

Organizing a Bicycle Safety Rodeo



Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board
November 2003

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Rodeo: A Bicycle Skills Event For Children

Bicycles have been used for transportation and recreation in this country for over a hundred years. In recent years, bicycling has enjoyed increased interest and participation. It's estimated that 57 million people in this country rode a bicycle in the summer of 2002.¹ Unfortunately, increased ridership has resulted in an alarming increase in injuries as a result of crashes. In 2000, 690 persons were reported to have died in bicycle/motor vehicle crashes and additional 51,000 persons were injured in the United States.² It is worth noting that injury prevention specialists often point out that accident is a misnomer, in that it implies an event strictly left to chance. Preferred terms include "crash" or "incident".

Research has determined that bicyclist behavior (or misbehavior) is the cause of many of these incidents.³ Studies have provided us with the information we need to design a hands on educational program that will teach bicyclists the skills they need to reduce their chances of getting injured.

Common situations for bicycle/motor vehicle crashes occur when the bicyclist:

- enters a roadway from a sidewalk or driveway without stopping,
- runs a stop sign or traffic light,
- rides on the wrong (left) side of the roadway,
- rides in low light or at night without proper lighting or reflective clothing.

Other common causes involve the cyclist swerving or making an unexpected turn in front of a vehicle, or a motorist cutting in front of a cyclist. We also know that a vast majority of incidents and serious injuries don't involve cars. This happens when a cyclist runs into something like a pothole, road debris, a pedestrian, another bicyclist or simply loses control of the bicycle.

A rodeo is a series of events or challenges, which provides an opportunity for bicyclists to practice and develop skills they need to avoid these typical crashes. Some are designed as large, municipal events with skills activities, exhibits, and games, while others are much smaller in format requiring a smaller number of volunteers to run the event.

The goal of any bicycle rodeo is to provide an opportunity for the participants to learn, practice, and demonstrate their bicycle handling skills in a fun, noncompetitive atmosphere. It is designed to allow the evaluator to provide immediate feedback to the participant in a positive manner (e.g., satisfactory; needs improvement). If they have difficulty with a particular lesson, they must have the chance to keep trying until they're comfortable with it.

¹ National Survey of Pedestrian & Bicyclist Attitudes and Behaviors, 2002, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

² Traffic Safety Facts 2000. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

³ A study of Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Accidents: Identification of Problem Types and Countermeasure approaches. 1977 Cross Kenneth and Fisher, Gary. National Traffic Safety Administration.

ORGANIZING A RODEO

Organize a planning committee

Contact local service organizations, parent-teacher associations, the health department, Cooperative Extension, bike shop owners, and cycling clubs.

In addition to the volunteers needed to carry out tasks in preparation for the rodeo, a minimum of seven will be required on the day of the event (seven stations plus registration). You must have at least one person for each station who is familiar with the purpose of the rodeo and that specific station. Most stations will be difficult to manage without extra help. Some tasks can be handled by last-minute recruits (such as parents), who can assist the instructors or serve as evaluators at each station. This allows each instructor to actively direct the cyclists. These recruits may also help move children from station to station to avoid long lines. This guide is designed to help you efficiently organize an event for youth between the ages of 8 and 12 with approximately 10 volunteers.

Don't forget to seek the involvement of your local police agency. In the past, police have been invited to inspect or register bicycles at rodeos. With more and more agencies forming units with police on bicycles, you may find them an even more valuable resource. A police cyclist who has participated in a police cyclist-training course is a highly skilled cyclist, and someone you can look to for firsthand information on cycling skills.

A bike mechanic is an asset to have at the inspection station. Sometimes local bike shops will provide such expertise.

Choose a location and date

Choose a convenient playground, gymnasium or parking lot in which to hold the event. Hard-surfaced, level, and traffic-free areas are best. Pick the site (make sure you get permission to use it) and date. Ideally, your location should provide the opportunity to run at least a portion of the course on a street. Check with local officials; they may be able to temporarily close a street to traffic.

Publicity

Ideally, this event is held in conjunction with other community or school activities. This helps support the educational goals of the program and enhances your publicity efforts. Don't forget to promote it in the local newspapers, radio and television. *See the appendix for sample publicity pieces.*

Funding

You can enhance your program and save some money, if you find sponsors willing to cover the costs of promotional material, supplies, ribbons, prizes or certificates, refreshments, and publicity.

Helmets

In New York State, effective June 1, 1994, all persons between the ages of 1 and 14 are required by law to wear a safety helmet while on a bicycle. (Children less than one year of age are prohibited from riding as a passenger on a bicycle.) While persons over the age of 14 are not required to wear a helmet under NYS law, it is strongly recommended that all cyclists wear a helmet.

Awards, prizes, refreshments

You may decide to give certificates of participation to all who complete the course. See *the appendix for sample certificates*.

