

Pedal Power



There's never been a better time to saddle up and start cycling, but it can be confusing for beginners. If you're wondering how to buy the right bike, how to cycle safely on the road or how best to navigate your journey to work, this guide is for you.

Benefits of cycling

There are many great benefits to cycling regularly; here's a list of reasons to hop on a bike:



Cycling is an excellent form of exercise. Steady cycling can help burn 300 calories in an hour.



Cycling reduces road congestion. Did you know that 15 bicycles could fit in the same space as one car?



Getting on a bike is far less costly and has lower maintenance compared to vehicles.



It's good for the planet. The total CO2 emissions per kilometre for riding a bike are about 21g, which is ten times less than a car.



Evidence shows that biking can de-stress and clear the mind, giving long-term mental health benefits.



Gives you the opportunity to enjoy the countryside routes and urban streets. It helps you explore and appreciate your surroundings.

Choose a bike

If you are thinking about purchasing a bike, you might be overwhelmed by the range of models and styles on the market. To pick the most suitable bike for your needs, you must ask yourself: how often do you plan to ride? How much are you willing to invest? And what exactly will you use your bike for?

We've listed some of the more popular types of bike out there.



City bike

Designed for short, leisurely rides. They often have very few gears and are fitted with accessories such as baskets for practical journeys. The riders generally sit in an upright position with rounded handlebars for additional comfort.



Road bike

As the name suggests, road bikes are designed to ride on the road. With narrow tyres, light frames and drop handlebars these bikes are designed for speed with the least effort possible.



Mountain bike

Designed to go on off-road trails, which means they're chunkier and have rugged tyres, but they can be used on the pavement too.



Hybrid/commuter bike

A cross between a mountain and a road bike. Not as fast as a road bike, and not as rugged as a mountain bike, but good for commuting.



Electric bike

Gives you all the freedom and benefits of cycling, with a little extra assistance. The result is less sweat, more miles, yet with all the health benefits of life on two wheels.



Cargo bike

Great for those wanting to carry packages, kids, cargo, food and more.



Tandem bike

Designed to be ridden by more than one person, ideal for transporting older children.



Folding bike

Can be taken on to public transportation for free, and then stored under your desk at the office. This bike is perfect for the multimodal commuter, needing a solution for the first and last miles.

Getting started!

We have listed some accessories that you may need to start commuting by bike:



Cycle helmet

Although it's not a legal requirement to wear a cycling helmet in the UK, a good quality helmet might save your life. It's not hard nowadays to find one that's comfy, light and affordable.



Pannier rack

You can choose to commute without a rack, but adding panniers lets you strap cargo to your bike instead of your back, making your ride easier!



Locks

It's recommended that you carry two locks: one U-lock and one cable lock. A cable lock can be used to secure the front wheel and a U-lock to secure the cycle frame to the bike rack. U-locks are also hefty and difficult to cut through, minimising theft.



Lights

By law, cyclists are required to have working lights on the front and rear of their bicycles, switched on between sunset and sunrise - white at the front and red at the rear.



Mud guards

Help in getting rid of sand, dirt, road grit and all other things that get stuck to your wheels.



Visibility

Even if it's not dark or if it's a foggy day, wearing bright colours or reflective clothing and using bike lights can help you stay visible to other road users.

Other accessories that can be added are baskets and a phone mount.

Cycle to Work scheme

There's been a revolution in the number of people cycling to work in the UK over the past decade. Cycling to work is usually cheaper, more fun and often quicker than other forms of transport. The Cycle to Work salary sacrifice scheme allows you to purchase a bicycle and cycling accessories at a reduced rate. By using the Government scheme, you can spread the cost across your salary and save between 25% and 39%. Speak to your employer to see if they are signed up to one of the many options available.



Common cycling road signs

Despite their clarity, some of the UK's traffic signs are widely misunderstood – particularly those relating to cyclists. We've listed some cycling signs that we all should know.



No bikes ahead

To prohibit the use of bicycles on pedestrian routes, main roads or dual carriageways.



No entry

You may not enter while cycling unless 'Except cycles' is also displayed.



No motor vehicles

The motorbike and car regulatory sign is designed to prevent road use for all motor vehicles. This doesn't include bicycles.



Pedal cycles only

Used to show where cycle routes start, they are often accompanied by national cycle route numbers.



Shared cycle and pedestrian route

Used to show mixed use cycle lanes that are for both pedestrians and cyclists with both having equal right of way.



Segregated cycle and pedestrian route

Used on routes where pedestrians and cyclists are segregated by a central line. The sign dictates which side of the line cyclists should ride and where pedestrians should walk.

CYCLISTS DISMOUNT

Cyclists dismount

Used in areas where designated cycle paths come to an end or merge with pedestrian paths with high foot traffic.



