



Sustaining Dunbar

Travel Advice Fact Sheet 3 -Buying and Choosing a Bike



When buying a bike for you or your child, think about what type of journeys you want to use your bike for, and where you want to go. Choose the bike that's best for the majority of journeys you intend to make. Many bikes have lots of extras, you may be able to keep the cost down by choosing a bike with only the things you think you'll really need on it. Most importantly, go to a bike shop and try some out, test ride a few.

What Size do I Need?

This is the most important part of choosing the right bike. A good bike shop will help you, but some basic guidelines are:-

Children's Bikes - Your child must be comfortable, able to reach the handlebars and brakes easily, and touch the floor with the ball of their foot. Based on an "average sized" child, the starting point is:

- Balance bike - suitable for ages 18 months to 4 years
- 12" Wheel Cycles - Suitable for ages 2½ to 4 years
- 14" Wheel Cycles - Suitable for ages 3 to 5 years
- 16" Wheel Cycles - Suitable for ages 5 to 7 years
- 20" Wheel Cycles - Suitable for ages 7 to 9 years
- 24" Wheel Cycles - Suitable for ages 9 to 11 years
- 26"+ Wheel Cycles - Suitable for ages 11+ (These are classed as adult cycles.)

Generally, when your child can ride well without stabilisers, move up to a 16" wheel. When your child reaches a 20" wheel you should be able to get different frame sizes too, giving more flexibility. Don't be tempted to buy a bike which is too big for your child, thinking that they will grow into it. A bike which is too big will be hard for your child to control, making it dangerous. Remember too that it is easier to learn to cycle on a bike which is slightly too small, where the rider can put both feet on the ground more easily.

Adult Bikes - Adult bikes usually come with 26", 27" and 28" wheels. The size of the bike is determined more by frame size, which is measured in inches from the top of the frame by the seat post to the centre of the axle carrying the pedal arms. To get a rough estimate of the frame size you'll need, you should take your inside leg measurement, subtract 1" for a road bike or 3" for a mountain bike, then subtract 10". This will give you the maximum frame size that you should try. When trying out a bike, you should have at least 1" clearance between the frame and your bottom for a road bike, and 3" clearance for a mountain bike. Bikes also vary in length from saddle to handlebars, so don't forget to check this too. All saddles are adjustable by at least 4", enabling you to adjust your bike to fit perfectly.

There is a bike to suit you



Road



Mountain



Hybrid



Traditional Roadster



Folding Bike



Electric



Tag-along



Trailer



Types of Bike

Road Bikes - Designed to be speedy so have lightweight frames and narrow tyres, and often have drop handlebars. There are two main types; racing, which are the lightest and fastest, and touring which are sturdier and more suitable for longer journeys.

Mountain Bikes - These have very sturdy frames, fatter, knobby tyres and very good brakes and suspensions. Although designed for off-road cycling, they are good for all types of terrain and can be fitted with smoother tyres for city riding.

Hybrid Bikes - These have the speed of a road bike and the strength of a mountain bike. Lightweight but sturdy, and suitable for most terrains; a good everyday option.

Traditional Roadster - Very common in Europe, heavy but durable with a traditional upright riding position and step-through frame. Good for everyday, utility cycling around town.

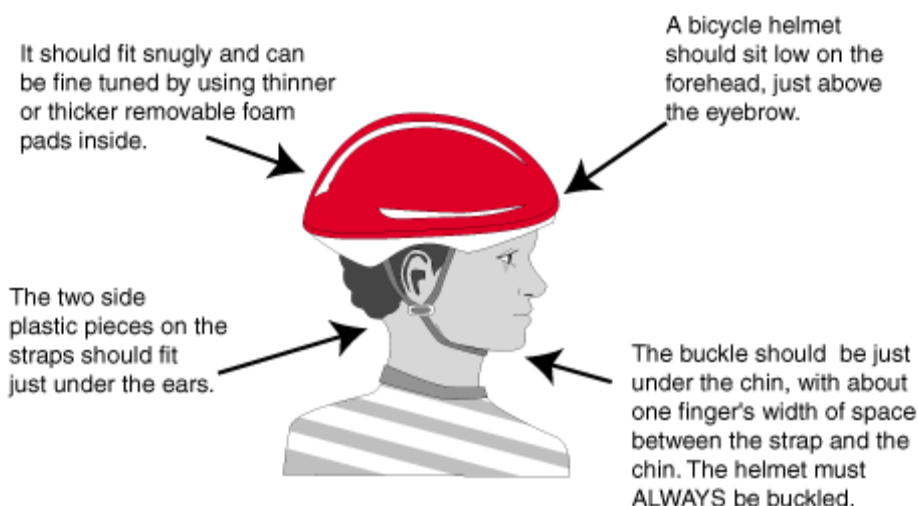
Folding Bikes - Ideal for people who use public transport a lot, but use their bikes at either end of their journey. Folding bikes have smaller wheels and fewer gears to make them more compact and able to be folded down to a carryable size.

