

Why We HATE Training Wheels

Most everyone remembers the day the training wheels came off! What a glorious day... and then came the fall. One of your parents held the seat yelling at you to balance and just pedal. Well eventually you got it, but it wasn't fun at first. What if we told you training wheels suck. I'm sure you'd agree. There is a better way to teach someone to ride a bike.

Riding a bike is all about balance. Maintain your balance and you stay upright and have a blast. Bikes are made to stay in motion. Successful riders learn to lean into a turn and not turn the handlebar 90 degrees. Training wheels train you to turn the handlebar 90 degrees and to slow down—just the opposite skills your child needs.

Most kids are not ready to pedal a bike until they are about 5. We've seen 3 and 4 year olds do it, but they are the exception. Pedaling is a hard motor skill. We say, skip it. Just do the balancing.

Balance Bikes don't have pedals or training wheels. They are essentially sit-down scooters. Every kid has some sort of riding toy and this is the same premise, just with two wheels instead of 3 or 4. We have seen kids as young as 18 months successfully balance and ride a balance bike.

Family Bicycles carries the Strider brand of balance bikes. We choose this brand for its price point, durability, and because it has foam tires instead of tubes—3 year olds really don't understand flat tires! The Strider Bike will fit most kids from age 18 months to 5 years of age. Kids who start out on a Strider almost never need training wheels—only when Mom or Dad insist on buying a "real bike" too early and too large.

Turn over this card for a summary of how to ditch the training wheels.



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Ditch The Training Wheels

Everyone at Family Bicycles HATES training wheels. If we controlled the world, training wheels would be banished for good! Fortunately we know the secret to ditching the training wheels and are willing to share it with YOU!

1. THE BIKE MUST FIT

Your child must properly fit the bike, it simply won't work if the bike is too big or too small. Feet should be flat on the ground with a very slight bend to the knee and arms should comfortably reach the handlebars. Feet become the brakes in this method so they must touch the ground.

2. REMOVE THE TRAINING WHEELS

Seems obvious, but you'd be surprised. Remember that you do not need to remove the rear wheel nuts, just the first set of nuts keeping the training wheels in place.

3. REMOVE THE PEDALS

Yes, I really do mean it. Remove the pedals. This is true no matter how old your child or how big the bike. The pedals must come off. To remove pedals you need a pedal wrench—an adjustable wrench will not work properly. To remove pedals you must turn towards the BACK of the bike—back the pedals off. This is true because the left side is reverse threaded so it doesn't just unwind as you pedal.

4. SCOOT AROUND

Now go ride the sit-down scooter somewhere with a slight hill. Practice taking 3 giant steps to build up speed and then lift your feet up to coast. The first try you might make it 5 yards, but eventually you can go forever. This can take anywhere from an hour to a month. Every kid is different—practice is the key.

5. INSTALL THE PEDALS

Put the pedals back on when your child is ready. They will tell you. Turn both sides to the FRONT of the bike. Now, you hold the handlebar walk backwards as your child pedals and let go. Almost everyone just keeps pedaling! Practice starting from a dead stop by using the feet to get started and then putting feet on the pedals to keep going.

If all else fails, enroll your child (or yourself) in one of Family Bicycles' Ditch the Training Wheels Classes. Classes are \$40 for a two hour session or \$35 per hour for private lessons. See our website for more information.



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