Preparing your child for training

Our cycle training courses at schools are intended to both nurture and challenge young cyclists. We expect them to master a lot, but to get most of the course they have to be appropriately prepared. You can help your child by making sure they have some basic skills and are appropriately equipped.

Choosing a bike

Please read our Pre-course Bike Check to ensure that your child's bike is appropriate for participation in the course.

If you are buying a new bike, pay special attention to our notes on selecting the correct size of bike.

As a rule, participants will get more from the course if they ride a bike equipped with gears. BMX bikes are generally a cause of problems on the road because riders find it difficult to both ride sitting down and ride up hills.

Teaching your child to ride

Occasionally, trainees have reached the ages of ten or eleven without ever having learnt to ride. Here are some tips on how to get them started:

- Use an open space, such as an empty car park or tennis court.
- Use medium to easy gears.
- Start with the right pedal raised and push down firmly to set off.
- Start by supporting your child from one side, placing one hand gently on a handlebar and the other placed on the opposite

shoulder. This way, your child can learn to pedal with a sense of security.

- Progress to support your child gently only by the shoulders so that they can steer for themselves.

- Practice starting, cycling along, and stopping safely using broth brakes.

- Once your child can start consistently, pedal along for about thirty meters, and stop cleanly without dragging their feet, they should be able to cope with our Level 1 training.

Helmets

Whilst there is no legal requirement to cycle with a helmet, we normally expect that participants wear a helmet during our courses. Ideally, helmets should be standard cycling helmets with an adjuster and air vents.

If your child's helmet is not of this type, please consider the following:

- Helmets intended for younger children may just fit if your child has a small head, but, if they cannot be made comfortable, we will not allow them to be worn.

- Adult helmets may not be sufficiently adjustable if your child has a small head, in which case we will not allow them to be worn.

- Urban-style or BMX-style helmets may be worn. However, it is important to check that the replaceable foam pads which are fitted inside are of the correct thickness.

- Full-face helmets interfere with speaking and listening and may not be worn for on-road training.
- Helmets without foam pads, suitable straps, or clasps, or helmets intended for other uses, such as horse-riding helmets, may not be worn for cycle training.

Other equipment

Your child should be provided with clothing which is appropriate to changeable weather. We absolutely will train on cold days, or in drizzle and light rain, provided conditions are safe. Please ensure that your child has access to:

- full finger gloves throughout autumn and spring terms
- warm layers, such as sweatshirts and woolens
- a waterproof layer
- a change of clothing, especially trousers

Your child should also be equipped with appropriate shoes, which should ideally be trainers.