It is highly recommended that bicyclists of all ages wear a Snell and/or ANSI approved helmet while bicycling. You may be able to arrange for helmets to be available for participants to borrow during the event and/or have them available for purchase. Local bike shops and health departments are generally aware of special programs that could be set up to offer helmets for very reasonable prices.

Often, organizers choose to award several prizes (reflective clothing/helmets) instead of one large prize (a bike), and choose not to identify just the "winner" for the day, but instead hold a random drawing from among everyone who completes the course.

It's not always practical to expect everyone to stay for the entire event making it difficult to address the participants as a group. One option is to present certificates and prizes later, in conjunction with a school assembly or other event.

A well-fed volunteer is a happy one. Consider having coffee, juice, donuts, etc., available. Other ideas include providing beverages and snacks for the participants. Local commercial establishments may be willing to contribute supplies.

Planning and designing the course

Be prepared for a mix in the age range and skill levels of the participants. The success of this program is based upon the one or more than one adult's ability to work individually with participants, develop a sense of their skill level, and take him or her one step further.

Younger and less-experienced participants will find demonstrating some of the basic skills such as balance, turning, and scanning challenging. Older and more-experienced participants will be challenged with more difficult skills such as avoiding hazards and executing quick turns.

A "warm-up pit" can provide some diversion in your course. The person in the "pit" can work with those needing special attention. Those less adept at balance and control could work on the serpentine or slow race. Those looking for more of a challenge could try emergency turns. The pit holds participants' interest, and gives them a chance to fool around and release some energy.

Keep in mind the traffic flow. You may find it necessary to limit access to the course by using natural boundaries or putting ribbon around the perimeter.

Orientation

Each person should be very clear on the purpose of the station they will manage, as well as being familiar with the activities taking place elsewhere. Volunteers should be oriented to the objectives and procedures of the stations prior to the day of the event. Use the following station descriptions to orient the volunteers, and give each one a photocopy of the description of the station they will be operating. After the course is laid out, review each station with the entire cast of volunteers.

Volunteers should be easily identifiable. Issue them nametags, vests or t-shirts.

Wrap-up

Be sure you have follow-up publicity and write thank-you letters. How will you evaluate your event? Have you made notes on what worked well and what you would like improve upon for the next time?

Bicycle Safety Rodeo Materials

Items supplied in the Bicycle Safety Trailer

- Orange Safety Cones
- "Bicycle Rodeo" Banner
- Dutchess County TSB Sign
- Station Identification Signs
- Line Machine (organizer needs to supply 2 bags of athletic field lime, available at home improvement centers or garden supply stores)
- 100 yard Measuring Tape
- Basic Tools, Bicycle Pump, Repair Stand
- Bicycle Inspection Forms
- Registration Forms
- Certificates of Completion
- Bicycle Helmets
- Various Pamphlets/Stickers/etc.
- Tent/Canopy
- Tables and Chairs

Items you will need to obtain

- 10-12 Clipboards
- Pencils for registration table and volunteers at stations
- First Aid Kit
- TV and VCR (if desired)

Time Line

Three Months Prior

- Contact Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board – The board has a Bicycle Safety Trailer with materials for a bicycle safety rodeo. Once contacted the board will review the requirements needed for use of the trailer including liability agreements. The trailer is available on a first come first serve basis, so plan ahead and contact the board early.
- Choose the date and time – Setup for the rodeo takes about one to two hours. Allow approximately a half hour for each child to complete the course. Registration should have a specific closing time, so that children do not show up 10 minutes before the end of the rodeo and expect to be able to complete the course.
- Arrange for volunteers.
- Check with local businesses and local service organizations about the availability of support for giveaways.

Six Weeks Prior

- Contact local elementary/grade school principals to place an advertising announcement/flyer in their schools. The children should be reminded to bring their own bicycles and helmets. There are several helmets provided with the trailer for those children that do not have a helmet or to distribute as required.
- Contact local radio stations and local newspapers for public service announcements. The Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board should be identified as a sponsor in addition to any other agencies assisting your efforts.
- Make a “floor plan” of the proposed site. If the site will not accommodate all stations, the rodeo may be reduced. This would reduce the number of volunteers needed. Be sure there is a secure place for children to park their bicycle while registering and watching videos (if appropriate).
- Contact local bike shops or bicycle clubs for help with bicycle inspection stations.

One Week Prior

- Have a meeting with all volunteers to explain the rodeo course. Give each volunteer a copy of the rules and directions. If the police or other organizations are volunteering, they may want to be present at the meeting.
- Answer questions and distribute site layout.
- Check supplies to make sure everything is ready.

Day of Rodeo

- Arrive at the site two hours prior to scheduled start time to set-up. This should include signage, and registration table. Make sure your first aid kit is close at hand.
- One hour before the rodeo, volunteers should arrive to set up their own stations. Make sure the area is clear of debris, sand and rocks to avoid possible injury to the participants.

