

The comfort zone of using stabilisers can be a tricky place to move on from. Here's how to encourage your children to ride on their own two wheels.



Cycling



4 to 7



30 to 60 minute sessions



What you need

- A bike per child
- Allen keys to remove pedals (tip: mark the left and right pedals accordingly, as the left pedal threads in the opposite way to the right)
- funky, fun plasters just in case
- treats for trying hard
- camera at the ready to capture these magical moments.



Things to remember

Find a quiet, traffic-free area such as a cycle path or somewhere with short grass or smooth tarmac. A slight downwards slope can often help. Look out for hazards like pedestrians, dogs, balls and vehicles.

Ensure that pedals/ cranks are replaced correctly – your local bike shop or school cycling officer might be able to help.



Activity instructions

Stabilisers aren't the sum of all evil - it's great your kids are on a bike at all! But because children can lean on their stabilisers, they often need to work on their balance before they can ride on two wheels. So set a date and focus on helping your child ditch those stabilisers for good. Here's one way to go about it.



1. Remove the stabilisers

Remove the stabilisers AND the pedals. Some like to remove the crank arms too (see image overleaf). This essentially turns any bike into a balance bike.

2. Adjust the saddle height

Adjust the saddle so your child can reach the floor easily with both feet. If your child is a little older and doesn't like the sound of this, go somewhere quieter so they won't feel embarrassed if anyone sees them (continues overleaf).

3. Encourage scooting along

Encourage your child to scoot along, keeping their feet off the floor for longer each time. This helps kids find and develop their own balance – a skill not really needed with the stabilisers on. Do this in regular short bursts over the course of a week or two, and your son or daughter will quickly become far steadier and more confident on just two wheels.

4. Replacing the pedals

When your child's ready, replace the pedals one at a time, giving them time to get used to first one pedal (scooting along with one foot whilst resting their foot on the pedal), then the other. When replacing the left pedal, remember it's threaded the other way to the right one.

5. Squashing a balloon

Next, sitting comfortably on the bike, get them to raise their right pedal up slightly then to press down on it like squashing a balloon, pushing off with their left foot. Let them glide along for a few metres, coming to a gentle stop using their brakes and putting both feet down. As this becomes easier and they begin to really get their balance, it's time to reintroduce the pedalling.

6. Reintroduce the pedalling

Once they've got the hang of the above, glide a bit further each time and add in a few turns of the pedals, coming to a controlled stop using the brakes. Keep this up, letting the pedals go round and round, going further and further each time. You might want to run alongside for moral support.

After a few sessions of this – sometimes just one but every child is different – it will be “Hello, brand new cyclist. Goodbye forever, stabilisers!”



Tip

Encourage your child to look ahead, not down at the wheel or their feet. It helps with balance, and will make them all the more surprised when they realise that they are finally doing it – cycling on their own.

Cycle training

Once they can ride, Bikeability cycle training is a brilliant next step, to turn them into confident cyclists on roads. If not on offer at your school, ask your local authority about cycle training for children and adults near you.



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