



Cycling - the facts

Riding a bike is great fun. It's good for our bodies and good for the planet as well. But cycling can be dangerous, and drivers and cyclists need to take proper care to keep each other safe. Cyclists are some of the most vulnerable road users, and children are at particular risk. About 100 children under the age of 11 are killed or seriously injured in cycling collisions every year.¹

Healthy bodies, healthy planet

Cycling is an excellent form of exercise and can help with both weight loss and physical fitness. For children, cycling can help fine-tune skills like balance and coordination, and can even boost brain power by increasing blood flow to the brain.²

Cycling also helps to keep the planet healthy. More than a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions come from cars and other vehicles,³ and this pollution can ruin communities' ability to enjoy their local areas. If more people choose to cycle instead of driving, there will be less traffic on the roads and the air will be cleaner to breathe.



Cycling is good for our health, good for the planet and good for our economy too

-  =  Improves fitness
-  =  Boosts brain power
-  =  Increases wellbeing
-  =  Lowers pollution
-  =  Reduces congestion

Children should cycle with a grown up on safe cycle paths

Traffic is heavy, it hits hard and can hurt people, so cyclists should avoid riding on the road where they can. Most roads are unsafe for children, especially fast and bendy rural roads and busy roads in towns and cities that do not have separate spaces for cyclists. Children can perceive hazards differently to adults, and may think that if they can see an approaching car, the driver can see them too.⁴ Children tend to concentrate on what is right in front of them and might not notice things at the edges of their vision.⁵ This can affect their awareness of traffic.

Find out more at www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

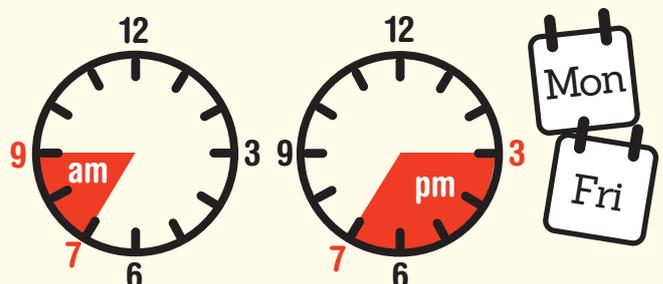
Younger children in particular can find it difficult to pay attention to more than one aspect of a potentially dangerous situation, and generally speaking children cannot accurately judge the speed and distance of approaching traffic until they are about 12 years old.

Training builds skills

Around the age of 10, some children begin riding their bikes to school by themselves. In 2016, almost half (44%) of all cyclist deaths and injuries happened at times when children would be travelling to and from schools – on weekdays between 7am and 9am, or 3pm and 7pm.⁶

Training helps give children the skills and confidence they need to prepare them for cycling safely on the roads. Organisations like Bikeability, Cycling Scotland and Cycle Training Wales run training sessions for all ages and abilities, and cover topics from balance and control to planning independent journeys on busier roads. Schools can arrange for professional trainers to deliver courses with their pupils.

44% of cycling casualties occur at times when children are travelling to and from school



Protecting ourselves

Although there are no laws that require cyclists to wear helmets in the UK, Brake and the Highway code recommend wearing them on all cycling trips.⁷ Almost a quarter of cyclists involved in crashes suffer serious head injuries,⁸ and although helmets can't stop a crash from happening and can never stop all injuries, wearing a well-fitted, good-quality helmet can protect children's heads if they fall off their bike, reducing the risk of serious head or brain injury by 69%.⁹ High-visibility and reflective clothing can also increase a cyclist's chances of being seen,¹⁰ and could reduce the likelihood of being involved in a crash.¹¹



Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk of serious head or brain injury by

69%



It's really important that a cycle helmet fits correctly – if it moves around at all, the level of protection will be reduced, and if it's too small it won't be able to protect the lower part of the head. The straps should form a 'v' under the child's ears without them being able to fit more than two fingers between the straps and their chin. The gap between their eyebrows and the helmet should be no bigger than the width of two fingers.¹²

Brake recommends that children under the age of 10 should always ride with a grown up and should only cycle on safe, segregated paths away from motorised traffic.

Our short, animated film for children called We Love to Cycle explains how to stay as safe as possible when riding a bike. This is available in your Road Safety Week action pack.



Get involved

For Road Safety Week 2018, we are shouting out about the safety of those on two wheels, and encouraging everyone to be Bike Smart. We can all play our part in raising awareness about the importance of protecting those on bikes and this year we are asking drivers to be Bike Smart by looking out for those on two wheels, driving safely and slowly and giving riders plenty of space, cyclists to be Bike Smart with safe riding behaviours and appropriate training and equipment, and policy-makers to be Bike Smart by mandating lifesaving technology and prioritising cycle friendly infrastructure.

Smart drivers are Bike Smart

Smart drivers are responsible and considerate of other road users, particularly vulnerable road users such as cyclists and motorcyclists. Our short explanation film, infographics and driver advice sheet outline simple but really important measures that all drivers can use to make roads safer for everyone on two wheels. These are available in your Road Safety Week action pack. Please share these messages with parents and carers.



References

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