Station 1: Registration And Inspection

Objective

Check the safety and fit of the bicycle before riding.

Background

There is no documentation on the frequency or severity of crashes that happen as a result of a riding bicycle in poor operating condition or improper fit to the rider. Nevertheless, crashes due to mechanical failure, or the rider's inability to maneuver due to improper fit, clearly are avoidable.

Questions

- What happens if screws and bolts are loose? How do they get loose?
- What kind of brakes does your bike have?
- What could happen to your brakes that would cause them not to work?
- What happens if your brakes don't work?
- Why do your handlebars need to fit tightly?
- Where do you adjust your seat?

Procedure

Inspection:

Look over the bike, checking: security of seat and handlebars, adequate brakes, loose or rusty chain, and tire inflation.

Fit:

Have the child straddle the bike to make sure that it fits properly.

- a. Sitting on the seat with hands on the handlebar, the child must be able to place the balls of both feet on the ground.
- b. Straddling the center bar, the child should be able to stand with both feet flat on the ground with about a 1-inch clearance between the crotch and the bar. On a bike with a "step through" frame, the rider must be able to adequately reach the pedals while seated.
- c. If the bike is outfitted with hand brakes, make sure that the child can comfortably grasp the brakes and apply sufficient pressure to stop the bike. Do they know which is the front brake? Rear brake?

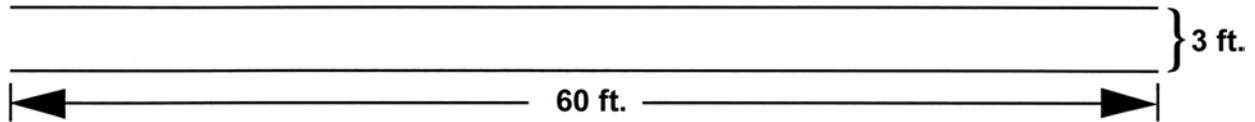


***Tip -** This station can turn into a bottleneck, unless you have many volunteers. To facilitate participant movement without sacrificing safety, do a quick safety check at the beginning and set up a repair/adjustment shop as a final optional station. Bikes considered unsafe for the course go directly to the repair station.

Station 2: Mounting And Dismounting

Objective

Test the primary sense of balance while mounting the bicycle. Rider must mount, steer bike without losing balance or swerving out of the lines, and then dismount.



Procedure

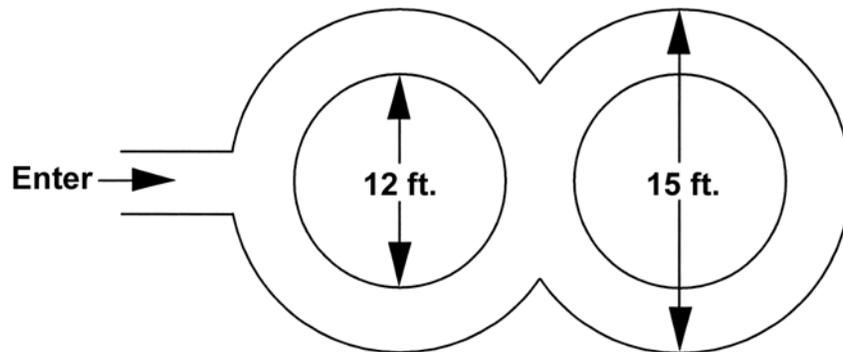
1. Have two parallel lines, 3 feet apart and 60 feet in length. If space is limited, reduce to 40 feet.
2. Rider should place both hands on the handlebars and the left foot on the left pedal with the right foot on the ground to provide balance. The rider is then to push off with their right foot and steer the bike without losing balance or swerving out of the lines the sixty feet, and then dismount the bicycle.
3. Young riders can develop a sense of balance as well as a sense of momentum in turning. It emphasizes how a slight swing of the front wheel serves to reinstate the balance of the rider when he starts to topple. It trains for straight riding.

**Tip – Have the rider look over their shoulders while riding in a straight line. This replicates looking for traffic.*

Station 3: Circling And Changing Direction

Objective

To test change of balance required by intended change in direction:



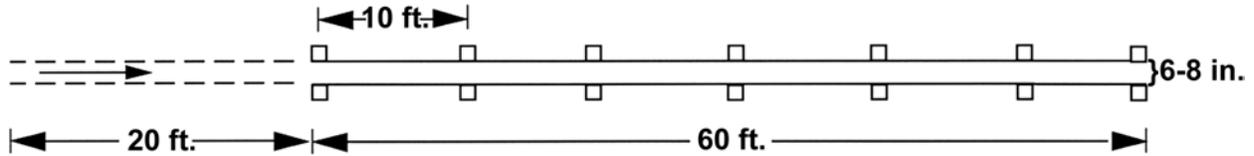
Procedure

1. Have two touching circles, each 15 feet in diameter; two inside circles 12 feet in diameter.
2. The rider is to start five feet from the circles and enter the circles at the opening. The rider should start to the right and maneuver through the circles in a figure eight. Have them ride as close to the inside circle as possible without touching the line and ride the figure 8 two times.
3. Traffic frequently demands that a bicycle rider change their direction without warning. It tests the ability of a rider to shift their balance and their direction.

