



# CYCLING FOR NON CYCLISTS

At the end of a number of sessions, depending on the individual, an individual learning will be able to:

- Demonstrate effective Helmet, Clothing, Bike and Conditions Checks
- Demonstrate an ability to safely mount and dismount a bike while preventing it from moving
- Demonstrate correct seated position on the bike
- Demonstrate a walking motion while seated on the bike (STRIDING), as the first stage of movement
- Demonstrate increasing length and speed of striding as the next stage of movement
- Demonstrate the ability to keep both feet off the ground for five seconds or more (GLIDING)
- Demonstrate the ability to keep the bike going in a straight line, while feet are off the ground
- Demonstrate correct starting position
- Demonstrate correct start
- Demonstrate cycling in a straight line
- Demonstrate ability to control speed through use of the back brake and by freewheeling
- Demonstrate ability to look around while maintaining control of the bike
- Demonstrate ability to manoeuvre round objects while maintaining control of the bike
- Demonstrate ability to maintain distance from other bike riders and maintain control of own bike while doing so
- Demonstrate effective cornering, both left and right
- Demonstrate correct stopping

## CHECKS



Checks that a rider should perform every time before getting on the bike to ensure that equipment is in correct working order and that the cyclist is making a safe start to the journey. Checking weather and road conditions constantly is also vital to a safe journey.

### Pre-checks

- ✓ Bicycle Check
- ✓ Helmet Check
- ✓ Saddle Height
- ✓ Clothes Check
- ✓ Conditions Check





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## GETTING READY AND PREPARING THE BIKE



From the outset, it is important to teach good habits and pre-checks which should be carried out every time before getting on a bike

### Helmet check

- no cracks, wear or tear, properly fitted
- **Level** from the forehead to the back of head
- **Two-finger space** above eyebrows
- **V straps** sitting just below ears – adjust as necessary
- **Thumb space** between **chin and buckle**
- Keep thumb between chin and buckle when fastening to **avoid pinch**
- **Helmet should stay** on the head without buckle being fastened on bending over – adjust frame as necessary

### Clothes check

- bright to be seen, nothing that can get caught in the moving parts of the bike
- **Light, bright coloured clothing** (hi-viz jackets and vests, Sam Browne belt and reflective bag covers etc.) promotes safety by increasing **visibility**
- **Clothing** needs to be **appropriate to conditions**
- Wear **reflective clothing**, especially after daylight
- **Clothing can get caught** in the moving parts of the bike – check for
  - ~ **Shoelaces** – are they tied and tidied away
  - ~ **Jacket toggles** – is there a loop that may catch the saddle
  - ~ Flaired **trousers** or flowing **skirts** which could catch in the chain
  - ~ **Long scarves**
  - ~ **Never hang, or balance, anything on the handlebars** as there is a risk of getting caught in the bike and unbalance the rider
- Carry **baggage** carefully – a carrier, panniers, a basket or a backpack over both shoulders are all ideal

### Bicycle check

- **Bike Check** or “**M Check**” before getting on the bike.
- ~ Start at the front of the bike and systematically work towards the back of the bike checking if anything sounds, feels or looks loose

### Saddle Height

Before the learner gets on the bike, the teacher should check that the bike is the right fit for the learner;

- The **saddle** will be **lower** than a standard cycling position, to allow the learner to **stride with both feet** comfortably **reaching the ground**
- On the other hand, the saddle should **not** be so low that the learner’s **legs** are bent, rather than flexed, as this will **hinder** progress towards the stage at which the learner is ready to pedal (saddle height should be increased by small degrees as confidence grows and appropriate to learning stage)
- The **saddle** will need to be **parallel** to the ground
- The **handlebars** will need to be at a **height and reach** that suits the learner, holding a **comfortable upright position** when striding
- If the learner is in any way **nervous**, it is best to **remove the pedals** from a standard bike, or to use a **balance bike** or a bike with **folding pedals**.

### Conditions check

- Weather and surfaces, how they interact and how they affect cycling

The teacher will need to **assess the environment**;

- Taking account of **features** such as
  - sloping **ground surfaces**, gutters, shores and kerbs
  - **surface grip**
    - ~ gravel
    - ~ stones
    - ~ leaves
    - ~ all of the above may be impacted negatively by weather such as rain or frost
  - **access points** such as doors and gates
  - **yard furniture**
    - ~ poles
    - ~ shelters
    - ~ nets
  - **walls**
  - **corners** etc.



## Brakes

- The learner should be taught the different functions of the brakes before getting on the bike
  - **Back brake** to **slow**
  - **Front brake** to **stop fully**
  - Linking the verbal instruction “STOP” to brake action
  - Practising a walking stop

## Getting on the bike

- **Both hands on the handlebars**, hold the brakes, to prevent bike roll.
- **Getting on from the left**, lean the bicycle slightly **towards the left leg** and swing the **right leg over the back wheel**.
- **Getting on from the right**, lean the bicycle slightly **towards the right leg** and **swing the left leg over the back wheel**.

