



## Bicycling

**Council Approval:** Not required

(unless for long trips)

**Activity Permitted For:** D B J C S A

### About Bicycling

Cycling is a fun activity that girls can enjoy their entire lives. As with all activities, progression through skill building and conditioning are very important. Long day cycling trips, mountain and road biking, and long-distance cycling trips can be strenuous. The terrain may be difficult. Girls must also carry more gear and supplies than on short day trips. For this type of cycling, it's essential for girls to have opportunities to condition themselves beforehand. When training for lengthy bicycle trips, set realistic goals for mileage. Plan to gradually increase the distance. For instance, one week aim to ride ten miles. Strive for 15 the next.

#### Learn More:

- Middle and high school mountain biking teams: [National Interscholastic Cycling Association](#)
- [American Bicyclists](#)
- [People for Bikes](#)
- [International Mountain Bicycling Association](#)
- [Teen Trail Corps](#)
- [Adventure Cycling Association](#)
- [USA Cycling](#)
- [Tread Lightly](#)

Learn about road bike routes at [AdventureCycling.org](#). Find out about mountain bike trails in your area at [MTBproject.com](#). Check in with your local bicycle coalition or mountain bike association for events that can help you learn. Contact local bike shops and ask if they will host a maintenance clinic or guided ride for your group.

### Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) provides for people with disabilities.

## Safety Activity Checkpoints

**Organize cycling groups.** Participants should travel in groups of five or six, unless on a bike path. An adult must ride at the head and rear of every two groups. Groups should ride with at least 150 feet between them so that vehicles may pass. Each girl must have her own bike, unless riding tandem. Girls riding tandem bikes must have their own seats.

**Select a safe cycling site or route.** A community bike park is an excellent place to evaluate and practice bike handling skills. When selecting a trip route, use designated bicycle paths whenever possible. Avoid routes with heavy traffic and observe all state and local biking rules.

**Make careful plans for the type of road or trail to be traveled.** For example, secondary roads are quiet, but may have trees, curves, and hills that obstruct visibility. When planning to cycle on trails, check that trails are authorized for cycling by contacting land managers or checking jurisdictional websites and maps. Notify jurisdictional authorities about the group's trip when necessary.

**Know your surroundings.** Check the location of emergency and medical services along the route.

**Consider your riders.** Ensure that the length and terrain of the route, the time of day, weather, and the equipment are appropriate for the girls' experience level and physical condition. Review the route together and practice map-reading skills.

### Check the ABCs:

- **Air:** Check tire pressure and ensure that it meets the tires' specific air requirement.
- **Brakes:** Check that pads and brakes are adjusted appropriately.
- **Chain:** Make sure that the chain is engaged with gears, and shifting smoothly.

**Ride safely.** Plan to ride only during daylight hours. Ride with the flow of traffic. Obey traffic regulations, signals, lane markings, and local ordinances pertaining to bicycling. When on natural surface trails, cyclists yield to all others on the trail including hikers and those on horseback. Review trail etiquette guidelines.

### Help girls learn to:

- **Watch the road.** Recognize and avoid common roadway hazards like drainage grates and manhole covers, sand, gravel, glass, wet leaves, litter, and other road and trail hazards.
- **Communicate and cooperate with other road and trail users.**
- **Ride defensively.** Girls should stay aware of their surroundings and put themselves in the best position for safety.
- **Prepare for the unexpected.**

- **Pack light.** In addition, cyclists should carry a load weight on practice rides which is similar to the load weight they will carry on the planned, longer trip.
- **Practice packing and storing gear.** Light gear is stored in bicycle panniers (foldable carriers) or packs on the back of the bike.
- **Practice bike-riding skills in traffic.** These include signaling, scanning ahead and behind (especially before moving left), yielding to oncoming traffic, and making left turns. Girls should ride single file with traffic, but can ride side-by-side briefly in order to pass a slower rider.
- **Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead.**
- **Be aware of hazards.** Understand that motor vehicle traffic presents the greatest danger to cyclists. Other hazards that also cause cycling accidents include oil, wet leaves, parked cars, parked cars with doors that open in front of a cyclist, and rocks.
- **Brake early.** Girls should brake before they have to, especially on curves and when going downhill.
- **Stop fully.** It's important to make a full stop and look left, right, and left again, especially at the end of a driveway and before entering a street or roadway.
- **Walk bikes across busy intersections. Signal properly.** Use hand signals to let other cyclists and drivers know when they plan to turn and stop. Girls should also let other cyclists know when they plan to pass, prior to actually passing.
- **Use lights.** Keep lights on to increase visibility.
- **Make basic repairs.** This should be based on what is age-appropriate
- **Dress the right way.** Dress in layers in cooler temperatures, and shed layers as you get warmer. Avoid cotton and use synthetic fabrics instead because they wick sweat away from skin. Wear reflective or light-colored clothing when cycling at dusk, and wear bright-colored or fluorescent clothing during the day. On longer trips in cooler weather, carry extra clothing and rain gear. Don't wear dangling earrings, bracelets, or necklaces that can tangle in equipment.

**Learn emergency moves.** Read about and practice the quick stop, rock dodge, and instant turn at [Bike League](#), which also provides tips for beginners.

#### **On bicycling day:**

- **Stretch your muscles.** Before cycling, always warm up. Try walking, jogging, or cycling slowly before going faster. Gently stretch your hamstrings, quads (against a wall), and calves, before and especially after riding.
- **Be prepared in case of an emergency.** Provide a detailed itinerary and plan to call and check in with someone each day. Carry identification and a list of emergency phone numbers and contact information for bike repair shops.
- **Prepare for the long haul.** Adjust bicycles frequently for comfort. Check handlebars after adjusting the seat for proper leg extension. When stopping for the day, cool down gradually by walking around for a few minutes—don't stop cycling abruptly. Watch girls so that they don't push beyond their endurance levels.

## Safety Gear

Safety gear needed will depend on the length of your trip, the location, and the weather.

Bicycles should be in good working order and appropriate for the type of riding planned. Seats should be adjusted to the right height for each rider. Girls should have a slight bend in the knee when seated. A seat that's set too low is a common problem and causes significant discomfort. Watch for seats set too high, too; A girl's legs should never be fully extended.

It's also important for girls to have appropriate pedals for their experience level. Beginners should use flat pedals; experienced riders may choose clip-in pedals. Protective bicycle helmets with properly fitted safety straps are also required. Helmets should fit comfortably but snugly, be worn level on the head, and not move in any direction when the chin strap is securely fastened.

The helmet should meet the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F1163-88 requirements. Check the helmet for a Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal.

You'll also need a cycling repair kit for each group. Each kit should contain:

- A tire pump
- Spare tubes of appropriate size
- A tire patch kit
- Tools, including tire irons, a screwdriver, an adjustable wrench, pliers, and hex-head (Allen) wrenches
- Lubricating fluid
- Front and rear lights, for visibility during the day and at dusk
- Bike bell
- Reflectors
- Two water bottles or a hydration pack
- Day pack
- Appropriate clothing, such as bike shorts designed for cycling with wicking fabric
- Non-perishable, high-energy foods such as energy bars, fruits, and nuts
- Cycling gloves
- Stiff-soled athletic shoes such as court shoes or cycling shoes for beginners. Shoes with clips for experienced riders using clip-in pedals.
- General map and/or bike route map or map app on a smart phone