Station 4: Straight Line Control

Objective

To determine the ability of the rider to balance satisfactorily, and ride a straight line in a narrow space:



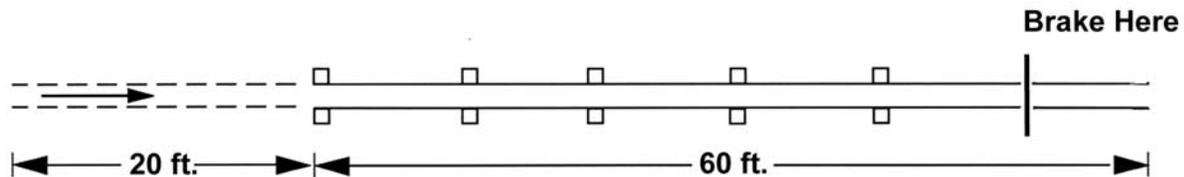
Procedure

1. The lane is 60 feet long and six to eight inches wide, Reduce the length to 40 feet if space is limited.
2. There should be 20 feet available in front of the start of the lane for the rider to balance, but it does not need to be marked.
3. Place small cones on the outside of the lane at ten-foot intervals.
4. The rider is to mount the bicycle in the first twenty feet and then ride as close to a straight line as possible between the cones the remaining 60 feet.
5. This is similar to Station 2 where riders can develop a sense of balance as well as a sense of momentum in turning. It emphasizes and makes clear how a slight swing of the front wheel serves to reinstate the balance of the rider when he starts to topple. It trains for straight riding in a narrow space say between parked cars and the roadway.

Station 6: Stopping Ability

Objective

Test judgment and braking control. Rider should ride through the first 50 feet and be able to bring the bike to a complete stop before touching either foot to the ground within the last 10 feet.



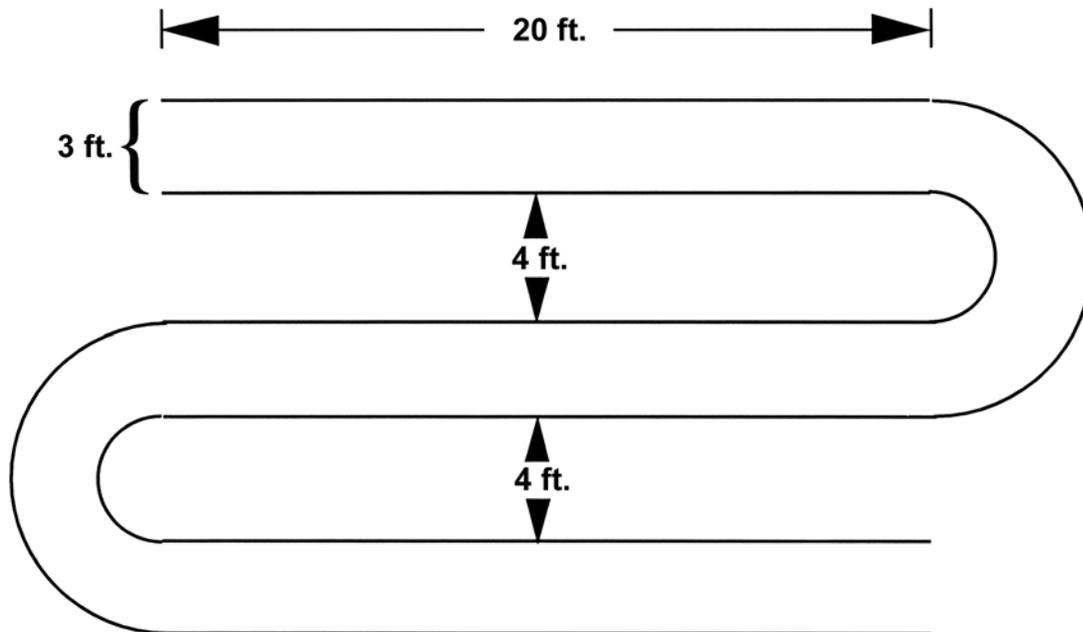
Procedure

1. The lane is 60 feet long and six to eight inches wide, Reduce the length to 40 feet if space is limited.
2. There should be 20 feet available in front of the start of the lane for the rider to balance, but it does not need to be marked.
3. A cross mark should be placed 10 feet from the end.
4. Rider should place both hands on the handlebars and the left foot on the left pedal with the right foot on the ground. Have the ride start by pushing off with their right foot, then ride in a straight line between the cones for the first fifty feet and then stop within the last ten feet without putting a foot down.