Learners should be encouraged to get on and off the bike from/to the left generally, as this mirrors the road in Ireland where the edge is on the left.

When sitting on the saddle, the learner

- needs to be able to **reach the ground** with feet flat and
- with **knees flexed** (initially this position will look too low, but is needed to facilitate confidence in balance at the outset)
- if the saddle is too high side-to-side shifting will cause discomfort and hinder progress to the scooting movement

## Brake Check

Moving the bike along with the hands positioned ready to pull the brakes



Pulling only the back brake causes the back wheel to skid, but will not stop the bike straight away



Pulling only the front brake will cause the front wheel to stop and the back wheel to lift off the ground



Pulling both brakes, back just before the front, should stop the bike smoothly and quickly

## Beginning to Move

- Staying **seated** and **looking straight** ahead while sitting **upright**, the learner should **move in a walking motion with alternative feet**, looking to **build up speed** and to feel the sensation of the **moving** bike and balance
  - keep **long, but relaxed arms**
    - ~ bent arms will make the handlebars swing from side to side
    - ~ this will make the learner feel unbalanced
  - the **pace** is set by the **learner** rather than the assistant walking beside them
    - ~ if the assistant is moving faster, the learner may stand out of the saddle to gain speed
- Once the learner is **moving smoothly** (balancing and gliding) in the seated position
  - **feet are staying off the ground** consistently for 5 seconds or so at a time
  - the bike is travelling in a straight line
  - the **pedals can be reintroduced**

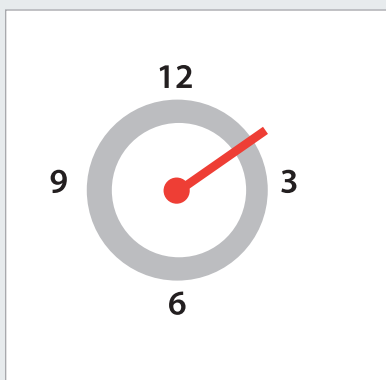


## Starting off and keeping control of the bike

The start is critical in the learning process

- Keep **one foot firmly on the ground, with the weight leaning to this foot**
- Place the sole of the **pushing foot** on the pedal, in the **2 O'Clock Pedal Ready** position, ready to push down and quickly away
- Generally, **start from a sitting** position.
- **Push strongly** to bring the other pedal up, place this foot on the other pedal **without looking down**
- Keep the **head up and the eyes forward**, not looking down at the pedals.
- Press the **ball of the free foot** firmly to the pedal keeping the **toes pointing forward** in the line of travel.
- Keep **looking in the direction of travel**, keep the **arms long** but relaxed, **sit upright** and push the pedals with a **steady rhythm**.
- Keep feet on the pedals through the **whole circle**.
- This may take some **practice** to master.

### Pedal Ready or 2 O'Clock Start Position



## Getting used to the movement off the bike

- Moving the bike
  - **Arms long**, but flexed
  - **Looking** in the direction of travel
  - **Pushing pedals** down alternatively as they come up
- Initially the learner may try to compensate for the **bike's movement** by leaning in the opposite direction to the way the bike is leaning
- They may also try to compensate by **leaning** in the direction the bike is leaning
- The trainer needs to emphasise the goal of **remaining centred** with head still, eyes ahead and little or no movement from the hips up
- Any lean of the bike should be countered by gently turning the handlebars in the same direction
- In time and with practice, these movements will become less pronounced as the learner gets used to the movement of the bike and how it balances

Guiding a learner by **holding clothing** at the back during this balance and steering stage can be a very helpful support, and while the teacher will be jogging beside the learner to facilitate this it is important not to

- Hold the handlebars in anyway
- Hold the saddle
- Support the weight of the learner, as the goal of the process is to give the learner the sense of balancing themselves, which necessarily involves allowing some movement





## Shoulder checking, riding one handed, freewheeling, back pedalling and cornering

### Shoulder Checking

- **Steady** and controlled pace
- **Sit upright** with hands on the handlebars – thumbs under and fingers over – looking ahead.
- Hold the **pedals still**
  - Hold the **handlebars**, keep the **arm of the checking shoulder** quite **straight** and steady for control and look smoothly back. Soften the opposite arm/elbow to help keep the handlebars straight.
  - Practise until comfortable shoulder checking to either side while cycling in a straight line.
  - If nervous, freewheel and then look behind.

