Get cycling

Curriculum teaching resources and activities to inspire Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils to get cycling

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Introduction

Cycling is one of the best forms of exercise to get fit and healthy.

On-bike games and fun classroom activities offer the most enjoyable and effective way of introducing cycling to nursery and Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils.

The on-bike games in this resource will help pupils get used to their bikes and develop understanding and awareness of cycling through movement.

The classroom-based activities will help pupils think about cycling in their everyday lives and become more aware of cycling and road safety.

This resource aims to give you the confidence to deliver simple activities that will encourage cycling among your pupils.

It will help prepare them and give them skills to enjoy cycling outside of school.

These sessions don’t need to be run by a teacher just a competent adult who is allowed to work in a school (TA, LSA, lunchtime assistant).

Although they focus on balance bike activities, most can be run with pedal bikes if you have some more advanced pupils in your class.

Additional training and support is also available, which is detailed at the back of this booklet.

Carrying out these activities will also help your school achieve TfL STARS (Sustainable Travel: Active Responsible Safe) accreditation.

For more information about STARS, visit tfl.gov.uk/stars
Let’s get cycling!

There are many ways the practical activities in this resource can be delivered, depending on the age and number of pupils, for example:

• As part of your PE curriculum
• As part of an after-school club
• Stand-alone session within your weekly classroom activities or at lunchtime

The activities are adaptable, so feel free to tailor them to suit your pupils’ needs and stage of development.

Break time and lunchtime sessions
Bikes can be used for play at break and lunchtime. This will make cycling feel normal and give pupils a chance to practice their new skills.

• Set out an area with cones for pupils to use the bikes
• Pupils can be supervised by staff or by competent older pupils
• Pupils can make up their own games or go in circles – they just love playing on bikes!

Adult support
If a pupil needs support, hold them on the shoulders with a light touch. Try not to hold the bike under the saddle—it’s not a comfortable position to be in when the bike is moving and puts unnecessary strain on your back.

Things to consider:
• You are not expected to keep the child balanced, only light support
• Try not to hold the handlebars as the child needs to be in full control of steering and braking, so they get used to the sensation of control
• If you are supporting a pupil during a turn always turn towards you (to the left if the child is on your right etc). This means you are less likely to lose balance and fall on or ‘drop’ them
Ditch the stabilisers

**Balance bikes**
These are bikes with no pedals. Children use their feet to scoot and maintain balance; this gives them a sense of independence and helps their transition to a pedal bike. The bikes themselves are much lighter and easier to handle than bikes with pedals so they require little adult help to use.

![Balance bike](image)

**Why not just use stabilisers?**
While there are positives to using stabilisers, they can delay the process of the child finding their balance – one of the most important steps in learning to ride a bike. This means they are older and bigger when they transition to riding without them, so giving them physical support becomes more difficult.

We recommend balance bikes as a great way for pupils to learn to balance, steer and build up their confidence on two wheels, while being able to place their feet firmly on the ground. Pupils who use balance bikes support their own weight and need less adult support.

**Moving from balance bikes to pedal bikes**
Sustrans have written a handy guide to teaching a child to ride without stabilisers.

Visit [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) and search for ‘teach your child to cycle’.
Completing a balance bike session at your school could meet a number of the Early Years Foundation Stage goals and give you good evidence for the EYFS profile.

ELG04 – Moving and handling

- Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements.
- They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space.
- They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.

Examples

‘Mo was able to use the balance bike independently (gross motor skills), controlling his speed with the brakes (fine motor skills) and steering around objects in the play area safely negotiating space. Child initiated.’

‘Leena managed to balance on the bike for two metres without putting her feet down. Leena made up a game as a snake and steered the bike around the playground. Child initiated.’
Teachers’ checklist

1 Before your training session:
   ✓ Plan where the bikes will be stored on site
   ✓ Send a letter to parents and collect permission slips (if required)
   ✓ Arrange a suitable area for the session, such as a playground or grassy area
   ✓ Put the session in the school diary and confirm who is running and assisting it

2 A week before:
   ✓ Make sure staff know where the bikes are to be stored
   ✓ Check the area you planned to use is still available and in good condition
   ✓ Remind pupils to bring coats, water bottles and/or sun cream
   ✓ Organise the groups and session times – let your colleagues know what is happening and what help you may need, depending on the activities you plan to run
   ✓ Read and check your general risk assessment

3 The day before:
   ✓ Check the activity area, ensuring it will be safe and appropriate for your session. A checklist can be found on page 10.

