

Freedom From Training Wheels

Parent Guide



You can teach your child to ride a bicycle — without training wheels!

Start by scouting out the right location. Look for a park or field with a gentle grassy slope (not steep!) about 50 yards/150 feet long that doesn't have any significant obstacles such as bumps, rocks or trees. It should be relatively smooth, and the grass shouldn't be too tall.

Before heading to the park, remove any training wheels from your child's bike and lower the seat so that the child can sit on it and rest both feet on the ground. It helps to remove the pedals, but you don't have to. Have your child put on long pants such as jeans and a long-sleeve shirt. Bring their helmet and a pair of full-finger gloves for them, too. The more injury-proofed your child feels, the more willing they will be to participate. Keep it exciting and fun for the child and remember: NO PRESSURE.

Balance First

Now you're ready to teach your child using the "Balance First" method. This allows the child to find a sense of balance without the interference of training wheels and pedals. Once the child is confident gliding and balancing, the pedals are reattached and pedaling starts.



Photo credit: SoaringOak Photography

The goal of teaching kids to ride is to help them learn the required skills of balancing, steering, pedaling and braking. This is a lot to throw at them at once, which is why so many parents wear themselves out running behind the bike while their children struggle with all these new skills.

The secret is to help them master one riding skill at a time. Your child must be comfortable with each new skill before you show them the next. They'll learn much faster. And you can simply stand in one spot praising and encouraging your student.

more info at www.ibikeknox.com

#1 Finding Balance

Walk up the grassy slope about half way, point the bike downhill and have your child get on and coast very slowly down the hill using their feet as outriggers, dragging them for balance and to slow down. The lowered seat makes it easy for them to reach the ground and maintain their balance. The soft grass will keep their speed down and make the bike come to a stop at the bottom of the slope.

Have your child repeat several times, coaching them to lift their feet off the ground a bit to get a feel for how steering affects handling. They'll learn quickly because they can drag their feet anytime they want so they won't feel out of control.

Stick with this skill until they're confident balancing and steering and they can make it down the hill with their feet up. Make a big deal out their progress so they recognize how great they're doing.

Explain to your child the "balance first" method this way:

- ◆ Focus on a point in front and aim for it.
- ◆ Use your feet to roll the bike while looking straight ahead
- ◆ Go faster when it feels comfortable. When you get some speed, lift your feet up to glide.
- ◆ Always keep your head up!

#2 Pedaling

Once your child can coast downhill with their feet off the ground, they can coast down with their feet on the pedals. Have them rest their feet on the pedals while you hold the bike in place, first. Be sure to remind them to put their feet on the ground as the bike slows down and stops so they don't fall over. After a few runs down the hill, they'll get the hang of it. When they're comfortable coasting with their feet on the pedals, have them practice pedaling the bike as they go down the slope.

Tips to share:

- ◆ Use your feet to find the pedals, without looking down.
- ◆ Once your feet find the pedals, keep gliding, then push down on the pedals!

#3 Starting from a Stop

- ◆ Place one foot on the pedal—let the child pick which foot feels comfortable. Have the child keep the other foot on the ground.
- ◆ Have the child practice pushing off but keeping one foot on the pedal.
- ◆ When ready, place the pedal at the 2 o'clock position to start and explain the concept of pedaling while pushing off.

#4 Braking

Most bikes for kids have coaster brakes, or "foot brakes," because you have to pedal backwards to stop. Show your child how this works and let them practice slowing, coming to a stop, and putting a foot down.