

The Four Minute Fitting Guide

Your objective: Snug, Level, Stable

You want the helmet to be comfortably touching the head all the way around, level and stable enough to resist even violent shakes or hard blows and stay in place. It should be as low on the head as possible to maximize side coverage, and held level on the head with the strap comfortably snug.

Be Prepared for the Worst

Heads come in many sizes and shapes. You should be prepared for the possibility that the helmet you are trying to fit may not be compatible with this particular head. And you can expect to spend ten to fifteen minutes to get your helmet properly fitted.

First, adjust the fit pads or ring

Most helmets come with extra foam fitting pads to customize the fit. Fitting pads are too squishy to protect you in a crash. Their only function is to make the helmet fit. You can usually remove the top pad or use a thin one there. This lowers the helmet on the head, bringing its protection down further on the sides. It may reduce the flow of cooling air, but not enough to notice.

Adjust the fit pads by using thicker pads on the side if your head is narrow and there is a space, or adding thicker pads in the back for shorter heads. You may also move pads around, particularly on the "corners" in the front and rear. Leaving gaps will improve

air flow. The pads should touch your head evenly all the way around, without being too tight. The helmet should sit level on the head, with the front just above the eyebrows, or if the rider uses glasses, just above the frame of the glasses.

Some helmets use a fitting ring instead of pads. With these one-size-fits-all models you begin by adjusting the size of the ring. Some of them may require the ring so tight for real stability on your head that they feel binding, but if loosening the ring produces a sloppy fit that helmet is not for you.

Then, Adjust the Straps

Now put the helmet on and fasten the buckle. Be sure the front is in front! You want to adjust it to the "Eye-Ear-Mouth" test developed by the Bicycle Coalition of Maine. When you look upward the front rim should be barely visible to your **eye**, the Y of the side straps should meet just below your **ear**, and the chin strap should be snug against the jaw so that when you open your **mouth** very wide you feel the helmet pull down a little bit.

With the helmet in position on your head, adjust the rear (nape) straps, then the front straps, to locate the Y fitting where the straps come together just under your ear. You may have to slide the straps across the top of the helmet to get them even on both sides. Then adjust the chin strap so it is

comfortably snug. Now adjust the rear stabilizer if the helmet has one. It keeps the helmet from jiggling in normal use and makes it feel more stable, but only a well-adjusted strap keeps it on in a crash.

When you think the straps are right, shake your head around violently. Then put your palm under the front edge and push up and back. Can you move the helmet more than an inch or so from level, exposing your bare forehead? Then you need to tighten the strap in front of your ear. Now reach back and pull up on the back edge. Can you move the helmet more than an inch? If so, tighten the nape strap. When you are done, your helmet should be level, feel solid on your head and be comfortable. It should not bump on your glasses (if it does, tighten the nape strap). It should pass the eye-ear-mouth test. You should forget you are wearing it most of the time, just like a seat belt. If it still does not fit that way, keep working with the straps and pads, or try another helmet.

You're Done!

We hope it worked for you. Let us know how we can improve these instructions.

The Quick Summary

Helmets are not hats! They must be level on your head and strapped on securely to be protective in a crash.

- You want the helmet to be level on the head, not tilted back or sideways.
- You want the fitting pads inside to be touching all the way around.
- You want the strap to be comfortably snug.
- With the strap fastened you should not be able to get the helmet off with any combination of twisting and tugging
- The helmet should not bump on your glasses or sunglasses in the front.
- The helmet should be comfortable enough to forget that it is on your head after only a few minutes.
- It will take you more fiddling time than you expect to get it this way.



If you have 4 more minutes, read on!

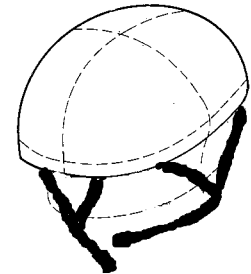
When to Replace a Helmet?

Replace any helmet if you crash. Impact crushes some of the foam, although the damage may not be visible. Helmets work so well that you need to examine them for marks, dents or foam crush to know if you hit. Most manufacturers recommend replacement after five years. We think that depends on usage, and most helmets given reasonable care are good for longer than that. We are not aware of any crash yet where helmet age was a factor. But if your helmet dates back to the 70's, it's time to replace it. Replace the buckle if it cracks or any piece breaks off. No one ever complains about the cost of their second bike helmet. But you may get more added protection from fitting your current helmet carefully than from buying a new one.

Warning: Children must always remove helmets before climbing on playground equipment or trees, where a helmet can snag and choke them.

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How to Fit A Bicycle Helmet



Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute

*A consumer-funded program of the
Washington Area Bicyclist Association*

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