Bicycling, Ages 5-8

Between the ages of 5 and 8 is the most popular time for kids to learn how to ride a bicycle. Make it the most popular time to learn safe riding skills, too. Certain skills are necessary to safely handle complex traffic situations. Because kids' learning and understanding abilities are still developing, children ages 5-8 should not bicycle on busy streets. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children in this age group stick to cycling on sidewalks and off-road paths only.

- Beginner cyclists should only bicycle with adults when learning to ride.
- Concentrate on teaching the 5-8 year old to develop or continue to develop basic riding skills, like knowing when and how to shift gears as he or she pedals. Teach the 5-8 year old to look behind him/herself for approaching traffic, while cycling in a straight line.
- Teach 5-8 year olds to recognize what can cause a fall and how to control a fall. They should learn how to spot roadway hazards and safely dodge them.
- Teach 5-8 year olds how to ride carefully on sidewalks, wet roads, and trails. Explain the dangers of night riding, such as low visibility and reduced sight distance, and make sure that this age group avoids riding at night.
- Teach 5-8 year olds the importance of wearing a bicycle helmet and that they should never ride without one.
- Teach 5-8 year olds about sidewalks, neighborhood streets, paths, trails, and how to plan a safe route. At this age, they should learn what designated bike lanes and bike routes are.
- Teach 5-8 year olds to pay attention to and obey traffic signs, signals, and other road markings.
- Teach them the importance of cycling with traffic, not against it. Like all cyclists, they should ride on the right.
- Teach 5-8 year olds to judge distances and speeds. Make sure they understand that it is impossible to perfectly judge distances and speeds.
- When crossing the street at an intersection or crosswalk, a 5-8 year old bicyclist should dismount and walk the bike, while taking care to watch for vehicles.
- Teach 5-8 year olds how bicyclists and drivers communicate with one another. Show them how to use standard hand signals, and make eye contact before moving in front of a car. Explain that a cyclist cannot predict what a driver or anyone else in traffic will do. Teach them the importance of always showing respect for others traveling on the road.
- Teach 5-8 year old cyclists to know a lot about their bicycle and helmet. Teach them how to fit and wear a helmet properly. Show basic maintenance skills, such as patching tires. Teach them about the brake lights and headlights they will need, how to carry cargo, how to use rain gear, and how to park and lock a bicycle.

For more information visit the League of American Bicyclists website at www.bikeleague.org.
This information is courtesy of the New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency. **The laws may be different in your state. Be sure to know what they are and to respect them**.

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