Electric Bikes - Rechargeable battery will help you to get up hills or pull a heavy load.

Accessories

Helmets - Helmets will provide protection if you fall and so are particularly recommended for novice cyclists and children. Your local bike shop will help you choose a correctly fitting helmet.

Fitting a Bicycle Helmet



For a final check, gently try to roll the helmet back and forth on the head. The helmet should not move more than 1/2 inch in any direction.

Bells - A bell is a must for considerate and polite cyclists. Pedestrians often cannot hear cyclists coming up behind them.

Panniers/Baskets - Essential for utility cycling.

Lights - Required by law when cycling in the dark. You will need a white light on the front and a red light on the rear.

Mud-guards - Recommended so you don't get mud and splashes up your back!

Skirt-guards - fit over the back wheel and keep long skirts and coats out of the spokes.

Bike Lock - D-locks and cable locks are the strongest. Park your bike at busy, well-lit locations.

Clothing - Reflective clothing such as bands or vests are a good idea if you cycle a lot at night. Gloves for cold weather and waterproofs for the rain are also useful.

Child carrying Equipment - This is covered in Factsheet 5 - Cycling with children.

Keeping the Cost Down

Second-hand bike sales are often held at the Dunbar Primary School Fair and the annual BikeFest, both held in Dunbar in the Summer, look out for details. There is also a national scheme called Cyclescheme, available to employees, which could save you around 40% of the cost of your bike if you use it to commute to work. More details can be found at www.cyclescheme.co.uk.

Setting Up Your Bike

When you've bought your bike, your perfect riding position can be achieved by making a few simple adjustments to the saddle and handlebars:

Handlebars - Well positioned handlebars are essential for comfort and safety. A good position to start is with your handlebars at the same height as your saddle. For a speedier head down position, lower the handlebars. For the traditional "sit up and beg" riding position which is easier on your back, raise the handlebars.

Saddle - A well-positioned saddle will maximise the power from your legs. To find the right height for your saddle, place your bike next to a tall wall. Get on and put the ball of your foot on the pedal at its lowest point without stretching. Your leg should be straight. To adjust the height of your saddle undo the bolt or quick release catch at the top of the frame so you can slide the seat post up or down, making sure you don't go past the minimum mark. Try it out; if you're rocking from side to side when you cycle, you're probably too high. To adjust the position of the saddle, use an Allen key or adjustable spanner to loosen the bolt underneath the saddle at the top of the seat post. You can move the saddle forward and back, and adjust its angle. Adjust the saddle so your leg pushes vertically down on the pedal. If you slide anyway, readjust the saddle. Don't forget to tighten it well before trying and when you've finished. Remember, women's saddles tend to be wider than men's for their wider hips!

Bike Maintenance

Factsheet 6 - Looking After Your Bike will give you some basic information. Sustaining Dunbar runs 'learn to look after your bike' sessions where you can learn how to do day-to-day things such as fixing punctures and annoying squeaks and adjusting your brakes. Contact dan@sustainingdunbar.org for details, or phone 866920. We also run bike training courses from beginner to advanced to help you build confidence and get more out of your cycling.

Useful Websites

www.sustainingdunbar.org - lots of useful information about all forms of sustainable travel.

www.dunbarcycling.org - for information about cycling events in and around Dunbar.

www.thecyclingexperts.co.uk - to find a specialist cycle retailer near you.

www.whycycle.co.uk - gives wonderful advice for new cyclists in the UK.

www.spokes.org.uk - for all aspects of cycling, including advice about cycling with children.

Books

Bicycle, Love Your Bike: The Complete Guide to Everyday Cycling by Helen Pidd

Richards' Bicycle Repair Manual by Richard Ballantine and Richard Grant. Whatever the task, from fixing a roadside puncture to tackling a major refit, this book's reliable methods and simple instructions show you how to keep a bike in perfect running order.