

Get going

with Sustrans

Teaching a child to ride without stabilisers

Cycling for the first time without stabilisers can be a very powerful memory in a child's life. It is an achievement that will help build confidence and a natural sense of adventure.

FILM

This information sheet should be used in conjunction with the Sustrans film "Teaching a child to ride without stabilisers – a how to guide" available at tinyurl.com/losestabilisers



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Activity instructions

1 Get ready by lowering the seat and removing the pedals

Lowering the seat and removing the pedals enables the child to scoot along on the bike with both feet. Use this opportunity to provide instruction on using the brakes.

2 Giant steps

Demonstrate how a giant walks. When the child is ready, encourage them forwards for about 10 metres using giant steps.

3 Kangaroo hops

Demonstrate kangaroo hops. Encourage the child forwards for about 10 metres using the hops.



3



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4 Put one pedal back on

Either left or right, it doesn't matter. Make sure the child is comfortable on the bike and feels secure. An easy way of doing this is to get them to do a little 'wiggle' with the brakes on.

What you need

- A bike per child without stabilisers
- A spanner to remove and replace the pedals (tip: if the pedals aren't already marked left and right, make a note yourself as the left pedal threads in the opposite way to the right)
- A camera to capture the moment (optional)

Things to remember

Find a quiet, traffic-free area such as a cycle path or somewhere with short grass or smooth tarmac. A slight downwards slope can often help. Look out for hazards like pedestrians, dogs, balls and vehicles.

Ensure the pedals are replaced correctly.

Tip

To help with balance, encourage the child to look ahead, not down at the wheel or their feet.

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Teaching a child to ride without stabilisers (continued)



5 One pedal scoot

With one foot on the pedal encourage the child to scoot forwards using the other foot. Make sure they are looking up. Stop after about 10 metres.

6 Both pedals on

Put the other pedal on. Do the 'wobble' (with brakes on) to show that the bike is stable and safe.

7 First go – Hold the child (not the bike)

Explain that you are going to hold their back and their shoulder/upper arm. Get the child to put their feet on the pedals and check that they are ready. Encourage them to look up, let go of their brakes and pedal. Walk forwards (still holding on to them) and slowly release your grip. Stop after 3-5 metres.



8 Second go

Do the 'wobble' (with brakes on). Holding the child as before, get them to put both feet on the pedals. Encourage them to look up. If all clear, count down from 3 and encourage the child to let go of the brakes and pedal forwards. Let go after a few steps, then step back to exaggerate the distance they have travelled. Shout 'stop' after 5-10 metres. Now count out the paces so they can see how far they have gone.

9 Third go

This time, reduce contact with the child by gripping their clothes with one hand and holding the bike handlebars with the other. Repeat steps as before, releasing them after only a few steps and letting them ride for as long as they wish.

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