4 The day of the session:
   ✓ Ensure pupils put their bikes in the right area (if bringing their own)
   ✓ Collect any equipment needed and check all the pupils are present
   ✓ Take photos for the Early Years profile, the school newsletter and your school travel plan on tfl.gov.uk/stars

5 The day after:
   ✓ Review the session and consider what you may do differently next time
   ✓ Complete any EYFS profiles and put into the evidence file (if applicable) and also add to STARS
Each participating pupil will need a balance bike. They come in a variety of materials:

- **Wood** – good material but needs tools to adjust and generally doesn’t like being stored outside
- **Metal** – most popular material. Steel models tend to rust quicker than aluminium, which is also lighter
- **Plastic** – new to the market but are light, easily adjustable and don’t rust

**Pedal bikes**
A pedal bike is what most people would recognise as a bicycle. It is a bike propelled by the rider turning the pedals. These bikes come in many different shapes and sizes all suited to different tasks, such as a BMX, mountain bike or racing bike

**Helmets**
Helmets are particularly recommended for young pupils. Ultimately, wearing a helmet is a question of individual choice and parents need to make that choice for their children

**Additional equipment**
Regular PE equipment from your school can be used eg cones, bean bags and hula hoops
Four step bike check

It is important to do a basic equipment check each time you do a training session.

If your school has pool bikes these checks only need to be done once a month. However, if pupils are bringing their own bikes in, it is recommended you do this quick bike check each time:

1. **Check tyres and wheels:**
   - Are the wheels held firmly by the bolts?
   - Do the wheels spin freely?
   - Are the tyres firm and pumped up?

2. **Check all bolts and handlebars:**
   - Are there any loose bolts or obviously broken parts?
   - Do the handlebars move side to side freely and are they secure on the bike?

3. **Check brakes:**
   - Push the bike forward and pull the brake – does it stop the bike?

4. **Adjust the bike for height:**
   - Sit the child on the bike, are both their feet flat on the floor?
   - Can they reach the brake and handlebars comfortably?

If you discover a problem during the bike check, get it fixed before allowing a child to use the bike.

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**Notes**

**Before you start**
Ask each of your pupils to identify the following on each of their bikes.

This will let them explore all the functions and features of their bike.

**Checklist:**
- Seat
- Handlebars
- Wheels
- Brakes
- Bell

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The sessions

These sessions have been organised in a graduated way; once pupils can scoot and use the bikes competently they can move on to games and races.

Remember, before every session takes place consider:

- Is the area we are going to work in clear of obstacles?
- Is the area large enough for the session?
- Is another group using the space – what control measures are in place?
- Are there immoveable objects that have been considered, eg climbing frames and other playground furniture?
- Is the weather suitable? Please note that in wet conditions it takes longer to stop when cycling and smooth surfaces like drain covers become slippery.
- Are the pupils dressed appropriately with long clothing secured?

Before any activities take place you must ensure you have completed the safety checks on the next page.
This session is composed of four activities to get you started, taking you through safety checks, braking, balancing and push starts.

Session goal
To give pupils the confidence and skills to start and stop the bikes effectively – each activity can be repeated as many times as needed.

Safety check: 5 minutes
- Is the helmet on and fitted securely?
- Are any loose items of clothing tucked in or removed (eg scarves)?
- Are all the pupils’ shoelaces tied up?

Introducing bikes: 10 minutes
1. Collect bikes and walk pupils to the activity area
2. Stand pupils around one bike in a semi-circle – this is a good time to do the four-step bike check on page nine
3. Point to parts of the bike and elicit names/functions, for example: what is this (the seat), what do we do with it?
4. At this point prompt answers about the bike’s brakes (if applicable). Reiterate this is how we stop the bike

This activity covers
- Safety
- Balance
- Push starts
- Stopping
- Basic steering

What you will need:
- Time: 35 minutes
- Up to six pupils
- Balance bikes
- Large area in playground
Braking: 10 minutes
To understand how the brakes work and how they are operated:

1. Have pupils stand beside their bikes (with the bike on their right)
2. Have pupils individually walk in a straight line and apply the brakes until they are confident