Station 7: Short Radius Turning

Objective

To test balance, speed control, and steering coordination. Rider should maneuver through the course without veering over the lines or putting a foot down to balance.



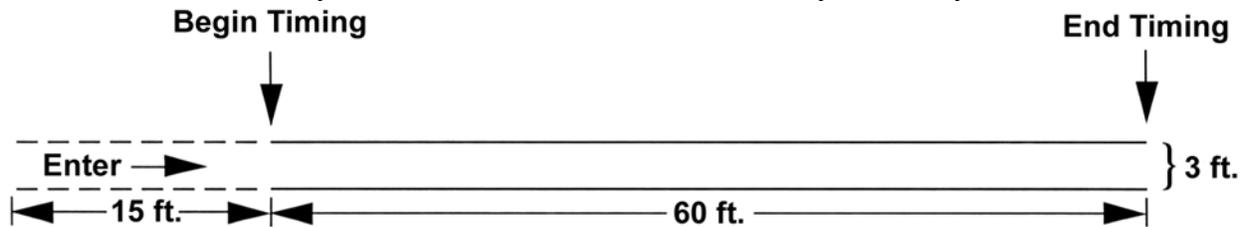
Procedure

1. The lane is three feet wide with each straight section 20 feet long.
2. Draw all straight sections first, and then connect them with an arc.
3. Four feet should separate each lane.
4. Rider should place both hands on the handlebars and the left foot on the left pedal with the right foot on the ground. Have the ride start by pushing off with their right foot, then ride in a straight line between the lines and maneuver through the turns without stopping or putting a foot down.

Station 8: Slow Speed Control

Objective

To determine the ability of the rider to balance satisfactorily on a bicycle:



Procedure

1. Use a stopwatch or watch with a second hand.
2. Instruct the rider to mount the bicycle 5 - 10 feet to the rear of the starting line and ride between the lines the full distance in not less than 25 seconds. Riding fast makes balancing easier.
3. This tests the rider's ability to balance on the bicycle and ride straight while moving at a slow speed.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to set up a valuable learning experience for the youth of your community. We never know when we've passed on a skill or modified a behavior that prevents a serious injury. Unfortunately, we know all too well the pain and anguish when there is an injury. Your group's interest in promoting safe cycling is sure to have a positive impact on all involved.

With any luck, your event had few glitches, everyone learned something about bicycling skills, had fun, and the organizers are making notes for improvements to next year's event. This guide has only been able to serve as a starter for you, and we hope it has given you some good ideas. The possibilities for making a rodeo event fun and exciting are limited only by the creativity of those involved. What did you do to make it run more smoothly? What would you have liked to know that was not included in this guide? What tips do you have for other planners? We'd like to hear from you, how your event went. Send pictures, newspaper articles, or suggestions for inclusion into the next edition.

Once again, thank you for taking the time (and interest) to get involved in this very important safety program. Your interest is much appreciated.

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(845) 486-3603 (voice)
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trafficsafety@co.dutchess.ny.us(e-mail)

<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/TrafficSafety/TSIndex.htm>

APPENDIX

The key to successfully using the documents in this appendix is to make them your own. Your options for publicity and parent involvement should in no way be limited by these samples. (Go nuts.)

Publicity poster/flyer

Be sure to list, in big print, the location, date, time, and the name of your local chapter (including an address and phone number).

News releases

Personalize these as much as possible, they are just samples. Try to make them interesting to the local media.

Letter to parents before rodeo (with enclosures, below):

Again these are just samples personalize them filling in the missing details. The following two pieces are good background to include with the pre-rodeo package.

"How to Fit a Bicycle Helmet"

"What Every Parent Should Know"

Letter to parents after rodeo

This is a great way to reinforce the lessons that you worked so hard to impart at the rodeo; it allows the parent to pick up where you leave off.

Quick-Check hang tag

Each participant will be given one of these tags when they go through Station One. The volunteer at each station will make comments on this tag. This will help document the child's success in each area.

Certificate of completion

These certificates given to each child at the end of the rodeo enhance their feeling of accomplishment. This sample may be reproduced and filled in.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASES

Bicycle Rodeo to be Held

Bicycles have been used for transportation and recreation in this country for over a hundred years. Most recently, bicycling has enjoyed increased interest and participation. It is estimated that there are 57 million people in this country who rode a bicycle in the summer of 2002.

Unfortunately, nearly 10,000 injuries occur as a result of bicyclist/ motorist crashes each year in New York State. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that nearly seven to ten times as many bicycle crashes occur that do not involve a motor vehicle.

The Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board and your organization are sponsoring a bicycle rodeo designed to teach bicyclists the skills they need in order to reduce their chance of injury.

A bicycle rodeo will be held (day, date, time, location). Bicyclists aged *eight to twelve* are invited to attend (*all children must have a signed consent from their parent or guardian*). This event is made up of a series of stations, each dealing with an important aspect of safe cycling. Participants will have their bicycle inspected and will then learn about and practice bicycle-handling skill that could, some day, save their life.

For more information, contact (*event contact*) or the Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board at (845) 486-3602 (voice) or trafficsafety@co.dutchess.ny.us.

Police Cyclists to Visit Bicycle Rodeo

A bicycle rodeo will be held (day, date, time, location). Bicyclists aged eight to twelve and their parents are invited to attend. This event is made up of a series of stations, each dealing with an important aspect of cycling. Participants will practice the safe way to exit a driveway, how to scan, approach an intersection, and avoid road hazards.

Police cyclists from name of department will be at the rodeo. They will demonstrate some basic handling skills and address the importance of all cyclists following the rules of the road.

For more information, contact name of department or the Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board at (845) 486-3602 or trafficsafety@co.dutchess.ny.us.

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER-BEFORE EVENT

Dear Parent,

Your child has the opportunity to participate in an event that will give him or her a chance to learn about, and practice, safe bicycling skills. The Bicycle Rodeo includes a safety inspection and a series of maneuvers directly related to everyday bicycling situations. Participants will practice the safe way to exit a driveway, how to scan and approach an intersection, and avoid road hazards.

Date:

Time:

Location:

Please encourage your child to attend this worthwhile event. He or she will need to bring a bicycle, a helmet, and a signed permission slip. There is no charge for participating. Why don't you come along and join the fun?

The Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board is sponsoring this program and the *(name of your organization)*...

Sincerely,

"You"

Enclosures:

Permission slip

"What You Want to Know about Bicycle Helmets"

"What Every Parent Should Know"

Another option: Send home the inspection form along with the permission slip and ask the parents to fill it out with their child and bring it to the event.

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER--AFTER EVENT

Dear Parent,

Today your child learned some basic bicycling skills and safety tips. The instruction we presented is based on bicycle crash research, and to be truly effective, it needs reinforcement from you. Here are some points to stress with your child:

Ride with traffic

Riding against traffic has been shown to cause one out of every five bicycle/car crashes. This is because riding against traffic puts bicyclists where motorists least expect them. Motorists turning right normally look for traffic coming from the left, not from the right. The law requires all bicyclists to ride on the right-hand side of the road.

Stop and look before entering a street

Riding into the street from a driveway without stopping is the cause of half the bike fatalities to kids eight and under. It accounts for about one-third of serious crashes among children eight to twelve. Explain to your children that they must get in the habit of always stopping and looking for traffic at the end of a driveway, parking lot, or alley. Have them practice by looking left, then right, then left again.

Stop at all stop signs and red lights

Often kids break this rule when riding with friends or when they are distracted. This is another major cause of bike/car collisions involving children. Stopping for traffic control devices should be stressed so it becomes a reflex; it will also stop them from being ticketed!

Look behind and wait for overtaking traffic before turning left

Many kids have been taught to signal before turning but not enough attention has been placed on looking behind them first. Explain to your child that there is nothing magical about signaling; it won't make a car stop for you. You have to make sure nobody is coming from behind. If there are lots of cars behind, the rider should get off the bike and walk across the intersection using the crosswalks, if available.

Wear a helmet

We also talked to your child about bicycle helmets. Helmets save lives. Seventy-five percent of all serious bicycle injuries involve a head injury that might have been prevented, if the bicyclist was wearing a helmet. Effective June 1994, children between the ages of one and fourteen are required by NYS law to wear a safety approved bicycle helmet when they are bicycling. It is highly recommended that bicyclists of all ages wear an ANSI or Snell approved helmet while bicycling, especially parents and other adults who set an example for others.

Make your own decisions

Stress to your child that he or she needs to stop, look, and decide for him or herself if the road is clear before crossing a street or making a turn. It is not safe to just follow a friend.

A final note

Having their own transportation gives your child mobility and helps them grow personally Thank you for allowing your child to take on this exhilarating sport, and for helping them learn how to do it safely. If bicycling is not already a family activity, give it a try!

For further information contact...

Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board

626 Dutchess Turnpike

Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

(845) 486-3603 (voice)

(845) 486-3612 (fax)

trafficsafety@co.dutchess.ny.us(e-mail)

<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/TrafficSafety/TSIndex.htm>

Sincerely,

“You”

The Quick Summary

Helmets are not hats! They must be level on your head and strapped on securely to be protective in a crash.