End of cycle route

Used at the end of a cycle lane, track or route.

If you need to refresh your knowledge, download a copy of Know Your Traffic Signs <https://bit.ly/2ZQoYuv>



Contraflow pedal cycles in a one-way street

Used on one-way streets where pedal cycles can go against the flow of traffic.



Except cycles

No through road except cycles

Used to inform drivers that a street is a dead-end to motor vehicles, but the panel beneath tells you that you can cycle through.

Let's be considerate!

You should always cycle at a careful speed. Be patient. Get off your bike if you approach a crowded area.

Road safety tips for cyclists

Read up on the Highway Code to learn the most fundamental safety tips on how to cycle safely while on the roads: www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code

Alert other road users to your presence by using a bell or working lights on your bike. This is important, especially when you commute in the dark, or in autumn or winter.

Avoid being too close to the kerb – the safest position for you to cycle is to be between 50cm and 1m away from the kerb. This way, you are less likely to ride over drain covers, potholes and debris, and to be struck by a driver opening their door.

Making eye contact is an effective way of making your presence known to motorists.

Maintain your distance to give you more time to react if something happens on the road ahead. It takes longer to slow down on a bike.

Anticipate hazards – being aware of your surroundings will help you stay safe.

Signal your intentions clearly – use your arms and hands in a strong and obvious gesture.

Don't cycle on the pavement – it is illegal to cycle on footways unless a shared use sign is displayed.

Traffic lights are for cyclists too – you must stop at red lights. Always!

ABC check and bike maintenance

It's worth getting into the habit of going through our ABC check before you head off, to make sure your bike is still working smoothly, safely and fits comfortably.

A

A is for Air

Are your tyres inflated to a good pressure? Check if there's any damage to tyre tread and sidewall; replace tyres if they're worn.



B

B is for Brakes

Are both the front and back brakes working as you expect? Give them a test. Check the brakes and cables to make sure they aren't worn down.



C

C is for Chain and Control

Does the chain move smoothly? Always check that the chain is clean and lubricated. Check that your handlebars feel secure and turn smoothly.



MadeGood Bikes (www.youtube.com/c/MadeGoodfilms) and Evans Cycles (www.youtube.com/user/evanscycles) also both provide useful and easy-to-follow online bicycle maintenance and repair tutorials. These YouTube resources can help you to repair a puncture and replace an inner tube, master gear and brake adjustments, and provide instructions for putting together a flat-pack bike.

Lock thieves out!

There are some simple steps you can take to significantly reduce the risk of your bike being stolen:

- Register your bike at www.immobilise.com. Registering and marking your bike may act as a deterrent to thieves, who do not want to be caught holding or passing on stolen goods.
- Get a good bike lock (D-locks, thick cable locks or combination locks are the most secure) – look for Sold Secure Ltd approved locks or ask the bike shop for a recommendation.
- Take removable accessories and fittings with you.
- Always secure both the frame and wheels to an immovable object, such as a bike rack or a tree.
- Consider having your bike security-marked or engraved.
- Photograph your bike, take down all your bike details and keep them in a safe place.
- Find and note your bike serial number – usually on the crankshaft, underneath the pedals.
- Insure your bike, either on contents insurance or separately.
- Vary your routine – lock up your bike in different ways and places.
- Lock your bike every time you leave it, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- Ideally, use two different types of locks – a thief will need more tools to steal it.
- Think about where you leave it. Lock it in a busy, well-lit place, in view of other people or CCTV cameras.



Useful websites and journey planning tools

Mapping your cycle journey enables you to identify the quietest, balanced and fastest route between two postcodes, providing choice depending on experience and skill.

Cyclestreets.net is a great resource to help you start planning your journey today. Download cycle maps and plot cycle routes from across the UK.

For those who like to navigate the roads and cycle lanes using a traditional paper map, check out the large selection of downloadable maps on the Cambridgeshire County Council website: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/cycling/cycle-routes-and-maps>.

Report highway faults

Make sure you report any damage to roads and pavements, including potholes, streetlights, traffic signals, road markings, road signs, flooding and overgrown vegetation through the highways reporting tool: <https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk>



Cycling apps

Cycling apps can be a perfect pocket-sized solution to help you share, plan and map routes, measure speed and distance travelled, and track your stats and goals to keep you motivated.



Komoot

Generates ready-built routes in your area that can be filtered by distance, difficulty and public transport links.



Ride with GPS

Creates route planning and navigation tools across a website and app, enabling cyclists to go on better rides more often.



Strava

Can be used to log a wide range of ride data, including GPS-tracked route displayed on a map, speed, distance, power output and heart rate.



Viewranger

Can show your position, record your tracks, plan routes and save online maps for offline use.



smartjourneys

www.smartjourneys.co.uk

