

GUIDE TO CYCLING WITH AUTISM #3

General advice for parents and guardians

Cycling is a great way to travel, get active and reduce our impact on the planet. ecobirmingham believe people of all abilities and differing needs should feel confident riding a bike.

It is possible for autistic people to learn to ride a bike, but they will need more help to do so. It may take them a lot longer to learn to ride than a neurotypical person.

Below are some general advice and tips to help get your child cycling:

LOCATION

Good features for a location to learn to cycle:

- Flat
- Concrete
- Approximate size and shape of a tennis court
- Few distractions or disturbances

Places to avoid if possible:

- Grass
- Steep hills
- Narrow paths
- Busy places
- Places with things that will distract your child

If your first choice location isn't available (for example it is busy), then have another location in mind.

PATIENCE

Autistic children typically need longer to learn how to pedal. Patience is the most important virtue in teaching your child to cycle. Don't put them under pressure or set unrealistic targets. Don't make comparisons between their progress and others.

CLOTHING

Good examples of clothing include:

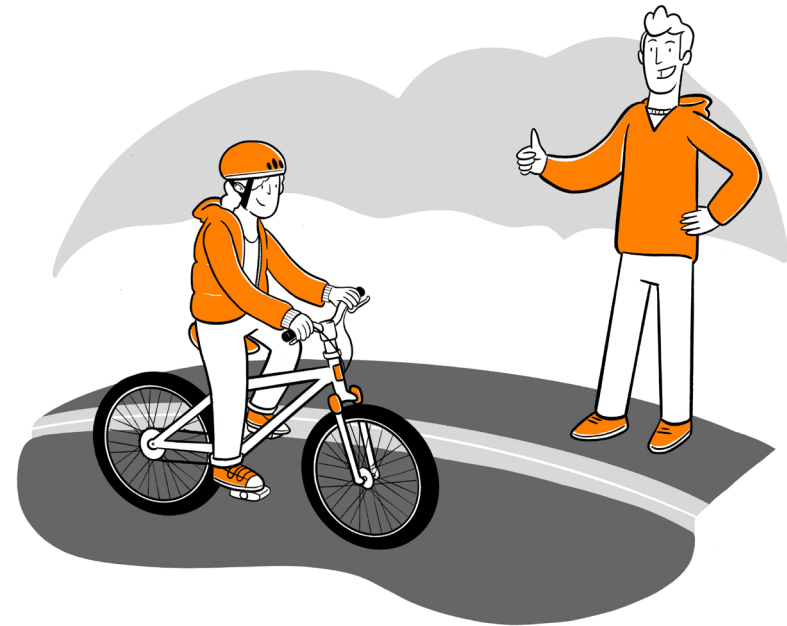
Trousers or jeans, fleeces, trainers and gloves or mittens (in all weathers for warmth, as well as better grip on the handlebars.)

Clothing to avoid:

Loose or baggy clothing, school shoes, shorts or skirts (as bare legs can brush against pedals or chains making your child uncomfortable), long coats (they get caught on the saddle) and bags (shoulder bags or rucksacks, as they can affect balance).



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SHOULD YOU HOLD ON TO YOUR CHILD?

We generally advise that you should not hold on to your child. The aim of cycling tuition is to teach them to pedal independently. If you hold on to them too much, it can affect their balance, and can lead your child to believe that you will always be there to hold on to them when cycling.

When your child is starting to pedal, it's ok to give them a push to get them going, but the aim is to get them to do more and more of the pushing with their feet, and less pushing by you. If you do push them, then let them go.

REWARDS

Learning to pedal can be hard work, and it isn't always obvious to your child that they are making progress. Your child deserves rewards for any progress that they make. It's up to you how to reward them, but it's important that you do reward them.

For more information about cycling tuition or safe cycle routes in Birmingham please visit our website: www.ecobirmingham.com or email cycling@ecobirmingham.com