that the scooter does not generate speeds that are beyond the child's ability to control.

Scooters may be ridden on the footpath by children under 12, unless specifically prohibited by a sign.

Helmets should always be worn, along with other safety equipment such as knee pads and elbow pads.



Be a Role Model

An important part of teaching a child to ride is for a parent or adult to be a good role model. Show them how to ride their wheels safely and encourage them to copy or mimic you.

Set a good example when riding with your children and always use a helmet.

Bicycles

Most injuries to children on bicycles are the result of the child losing control, so it is very important that the bike is the right size for the child.

Buy bicycles with spoke guards and chain guards for added protection. By law, the bike must have both front and rear lights and a rear reflector if riding at night. However, *Kidsafe NSW* recommends that children do not ride their bikes after dark.

Size

Getting a bike the right size is the first step when choosing a bike for your child. A bike that is too big or too small can be a safety hazard.

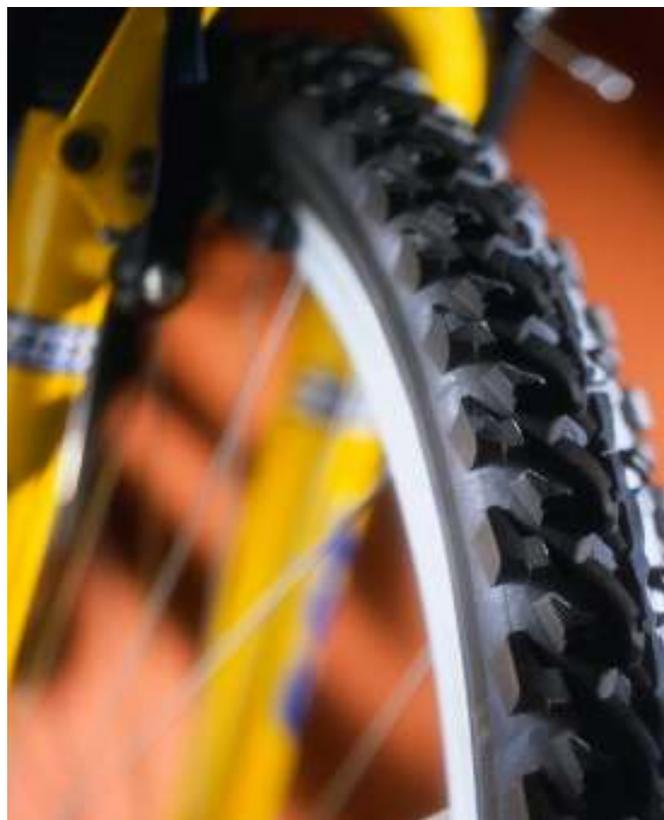
How to check? A child should be able to touch the ground with both feet at the same time, whilst seated on the saddle.

They should be able to reach the handlebars and grasp any hand operated brake lever when sitting on the seat.

Bicycle Safety Checklist

Parents should ensure that bikes are equipped with the following safety devices. Do regular spot checks to ensure they are still attached, are clean and work correctly:

- **Brakes** – ensure brake blocks are not worn down and are fitted correctly.
- **Chain** – should not be too loose. Clean with a dry cloth and oil regularly.
- **Tyres** – look for bald spots, bulges and cuts. Ensure they are properly inflated before each use.
- **Pedals** – should spin freely.
- **Bell or Horn** – should be loud enough for others to hear.
- **Lights** – check batteries and globes.
- **Reflectors** – on front and rear of bike.
- **Visibility** – improve *kids on wheels* visibility to pedestrians and motorists by using reflective tape, flags, etc.



Tricycles

- Make sure it is the right size for the child.
- Both the child's feet should be able to touch the ground when they are seated.
- Ensure that it is stable.
- Provide a safe area to use it – away from slopes, stairs and changes in level.



Riding the Bike

All riders of bicycles are required by law to wear a Standards Australia approved **helmet**.

Young children should only ride their bikes on footpaths or shared paths. Children under 12 years and older riders accompanying them, may ride a bicycle on a footpath unless there are signs which specifically prohibited bikes. Riders must keep to the left and give way to pedestrians.

Cyclists 12 years or over cannot use the footpath unless it is signposted as a shared path or they are accompanying a younger rider. Otherwise they must use roads or designated cycleway.

When using footpaths and cycleways, there are a few simple rules that adults should ensure children are familiar with:

- Children on bikes should always give way to pedestrians.
- Teach children to step off and walk their bikes when crossing the street, railway crossing, traffic lights or pedestrian crossing. Ensure they learn to recognise when it is safe to cross.
- Avoid riding on broken pavements, loose gravel and leaves as these can cause the cyclist to lose control of the bike.

Once children have had plenty of practice on their bikes and have developed their skills in control and steering, they can be given the opportunity to experience on-road riding, **under close adult supervision**. Always choose quiet and low traffic roadways to practise their on-road skills, and ensure the rules below are followed:

- Obey the rules of the road and know what each traffic sign means.
- Look behind before making a turn. They should also make a shoulder check before signalling a turn.
- If there is traffic, a child should stop by the side of the road and wait for a gap before turning. Always stop and check before turning into a street.
- Wear light or bright-coloured clothing so that the cyclist is visible to motorists.

Always wear a helmet!



Road authorities advise that children on wheeled toys should be accompanied by an adult until 9 or 10 years of age depending on the child's individual development.





For further information visit
bicyclensw.org.au
rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/bicycles

Protective Equipment

Parents and carers need to ensure children have access to and always use, the appropriate safety equipment.

Helmets

Helmets are the most important piece of safety equipment and are intended to protect children's heads in the event of a fall.

To be effective however, the helmet has to be well fitting and needs to be used every time. Involve the rider in buying the helmet and make sure they are happy with the appearance. If they like their helmet it is more likely they will wear it.

Don't rely solely on the stated helmet sizes. Not every helmet will fit snugly and you will need to test the fit. Adjust the straps and clip it up. It should sit straight and comfortably on the head. Push gently with the heel of your hand against the front of the helmet. If it moves easily, it does not fit.

Don't buy a helmet that is too big, so the child will grow into it. It will be too big to protect the child now.

The helmet should feel comfortable and have a good airflow, particularly if you live in a warm climate.

Always look for the Australian Standards mark. These helmets have been tested and approved.

Second-hand helmets may not be good value for money. It can be difficult to see damage to the foam lining and a damaged helmet will not protect the rider. With second-hand helmets you have little choice for comfort and fit.

Young children who wear helmets from the moment they start riding their first wheeled toy are more likely to continue the helmet wearing habit.

Finally, make it clear to kids that the helmet is to be used **every** time.

Knee, Elbow and Wrist Guards

Guards are designed to protect vulnerable parts of the body that research has shown are common points of contact in falls.

They are particularly important for riders of skateboards, rollerblades and scooters as they are more prone to falls.

Wrist guards are designed to strengthen the wrist area so that a child falling and putting out a hand to break the fall is less likely to damage or break the wrist.

Wrist injuries are very common for skateboard, rollerblade, and scooter riders.

Clothing

The type of clothes worn by a child when using their wheeled toy can provide important protection in the event of a fall.

Long pants and closed in shoes provide the best protection.

Visibility

Kids on wheels should not ride in poor light and depending on the age of the child, not near traffic. You can improve visibility of *kids on wheels* by using:

- Bright coloured clothing or a visibility vest
- Reflective tape
- Reflectors

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