- You want the helmet to be level on the head, not tilted back or sideways.
- You want the fitting pads inside to be touching all the way around.
- You want the strap to be comfortably snug.
- With the strap fastened you should not be able to get the helmet off with any combination of twisting and tugging
- The helmet should not bump on your glasses or sunglasses in the front.
- The helmet should be comfortable enough to forget that it is on your head after only a few minutes.
- It will take you more fiddling time than you expect to get it this way.



If you have 4 more minutes, read on!

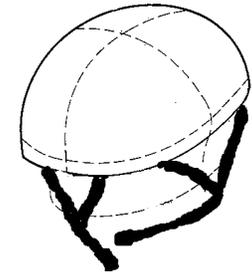
When to Replace a Helmet?

Replace any helmet if you crash. Impact crushes some of the foam, although the damage may not be visible. Helmets work so well that you need to examine them for marks, dents or foam crush to know if you hit. Most manufacturers recommend replacement after five years. We think that depends on usage, and most helmets given reasonable care are good for longer than that. We are not aware of any crash yet where helmet age was a factor. But if your helmet dates back to the 70's, it's time to replace it. Replace the buckle if it cracks or any piece breaks off. No one ever complains about the cost of their second bike helmet. But you may get more added protection from fitting your current helmet carefully than from buying a new one.

Warning: Children must always remove helmets before climbing on playground equipment or trees, where a helmet can snag and choke them.

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute
4611 Seventh Street South
Arlington, VA 22204-1419 USA
703-486-0100 info@helmets.org www.helmets.org
We are all volunteers, funded by consumers like you.
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How to Fit A Bicycle Helmet



Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute

*A consumer-funded program of the
Washington Area Bicyclist Association*

www.helmets.org

The Four Minute Fitting Guide

Your objective: Snug, Level, Stable

You want the helmet to be comfortably touching the head all the way around, level and stable enough to resist even violent shakes or hard blows and stay in place. It should be as low on the head as possible to maximize side coverage, and held level on the head with the strap comfortably snug.

Be Prepared for the Worst

Heads come in many sizes and shapes. You should be prepared for the possibility that the helmet you are trying to fit may not be compatible with this particular head. And you can expect to spend ten to fifteen minutes to get your helmet properly fitted.

First, adjust the fit pads or ring

Most helmets come with extra foam fitting pads to customize the fit. Fitting pads are too squishy to protect you in a crash. Their only function is to make the helmet fit. You can usually remove the top pad or use a thin one there. This lowers the helmet on the head, bringing its protection down further on the sides. It may reduce the flow of cooling air, but not enough to notice.

Adjust the fit pads by using thicker pads on the side if your head is narrow and there is a space, or adding thicker pads in the back for shorter heads. You may also move pads around, particularly on the "corners" in the front and rear. Leaving gaps will improve

air flow. The pads should touch your head evenly all the way around, without being too tight. The helmet should sit level on the head, with the front just above the eyebrows, or if the rider uses glasses, just above the frame of the glasses.

Some helmets use a fitting ring instead of pads. With these one-size-fits-all models you begin by adjusting the size of the ring. Some of them may require the ring so tight for real stability on your head that they feel binding, but if loosening the ring produces a sloppy fit that helmet is not for you.

Then, Adjust the Straps

Now put the helmet on and fasten the buckle. Be sure the front is in front! You want to adjust it to the "Eye-Ear-Mouth" test developed by the Bicycle Coalition of Maine. When you look upward the front rim should be barely visible to your **eye**, the Y of the side straps should meet just below your **ear**, and the chin strap should be snug against the jaw so that when you open your **mouth** very wide you feel the helmet pull down a little bit.

With the helmet in position on your head, adjust the rear (nape) straps, then the front straps, to locate the Y fitting where the straps come together just under your ear. You may have to slide the straps across the top of the helmet to get them even on both sides. Then adjust the chin strap so it is

comfortably snug. Now adjust the rear stabilizer if the helmet has one. It keeps the helmet from jiggling in normal use and makes it feel more stable, but only a well-adjusted strap keeps it on in a crash.

When you think the straps are right, shake your head around violently. Then put your palm under the front edge and push up and back. Can you move the helmet more than an inch or so from level, exposing your bare forehead? Then you need to tighten the strap in front of your ear. Now reach back and pull up on the back edge. Can you move the helmet more than an inch? If so, tighten the nape strap. When you are done, your helmet should be level, feel solid on your head and be comfortable. It should not bump on your glasses (if it does, tighten the nape strap). It should pass the eye-ear-mouth test. You should forget you are wearing it most of the time, just like a seat belt. If it still does not fit that way, keep working with the straps and pads, or try another helmet.

You're Done!

We hope it worked for you. Let us know how we can improve these instructions.



