

# **TROUBLE SHOOTING GUIDE**

**For training towards**

## **INDEPENDENT CYCLING**

**ALWAYS REMEMBER ...**

No two learners are the same but some of these tips may work with some individuals ... however you will often have to think on the spot with an individual and look to come up with an individual solution for them!

**And**

Experience builds experience ... the more you work with individuals, the more you will learn yourself, building your own teaching toolkit and knowledge resource.

## **GENERAL PROCESS**

1. Pedals should be removed and securely stored by the learner's support person for the balance phase.

The learner's bike should look too small at the starting balance stage – feet should be flat on the ground with a bend in the knee, both hands should reach the handle bars comfortably with flexed arms and without leaning forward.

Learning to cycle on a bike that is too big for the learning process will make a challenging task very difficult and possible distressing, if not impossible.

2. To climb on, the learner should be guided to pull both brakes so the bike doesn't move, plant one foot on the ground near one side of the bike and swing their leg over the back wheel. (It doesn't matter which leg swings, as some learners may be weaker on one side.)

If swinging is difficult, a trainer can help by lifting the learner's leg slightly (having checked they are happy with this) being careful not to unbalance the learner.

Alternatively, the saddle may be lowered to the height where the learner can be assisted to walk on to the bike from the back.

3. Next, the learner will be guided to walk, one foot at a time.

The first goal is to see the feet getting lighter and the learner getting heavier on the saddle, sitting their weight on the saddle as they would ideally sit on a straight-backed seat.

The second goal is to increase the speed of the walk so that the strides become faster and longer becoming a glide

4. Only ever hold at the upper back (grip t-shirt, jumper or jacket) and if needed a hand lightly at the upper arm. Make sure the learner knows you will be doing this and is happy with that.

Once someone learning can lift their feet (glide) for an 8/10 second count, and steer while gliding, then it's time for the pedals to come on.

5. At this stage feet still need to be able to reach flat to the ground but the saddle needs to be raised slightly so there isn't as much bend in the knees. This height better facilitates pedalling, as a bike that is too low can be very difficult to pedal.

Use the same hold for support, aiming to gradually loosen the hold, then removing it gently for increasingly longer spells. The learner needs to feel supported while moving towards cycling independently.

6. The final key skill is independent starting. To facilitate this, the teacher needs to emphasis one foot flat on the ground bearing weight, one foot on a two-o'clock positioned pedal, eyes looking ahead in the direction of travel and starting with a firm push down on the pedal.

The teacher may initially assist with a gentle push to the back so the learner knows the force needed to get going.

## **GENERAL APPROACH**

A. Let the person learning do as much as they can themselves. Don't over assist.

B. If when holding the teacher is pulling the learner's t-shirt/jumper/jacket up, they are holding too strongly.

C. Set goals – for example; 10 steps; 10 pushes of the pedals; two laps of the yard/hall. Once the goal is achieved, praise, then increase if appropriate.

D. Give time to enjoy achievement; a learner who has just gotten on the bike, just started to move, or just started to pedal needs time to enjoy that achievement before striving for the next goal.

E. Every learner has their own learning curve – as a teacher, you must recognise each one, respect it, and move at the correct pace for that person.

F. Give only one simple, clear instruction at a time – for example “push down” rather than “keep pedalling”. Keep repeating/reinforcing that until the learner achieves – then move on to

the next. Small things at the early stages need not be stressed, for example, foot position on the pedals. These will come in time.

G. Praise what the learner achieves – for one individual, sitting on the bike is just as much of an achievement as cycling independently is for another.

## **TROUBLE SHOOTING COMMON LEARNING SCENARIOS**

1. Some learners may walk with the bike without actually sitting on the saddle. This may be because the action feels odd and uncontrolled to them. Get them to stop and feel what it is like to sit, and then move along while sitting. If they stand again, have them stop and repeat the process. Sometimes it can help to keep gentle hand pressure on their shoulders as they move (if they are happy for you to do this), until they get a sense of the movement required.

2. Some learners may look down a lot, which is not unusual, as there's a lot going on at the wheel. Set goals for them to adjust their eye level to where they are moving – look at the red door; the sign; a tree; or another person.

3. Some learners may hold their feet too lightly on the pedals. Get them to climb off and place one foot on top of yours. You can support them by placing a hand on their upper arm, once you have checked they are happy with this. Get them to push your foot down as you push up. Encourage them to really push your foot down. Then tell them that's just like the pedals. You can then say “push like you did with my toes”.

4. Some learners may pedal backwards as there is no resistance pushing like this. A good way of addressing this is to introduce a stationary trainer which allows the bike to be mounted securely off the ground, where the learner can concentrate on pedalling without worrying about balance.

The two places where the impulse to push back is greatest is at the top of the pedal cycle (leading in to the down stroke) and just past the bottom of the pedal cycle (at the push back at the bottom). Once you have checked with the learner that they are happy with it, these are the points to physically give assistance by placing your hand over the learner's foot on the pedal to show the strength of push needed.

After a number of circuits, ease off the pushing assistance, encouraging the learner to push themselves.

This stage may need to be repeated a number of times to help the learner with the concept of pushing the pedals.

5. Some learners overthink what they are doing and can become quite stressed, hindering their own progress – singing songs can help distract or just talking about something they like will often allow progress to happen unconsciously.

6. Some learners may not be able to generate sufficient speed to lift their legs and glide. In this case you may get a stronger grip of their jumper (if they are happy with this) to help create just enough speed to make the bike feel balanced but not to make the learner feel uncomfortable.

7. Some learners may take time to become comfortable with independent starting. You may need to go through this learning phase with the learner a number of times to prevent frustration and should continue to emphasise the build the key points clearly;

- \* Lean out on the foot on the ground

- \* Other foot on the HIGH pedal

- \* Look ahead

- \* Sit like a KING or QUEEN!

- \* Push HARD

- \* Keep pushing the pedals down every time they come up.

8. Some learners may have difficulty with the sequence of stopping. In this case you will need to clearly demonstrate the sequence. As many people have difficulty distinguishing left and right, the suggested method is;

- \* Demonstrate with verbal prompt – “Pull one” (left), “Then two” (right) and repeat, repeat

- \* Ask learner to put their hands on top of yours to feel the sequence and repeat.

- \* Ask learner to do themselves “Pull one”, “then two” and repeat – you may need to place your hands OVER the learner’s to demonstrate the pressure, if appropriate and if the learner is happy with this. Repeat until the learner shows confidence with the sequence, moving from full hand pressure, to tapping each hand if needed to support the sequence

- \* Holding the front wheel between your legs, you should ask the learner to put their feet on the pedals and then prompt “Feet down”

- \* The full sequence will be “One, two, feet down”

- \* You then need to reinforce the sequence while the learner is cycling, to prompt safe stopping