

Bike Fit and Buying Guide



Oversized bikes or bikes with brakes too difficult for a child to squeeze or reach make for a dangerous ride. The main mistake parents make is buying a bike that is too large, thinking that their child can grow into it. However, a poorly sized bike will cause frustration and can be dangerous when riding and racing in our Kids of Mud (KOM) program. Nearly every expert recommends taking your child with you to the store to ensure a proper fit. Sizing impacts how well your child can reach the ground, pedals and handlebars. If the bike is too large or too small, your child will have difficulty steering and braking.

The size of a child's bike is determined by the diameter of the wheels, usually ranging from 12 inches to 24 inches. The wheels of adult bikes start at 26 inches. Your child's age is an unreliable indicator because children grow at different rates. Measuring your child's height or inseam is the best way to find the right size.

Parents also often ask if they need to purchase an expensive or fancy bike – expensive and fancy are relative terms. But, it is our opinion that younger kids do not require shocks. Why? In most cases they are not necessary, especially rear shocks. They add weight to the bike which makes the bike more difficult to maneuver around obstacles and push up a hill. Shocks are also just another thing that could do wrong with the bike. If you want to purchase a bike with shocks, your best bet is to visit your local bike shop and purchase from a bike specialist.

Step 1 – Choose

Take the time to look at all bikes available at your local store or bike shop. Select the style of bike that will best suite your child's needs and expectations.

Step 2 - Measure

Measure your child's inseam. Inseam length equates to bike size measured in wheel diameter, not frame size.

Step 3 – Compare Sizes

Compare the inseam measurement to the sizing guidelines and determine a correct wheel diameter. Wheel diameters for a child's bike range from 12 to 24 inches.

Children's Bike Sizing Guidelines

Bike Sizing: The Right Fit

Be sure the bike is the CORRECT size. Bikes that are too big for the rider can be dangerous. There should be at least 1" between the inseam & the top tube. Use the chart below to help guide you in finding the right fit.



Alternate Chart

Approximate Age	Child's Inseam	Bike size (wheel diameter)	Comments:
2-4 years	14-17 inches 35-42 cm	12 inches	Most come with training wheels, some are direct drive
4-6 years	16-20 inches 40-50 cm	14 inches	not commonly available
5-8 years	18-22 inches 45-55 cm	16 inches	Most have rear coaster breaks and pneumatic tires, some have front hand brakes.
6-9 years	20-24 inches 50-60 cm	18 inches	not commonly available
7-10 years	22-25 inches 55-63 cm	20 inches	Some models are multi-speed with hand brakes.
9+ years	24-28 inches 60-72 cm	24 inches	Can have most of the features of adult bikes.

Step 4 – Test it Out

Test the bike by having your child sit on the bike seat. Make sure his/her hands can reach the handlebar (with a bend to the elbow), and both feet can touch the ground. Only the balls of the feet need to touch, not the entire foot. At this point the seat can be raised or lowered.

Then have the child stand over the top tube of the bike. Make sure both of feet can touch the ground fully (flat foot) and that there is at least one inch between the bike frame and pelvic bone. Some girl's bikes have lower top bars -- called a step-through frame -- but it's still important that there is plenty of room between the child and the top bar.

Step 5 – Brakes and Gears

Test the brakes. Make sure your child can reach the hand brakes easily with their fingers. They need to be able to pull them towards the hand grips with-in a finger width of clearance. At the bike shop, the technician can loosen and tighter the brakes for you (and show you how for further adjustments throughout the season).

Some smaller bikes may come with only coaster brakes (pedal backward to come to a stop) or in combination with hand brakes or instead. Either is acceptable in the KOM program. We do suggest that once your child reaches the U9 age category they no longer have coaster brakes, especially if they choose the race program.

Test the gears. Kid's bikes will either come with grip or trigger shifters. Generally speaking, grip shifters are considered better as they require less dexterity to shift from ones gear to another, and are more durable if the bike crashes. No matter which type of gear is on your child's bike, make sure that your child has the ability to move from gear to gear easily. Again, your bike technician can adjust the gears in the store prior to leaving with your purchase.

Conclusion

Following the above steps when selecting a bike for your child will ensure they have a fun and productive KOM season.