Things to consider

- Make sure pupils keep a gap so they don’t bump into each other
- The personal checks can be done away from the bikes to avoid pupils fiddling with them
- Include the pupils in the four step bike check and explain why we do it: ‘we check the brakes so we can stop safely…’
- Some balance bikes will come without any brakes. These are not recommended for these sessions as pupils will have to use their feet to stop
- Some balance bikes have a rear brake – pupils should be encouraged to use the brakes rather than their feet to stop
- Be aware that harsh use of the front brake could cause the bike to flip over the front
- Only have the pupils move at walking pace to avoid the bikes skidding or tipping forward
- If working with a small group of pupils, or if you have parents to help out with the session, you can walk with them and put a little weight on the saddle to give a more realistic experience of braking
Session one - Balance

Warm up - Gorilla: 5 minutes
To ensure pupils sit up with their weight over the saddle and have relaxed shoulders to better balance on the bike:

1. Line pupils up on their bikes facing the teacher – not too close together in case one falls sideways!
2. Ask pupils to put both feet firmly on the floor
3. Teacher to imitate a gorilla beating their chest (gently) and get pupils to copy
4. When doing the chest beating, pupils need to have their heads up giving the leader eye contact
5. Have pupils gently rest their hands on the handlebars with fingers over the brakes
6. Have pupils perform a two footed stamp, both feet off the ground at the same time. Repeat multiple times (for example two stamps in a row – link to counting)

Things to consider
• A two-footed stamp will give pupils an experience of balancing on the bikes without moving
• You can also use the mashed potato/bird wings as an alternative to ‘gorilla’— any move that makes them centre their body weight over the saddle not, the handlebars
Kangaroo hop and stop: 5 minutes
To be able to scoot along for a short time and stop the bike effectively using the brakes:

1. Pupils still facing the leader after Gorilla exercise
2. Leader to demonstrate a two-footed ‘Kangaroo hop’ – sit on the saddle, push off forward like a kangaroo, lift both feet off the ground, and glide
3. Come to a stop using the brakes, then let the pupils try moving across the playground in this way

Things to consider
- This activity will get pupils used to starting and stopping their bikes (key skills)
- Repeat previous learning – if pupils are leaning forward, looking down, or using their feet to stop, please stop them and refocus with Gorilla activity, looking up at the leader. Reiterate using and covering the brakes with the fingers

Kangaroo hop and stop
Session two - Brake box

Session goal
To be able to brake at a specific point with control

Activity
1. Mark out a box using cones
3. Line pupils up one behind the other in a long line on their bikes
3. Highlight sitting up and covering their brakes
4. Ask them to kangaroo hop along a straight line
5. Tell pupils to brake and stop in the box (a square of cones)
6. Give praise for stopping correctly using their brakes
7. Pupils scoot back round to the end of the line and repeat

Things to consider
• To make it more challenging, make the box smaller
• Can be a timed course if you want to introduce a competition
• Encourage safe braking at all times – being aware that for some bikes with only a front brake, going too quickly could tip them over the handlebars when braking

This activity covers
• Balance
• Push starts
• Stopping
• Basic steering

What you will need:
• Large area in playground
• 10-15 minutes
• Up to six pupils
• Balance bikes
• Cones
Session three - Crafty corners

Session goal
To steer around a gentle course

Activity
1. Set up a course using the cones with a gentle sweeping curve at one end
2. Line up pupils one behind the other on their bikes
3. Highlight sitting up and covering their brakes
4. Ask them to kangaroo hop along a straight line
5. Encourage pupils to use their brakes at the corner to control their speed
6. Pupils to gently steer around the corner
7. Pupils return to the end of the line and repeat

Things to consider
• Make the corner wide and sweeping at first to give pupils a gentle curve to steer around – too sharp and pupils may over-steer and lose balance
• Some balance bikes come with steering limiters which can make pupils lose balance when the limit is reached, but most do not. Pupils should also be encouraged not to steer too harshly as they may lose balance
• At-speed cornering can be difficult and steering more harsh
• Advanced pupils will be able to glide with their feet up around the corner

This activity covers
• Balance
• Push starts
• Stopping
• Basic steering

What you will need:
• Large area in playground
• 10–15 minutes
• Up to six pupils
• Balance bikes
• Cones
• Chalk (optional)
Session four - The long glide

Session goals
• To balance with both feet off the ground for a few metres
• To steer the bike in a straight line while balancing

Activity
1. Set up a long course with two lines, one after the other – a scoot line and a glide line (not too far apart or pupils will pick up a lot of speed)
2. Line pupils up behind the scoot line
3. Highlight sitting up and covering their brakes
4. Ask pupils to ‘kangaroo hop’ along the scoot line
5. Pupils then take both feet off the ground at the glide line
6. Pupils glide until they come to a stop
7. Use leader strides (or have a pupil helper) to count how far the glider has gone
8. Praise pupils for long glides
9. Return to the start and repeat