What Every Parent Should Know



Bicycling is fun for kids, and a big step in growing up. Having their own transportation gives them mobility and a taste of independence. But without proper training, kids can get into serious trouble on a bicycle. This bulletin will help you teach your child the attitudes and skills that will help make him or her a safer rider now and for years to come.

Be sure your child rides a bike that fits, one which he or she can straddle with both feet flat on the ground. A larger bike to "grow into" is hard for them to control. Stick with a bike having a coaster brake (the kind that brakes when you pedal backwards), unless your child's hands are large and strong enough to operate handbrake levers.

Your child should wear a helmet. Bicycle accidents are a major cause of head injuries in children. Hardshell bicycle helmets save lives. Three out of four bicyclists killed in crashes die of head injuries, and thousands suffer permanent brain damage. Most of these deaths and serious injuries could be prevented by hardshell helmet use. Helmets are stylish and come in all sizes. Most bike shops can fit your child (and you, to set a good example) with a comfortable helmet. Purchase a helmet that meets Snail Memorial Foundation or American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards. Forget the others.

There is no magic age at which a child can safely ride a bike. Younger children should ride under direct adult supervision, even when on sidewalks. Sidewalks have hazards, too. Drivers of cars entering and leaving driveways may not look for bikes, so bicyclists must look for and stop for cars crossing sidewalks. It can be said that before the age of ten,

few children can really understand traffic. They can be taught certain specific skills, but they will have trouble judging vehicle speeds and understanding concepts like "right of way."

Help them to understand that a bicycle is a vehicle and not a toy. Teach them how to start and stop a bicycle, and what to look for like loose chains and nuts, broken spokes, etc.

Spend time with your children. Show them that you care about their bicycling habits. Take them out for training rides. Here are some suggestions on what you can do:

Sidewalks, Driveways, etc.

Stop before entering a street from a sidewalk, driveway, parking lot, alley, curb, or any place. About half of the children eight and under who get killed on bikes get hit when they ride out of a driveway without stopping or looking when they enter a road. What you can do: Explain the reason for stopping before entering a street. Take your child to the driveway and practice stopping, moving out to see around objects, scanning left right left, and if there's no traffic, proceed into the road.

Playing

No playing in the road. What you can do: Help your child identify other places such as parks or playgrounds where he or she can ride figure eights, and otherwise zoom around without having to worry about cars. Explain that the street is for safe riding practices only.

As they got older:

Drive With Traffic

Driving against traffic puts bicyclists where motorists least expect them and directly causes one out of five bike/car crashes (Motorists turning right look for traffic coming from the left, not from the right). People drive cars drive by habit. **What you can do:** Stand on the sidewalk with your child at a busy intersection and watch which way drivers turn their heads.

Stop Signs and Signals

Stop at all stop signs and red lights. Bicyclists breaking this basic rule cause about 30% of serious bike/car crashes for this age group. **What you can do:** Explain the reasons for traffic signs and signals, and that traffic works as well as it does because most people know and follow the rules. Practice identifying different traffic signs. Close your eyes and listen for approaching "quiet" cars. Practice stopping and looking before entering an intersection and waiting for others who may not have yielded the right of way.

Traffic

Watch out for traffic and be predictable when traveling in traffic. Cyclists who make unexpected left turns without scanning behind for traffic and signaling their turns account for 30% of serious car/bike mishaps for young children. The key here is to look to the rear to see cars coming from behind. Children often forget about cars they can't see, think cars can stop faster than they really can, or assume adults will "look out for them." Bicyclists traveling around parked cars should also scan behind and yield to overtaking traffic. **What you can do:** Teach your child to walk across busy streets until he or she has more experience and

understands traffic. In the meantime, for residential street riding, your child can learn to always scan and signal before left turns. To teach scanning behind without swerving, take your child to a playground to practice riding a straight painted line while quickly looking behind. Stand alongside and hold up two or three fingers after your child rides by. Without swerving, have him or her practice telling you how many fingers you are holding up.

Decisions

Make your own decisions. Many accidents happen when youngsters follow each other. The first may run a stop sign and get through, but others may not be as lucky. **What you can do:** Impress upon your child the importance of checking traffic for him or herself. Each cyclist in a group should stop for stop signs, and scan behind (and yield to overtaking and oncoming traffic) before making left turns.

Busy Streets

No riding in busy streets. Children haven't built up their traffic cycling skills to handle heavy traffic situations. **What you can do:** Let your child know that certain streets are "off limits" and that riding on them is a privilege that will come when it is earned.

Night Riding

No night riding. Older cyclists, with the proper equipment and cycling skills, can do it in reasonable safety, but it's 20 times as risky as day riding, and it's not for kids. **What you can do:** Rule out night riding entirely. If your child is stuck somewhere after dark, be sure he or she knows to call you, collect from a pay phone if necessary, for a ride home.