

## GUIDE TO CYCLING WITH AUTISM #4

# Getting ready to pedal

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.



### YOUR CHILD IS READY TO PEDAL WHEN THEY CAN:

- Consistently scoot their bike for 10 metres without stopping
- Scoot fast enough to be able to take both feet off the ground while scooting



### PEDAL READY POSITION

Get your child ready to cycle in the 'pedal ready' position before they begin. The pedal ready position is:

- Hands on handlebars
- Both brake levers engaged if possible, to stop the bike from moving

- Head up and eyes looking straight ahead
- Left foot on the ground
- Right foot on the right pedal, with the right pedal level with the bike's down tube (this is part of the frame that connects the front of the bike to the chain ring/pedals)

Let them sit in the pedal ready position for a short while - Not too long, though!

Try not to hold on to them.

Praise them.

Get them to practice the pedal ready position regularly.

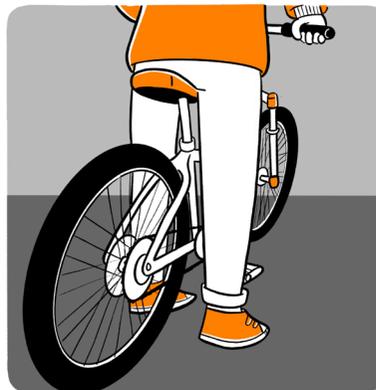
It's fine to reverse the position of the feet if it is easier (i.e. right foot on the ground, left foot on the pedal).

### CORRECT BODY POSITION

- Bottom on saddle
- Head up
- Eyes looking straight ahead
- Chest upright, not leaning forward
- Toes pointing forwards, with the ball of the foot on the pedal or on the ground.

Some children with dyspraxia or hypermobility will have difficulty with body position.

### The things to look out for are:



**Bottom not firmly on the saddle**  
This happens if they have hypermobility in the hips or pelvis area. If you see this happening, encourage them to sit firmly on the saddle, bear in mind that they may find it difficult to do so. They will still be capable of pedalling, and as they gain experience, will develop more control over their hips.



**Upper body and chest leaning forward.** This happens if they have hypermobility in the shoulders or upper body. If you see this happening, encourage them to straighten the upper body if they can, bear in mind that they may find it difficult to do so. They will still be capable of pedalling, and as they gain experience, will develop more control over their shoulders.



**Toes not pointing forwards, foot at an angle, or ball of the foot not grounded on the pedal or ground.** If this happens, encourage them to correct the position of the foot, bearing in mind that they may find it difficult to do so. They will still be capable of pedalling, and in time, they will get more control over the position of the feet.



## PUSHING OFF

When they are ready to pedal, your child needs to:

- Push down with the right foot on to the pedal - Hard
- Push forward with the left foot, hard - like a sprinter pushing off the blocks!

Most people learning to pedal underestimate how hard they need to push off at first.

Encourage your child to push as hard as possible. Pushing hard makes the bike move more quickly; and speed equals better balance.

Not pushing hard enough means the bike doesn't move, and makes it harder to balance.

Encourage your child to keep their head up and their eyes in front - and not to look down. If they look down, they will lose balance.

### Getting the left foot on the pedal

As soon as the bike starts moving, your child needs to raise their left foot, so that the left foot meets the left pedal.

When they feel their left foot on the pedal, your child needs to push the left pedal forward, and downwards, with their left foot, to keep the bike moving.



### Keeping the right foot on the pedal

It's important to keep the right foot on the pedal. Encourage them to keep their right foot on the pedal, and keep both pedals moving.

If your child keeps both feet on the pedals, and keeps both pedals moving, then they will succeed in pedalling.

### Keeping hands on the handlebars

Encourage your child to keep their hands on the handlebars, especially if they have dyspraxia or hypermobility. Keeping control over the handlebars means they can keep pedalling for longer, and are less likely to lose balance.

Once they are pedalling, encourage them to pedal for as long as possible.

This will increase their overall control of the bike, which is good preparation for further skills development.

### Keep the upper body straight

Encourage your child to keep their head up, and upper body straight all the time.

If you see them lean forward, encourage them to straighten their chest and upper body.

If you have a bike yourself, it's useful to practice these techniques yourself.

It will make it easier for you to teach them to your child.

Good luck!



For more information about cycling tuition or safe cycle routes in Birmingham please visit our website: [www.ecobirmingham.com](http://www.ecobirmingham.com) or email [cycling@ecobirmingham.com](mailto:cycling@ecobirmingham.com)