



Bike Buying Guide

The most important factor in buying a bicycle for your child is finding one that suits his/her needs. It is imperative that you buy a bike from a specialized bike retailer that will understand your child's needs and service your purchase. Discount retailers, while cheaper, do not sell the type of bikes we recommend.

- ✦ Buy a YOUTH or JUNIOR style frame. DO NOT buy a BMX or competition style race bike. The frame and pedals are lower to the ground on the youth bike and will allow your child to more easily maintain balance. There is a 5" height difference in the maximum pedal height between these two different frames.
- ✦ The YOUTH/JUNIOR bike's pedals are closer to the ground. This will give your child a heightened sense of security.
- ✦ Choose a bike with a coaster foot brake. A bike with ONLY a lever-controlled front break is dangerous to the beginning rider.
- ✦ Children with special needs do better on a more comfortable type of frame design. A way to describe "comfortable" means the types of bikes made 30 and 40 years ago, and these are becoming more popular once again under the name of "cruisers." Not all bike shops stock YOUTH and CRUISERS, but both can be ordered.
- ✦ We recommend the following brands: Rayleigh, Haro, Trek, Gary Fisher, and Giant. If you go to a reputable bike shop, they can advise you. Beyond asking for these brands, you must ask for a frame style that is known by several names – junior, juvenile, or youth.
- ✦ The seat needs to be low enough that the child can comfortably place one foot on the ground.
- ✦ If your child is tall enough to need a larger bike (24" or 26" tire diameter), then acquiring a bike becomes more difficult as most larger bikes are more complex (usually too complex for your child). For a large bike size, a good suggestion is a "cruiser" style. A good style is manufactured under the name "Electra".
- ✦ Try to avoid "banana seats" as they place the child too far back in the seat causing instability problems.
- ✦ If the child is not quite riding, we recommend two modifications: (1) Purchase a "bike trainer handle" marketed under the name of "Bike Rite USA." The Bike Rite USA model is sturdier than anything else we've seen to date, and is able to fit onto a wider variety of bikes. The web site is www.readyrider.com, and the handles can be ordered on-line. (2) Consider adding weight to the front wheel. We use chain that can be purchased at a hardware store, and then secured in place with electrician's tape. The added weight will cause the bike to be more stable.