Things to consider
• Can be made competitive with longest glide
• Make links to counting and measuring the steps
• To make it more advanced, make the scoot line shorter

This activity covers
• Balance
• Push starts
• Stopping
• Basic steering

What you will need:
• Large area in playground
• 10–15 minutes
• Up to six pupils
• Balance bikes
• Cones
• Chalk

The long glide

Glide feet up
Scoot with feet
Session goals
• To follow at a sensible distance behind another rider
• To control speed in a group
• To follow a path set by another rider

Activity
1. Line pupils up one behind the other
2. The first pupil becomes the head of the wiggly worm and the last becomes the tail
3. The first pupil can lead the group around the space in any direction – the ‘body’ of the worm (the pupils) must follow the wiggly worm’s path
4. Be careful when turning as the pupils may not have the cornering skill to make very harsh turns
5. If the leader stops, the worm must stop (this highlights the importance of looking where they are going and safe braking)

Things to consider
• This game can be used at the end of a session and the wiggly worms take their own bikes back to the storage area

This activity covers
• Balance
• Push starts
• Stopping
• Basic steering

What you will need:
• Large area in playground
• 10 minutes
• Two leaders
• Up to six pupils
• Balance bikes

Wiggly worms
Session six - Obstacle course

Session goal
To negotiate a short course showing all previously learnt skills

Activity
1. Set up an obstacle course using hoops, cones and chalk

2. Try to include a brake box, a gentle curve, a long glide and possibly a section where they get off and walk their balance bike (with the bike on the pupil’s right)

3. This session can be used as a fun game, a timed competition or a team exercise. If it’s a timed competition stress the importance of safety, covering brakes and controlling speed

This activity covers
- Balance
- Push starts
- Stopping
- Basic steering

What you will need:
- Large area in playground
- 15-20 minutes
- Up to six pupils
- Balance bikes
- Cones
- Chalk
- Hoops
Classroom activity one
Curriculum: English
Apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words.

Trace and match
- Trace each of the letters to form a word
- Link that word to the matching picture

bike
wheel
helmet
handlebar
Classroom activity two
Curriculum: Maths
Count to 31, forwards and backwards, beginning with 1. See if they can keep going to 100.

Dot to dot
Starting at 1, join all the dots in the right order to reveal a picture!
Classroom activity three
Curriculum: Maths
Identify and represent numbers using objects and pictorial representations.

Fun sums
Add up all the objects in each row and write the number in the box.
Word search

Repeating aloud first, find the following words in the word search.

- HELMET
- SEAT
- WHEELS
- BIKE
- BRAKE
- BELL

Classroom activity four
Curriculum: English
Read accurately by blending the sounds in words that contain the graphemes taught so far.
Classroom activity five
Idea for teachers: you could run a design competition at your school.

Design a cycle jersey

- Think of your own design for the cycling jersey below
- Please draw your design on the shirt
- Make it colourful, creative and if you like, show your friends!
Classroom activity six

Spot the difference

• Look below to see the differences between the two pictures
• They look the same but looks can be deceiving!
• There are five differences to spot
Classroom activity seven

Find your way home through the maze

• Draw your route home through the maze
• There is only one right path, see how quickly you can find it!
Odd one out

- See if you can spot the odd one out on each row
- Circle it and say why it is different to the other three pictures
Classroom activity nine
Idea for teachers: you could use this for a competition at your school.

Draw a bike
• Use your best drawing skills to copy the bike on the left, or draw your own bike!
• Why not colour it in too?
Classroom activity ten
Teachers: use separate sheets of writing paper if needed.

Tell us a story
• Look at the pictures below and write a story about this journey
• What do you think the pictures are telling us?
• Write your story in the space below the pictures
Additional support

Transport for London
TfL has information about a number of different programmes, resources and initiatives that support cycling in London. For more cycling inspiration and activities visit tfl.gov.uk/stars and tfl.gov.uk/cycling

British Cycling
The governing body of cycle sport in the UK.
www.britishcycling.org.uk

Cyclesprog
A website specifically developed to support parents riding with young children.
www.cyclesprog.co.uk

Local boroughs
Your local council may have a team of cycle instructors or will offer cycle training. Contact your local borough for more information.

Sustrans
A leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys they make every day.
www.sustrans.org.uk