### Riding One Handed

- **Steady** and controlled pace, possibly freewheeling.
- **Sit upright** with hands on the handlebars looking ahead.
- Start by **easing a hand** so only the finger tips touch the handlebar.
- Next, **hover** the hand just above the handlebar.
- Gently **remove** the hand fully off the handlebar, initially for a very short time.
- **Look ahead** to maintain a straight line.
- **Shift the body weight** between the saddle and the supporting arm to keep control.
- Keep a good, but relaxed, **grip** on the handlebar with the supporting hand.
- Place the **hand back on** the handlebar after 3 to 4 seconds.
- Practise until comfortable riding one-handed on both the left and right side.

### Freewheeling

- **Stop pedalling**, keep both **feet on the pedals**, leading to a steadying and gradual slowing

### Back Pedalling

- **Push the pedals back** instead of forward, just once, **keeping both feet on the pedals** to change pedal position without pushing the bike forward

### Cornering

- **Control speed** into the corner.
- **Look forward** and **move the head to look through** and **round the corner** on approach.
- Keep **both hands** on the **handlebars** for control when cornering.
- Generally, take a corner with a small, smooth movement of the handlebars.
- Keep the **inside pedal** (on the turning side) up to ensure balance and readiness to cycle out the far side of the corner, and to avoid the pedal hitting the ground while leaning.
- Generally, **freewheel through**, and then **pedal out** of the corner
- If the inside pedal is down, back pedal to bring it up just before entering the corner.

## Stopping

The learner should **stop by**

- pulling the **back brake**
- followed by the **front brake**
- **staying seated** on the saddle
- **keeping feet on the pedals**
- placing the **feet to the ground** just before the bike comes to a complete stop.
- When stopped, bringing the **pedal** to the **2 O’Clock Pedal Ready position** in preparation for starting again.

## Getting off the bike

- **Feet to the ground** once the **bike has stopped**,
- **Stand astride the bike**, **lean the bike** towards the standing leg and **swing leg over the back wheel**.
  - **Hold the brakes while dismounting to prevent the bike rolling forward.**



## TEACHING SOMEONE WHO IS LEARNING TO CYCLE



- **Appropriate levels of support** are very important – too much can hold someone back from learning
  - Supporting the weight of someone who is trying to achieve **balance**
  - Holding or moving the handlebars for someone is learning to **control** and steer a bike
  - Holding the saddle of someone is working on **starting independently**
- **Changing** levels of support to **match progress** through the learning process
  - **Walking or jogging** at the scooting stage
  - Taking a **firm grip of clothing** at the back (jacket/jumper) at the balancing stage
  - Moving to a lesser **grip** as balancing improves and the person learning can stop safely
  - Arriving at an odd reminder **tap to the shoulder** when independent cycling has been achieved but prompts are still needed for balance and control
  - Using **verbal prompts** such as
    - “Sit up” to encourage cycling body position on the bike
    - “Look ahead” to keep correct head position
    - “Push down” to prompt pedalling motion
    - “Foot down” when brakes are pulled and prior to full stop

## GAMES AND SKILLS



The following games to will develop bike-handling skills once someone is cycling independently;

- Going in and out (opposite sides of alternating cones) through cones. Spacing between cones can be varied according to ability and to increasing skill level
- Turning left and turning right – following curving lines of cones will introduce the concept of turning. The curve can be made more acute, until it becomes an actual turn, as skill increases. At all stages, the technique is to let the head lead, by looking ahead to where the curve/turn is leading
- As a progression to turning, introduce exercises in freewheeling between points, so that the person learns how to change the position of the pedals approaching a corner
- As a progression to turning, introduce exercises in back pedalling , so that the person learns the link between speed and pushing pedals
- As skill level increases, point-to-point areas (start to finish) can be used to introduce concepts such as looking behind and raising a hand off the handlebars





## FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION



Where school teachers can facilitate practice on bikes for pupils the following questions can be used to promote learning. These can be posed as self-reflective questions by the teacher, or can be used directly to prompt pupils.

- Which lever controls front and back brakes?
- How is the bike stopped from rolling before getting on?
- What is the way to get on a bike safely and correctly?
- Are both feet flat on the ground and reaching easily?
- Is the person learning sitting in the correct position – upright, eyes looking ahead, arms straight out to the handlebars and relaxed?
- Can the person learning move comfortably and easily with feet walking on the ground, while sitting on the saddle and keeping balance?
- Is the person learning getting enough momentum to stay balanced for a length of time when both feet are off the ground?
- Is the person learning in a safe, effective starting position?
- Can they start off independently?
- Can they pedal increasing distances independently while keeping balance?
- Can they use their brakes to stop safely and in a controlled way?

**At the end of each session, emphasise the importance of practice as an essential part of learning – someone learning should get out and practise their skills on the bike before the next session**