

LEARN TO RIDE A BICYCLE

Riding a bicycle is an important play activity for many children. However for those children with motor co-ordination difficulties it can be a very difficult skill to acquire. Children need to have developed many skills in order to generally ride a bike successfully. This means good balance, spatial awareness (ability to judge distance), and bilateral integration skills (co-ordination of two sides of the body together), muscle tone (strength).

General Tips

There are many things to consider before your child begins to learn to ride a bike.

For example;

- The size of the bike
- Your child's motivation
- The time of year
- Where are you going to learn
- Which essential skills your child finds challenging for example balance, spatial awareness, bilateral integration or strength.

It is important you;

- Only begin to teach your child when they are ready to learn
- Begin teaching your child at a time when they can get lots of regular practice e.g. summer time, school holidays
- Teach your child in a large open space with minimal distractions including other children
- Find a quiet, traffic-free area
- Choose a space with a smooth surface
- A slight downwards slope can often help.
- Consider other hazards such as traffic, pedestrians & dogs etc.
- Other factors to consider;
- Your child should be able to sit comfortably on the saddle with their feet flat on the floor
- Your child should be able to reach the handle bars without over stretching

A successful method to learning:

- Remove stabilisers and pedals
- Adjust the saddle so your child can sit on the seat and comfortably place their feet flat on the floor.
- Encourage your child to scoot along, picking their feet up of the ground as they go along. If your child has been reliant on stabilisers, they may have been using these to lean on and compensate for balance. So this activity will help to develop this further. You should do these in short bursts over a period of a few weeks.
- Replace the pedals on the bike when your child is ready. You may want to replace only one pedal at a time. Giving your child the chance to rest one foot on the pedal and scoot with the other foot initially.
- Work on the action of pushing off. With the child choosing their preferred foot, practice pushing down on the pedal with one foot and pushing off with the other.
- Practice the art of pedaling; initially try this in a straight line, practising using the brakes on command.
- Gradually introduce steering once confidence with pedalling and balance has been achieved.

Community Paediatric Occupational Therapy

Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Regent Point, Level 3, Regent Farm Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 3HD

Tel: 0191 2823452

Email: tnu-tr.physicaltherapyservices.nhs.net

