

RIDING WITH YOUR CHILD

FAQs AND TIPS



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Getting ready

Where should I go to find the right bike for my child?

- Ask your local bike shop for professional advice on selecting the right type of bike to ensure that it is the correct size and fit.
- A second-hand bike can be more cost-effective and sustainable, but you'll need to thoroughly inspect the bike to make sure it is safe to ride and meets your child's needs. Adjustments or repairs might be required before it can be ridden. Darebin Council offers Free Monthly Bike Checks darebin.vic.gov.au/bikechecks

What should I consider?

- Your child should be able to sit on the seat, with hands on the handlebars and place the balls of both feet on the ground. Don't raise the handlebars or seat beyond the warning marks on the seat post. See VicRoads *Bike Fit Guide* bit.ly/bike-fit-guide
- A back pedal brake is good for younger children whose hands may not be large or strong enough to operate hand brakes effectively.
- Gears are only useful if the rider knows how to use them properly, which is most likely at about 8 years of age. Geared bikes will have hand brakes and generally 20-inch or larger wheels.

Know the rules

- Always wear a bike helmet, fitted properly and fastened
- Make sure the bike has a rear red reflector, a bell, and at least one working brake
- For a full list of road rules, refer to bit.ly/bike-road-rules



Learning to ride

What's the best way to teach my child how to balance without training wheels?

- Balance bikes (training bikes with no pedals) are a great way to help your child develop their balance.
- You can also convert a normal bike by removing the pedals and lowering the seat height so your child has a slight bend in the knee.
- Practicing on a large open area such as a school yard or vacant carpark is ideal. Grass can be harder to ride on and gain momentum unless it's smooth and sloped.
- Bicycle Network has excellent tips for teaching your child to ride a bike bit.ly/bike-fit-parents

What if my children are at different stages with their riding?

- A tag-along (half a children's bike attached to the back of an adult's bike) is a good way to keep one child under your control while you supervise an older sibling.
- Child seats mounted on front or back, trailers and cargo bikes are other great options for younger children not ready to ride on their own.

When is it appropriate for my child to ride without me?

This will be different for every child and the more you ride with them the better sense you will have. Consider their riding experience, character, skills and confidence.

How can I prepare my child to ride independently?

- It's best if they start on a route they're familiar with from riding with you.
- Map out new routes together using the Darebin TravelSmart map darebin.vic.gov.au/travelsmart
- Ask your child's school if they offer Bike Ed for Schools vicroads.vic.gov.au/bikeed

How can I improve my own bike riding skills?

- Darebin Council runs regular free and low-cost bike programs suitable for all ages darebin.vic.gov.au/bikeskills
- See also VicRoads Adult Bike Ed vicroads.vic.gov.au/adultbikeed

Riding on footpaths and shared paths



Is there a difference between a footpath and a shared path?

Yes, a shared path is marked by walker and bike signage. It is designed to be used by both pedestrians and bike riders of all ages.

Who has right of way on shared paths and footpaths?

Bike riders must keep left unless it is impracticable to do so and must give way to pedestrians.

Who should ride in front – child or parent?

- When riding on the footpath, follow closely behind your child so you can see them clearly at all times and provide instructions or warnings.
- Remind your child to give way to pedestrians and keep to the left.
- If there are two adults, one can ride in front and one behind the child/children.
- On a wide shared path without road crossings, it might be appropriate to lead and model courteous and safe riding practices for them to follow.

How can I help my child to look out for cars backing out of driveways?

- Every time you walk or ride along the footpath with your child, take the opportunity to remind them to turn their heads to look for cars reversing from driveways. Peripheral vision is not fully developed until around 10 years of age, so younger children need to learn to move their focus.
- Explain that it is hard for drivers to see little people and talk about the importance of standing clear.
- If you feel your child is unable to ride safely near driveways, interim measures include using a child seat on your bike or attaching a tag-along bike.

Any tips for crossing roads?

Stop, dismount and walk your bikes together across the road when it is safe to do so.

Know the rules

Who can ride on the footpath?

- ➔ Children under 13 years of age.
- ➔ People older than this who accompany children under 13 years.
- ➔ Anyone with a medical certificate that says they have a disability that makes it difficult to ride on the road (and anyone accompanying them).

On the road

What's the best time to start the transition from footpath to road?

- Legally, children need to start riding on the road from the age of 13 years, so it is a good idea to start practising early to help them build their confidence.
- There's no specific age that is considered the best for transitioning from footpath to road but a good time to begin is when they can demonstrate good bike control and can behave safely.
- Start on quiet, local roads and venture onto roads with more traffic as confidence and skills increase.

Where should I position myself on the road when riding with children?

- Ride close behind and slightly further out to deflect traffic coming from behind.
- If there are two adults riding with children, one adult should lead the group, riding exactly where the children are to ride and the other should ride at the back, slightly to the right in a protective position.



For more information about Darebin's bike programs and support, visit

darebin.vic.gov.au/darebinlovesbikes

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