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# The Safety Rules Can Protect Your Child

## 1. Never ride out into a street without stopping first.

Nearly a third of car-bike crashes involving a young child occur when the child rides down a driveway or from a sidewalk into the street and in front of a car. Kids must learn to stop, look left, look right, look left again and listen to be sure no cars are coming before entering a street. Look left that second time because cars coming from the left are on the child's side of the street and are closer. Use your driveway or sidewalk to demonstrate this way to enter a street. Have the child practice the entry, looking left, looking right and looking left again. Make sure that they understand that because they see a car does not mean the driver sees them. They must always assume that the driver has not.

## 2. Obey stop signs.

Nearly a third of the car-bike crashes with a young child occur when the child rides through a stop sign or red light into crossing traffic. Kids must learn to stop, look left, look right, then look left again at all stop signs, stop lights and intersections before crossing. Make sure they know the basics about stop signs and stop lights, and that they must always ride on the right, with traffic. Then take your child to a controlled intersection and practice crossing safely. Explain that when riding in a group, *each*

*bicyclist* must stop and make sure it is clear before crossing. Teach young children to walk their bikes through busy intersections. Remind them to obey traffic signals even if no one appears to be coming. While you are at it, explain one-way streets to them too.



## 3. Check behind before turning, swerving, or changing lanes.

Nearly a third of the car-bike crashes involving children occur when a child turns suddenly into the path of a car. Kids must learn to look behind them before swerving, turning or changing lanes. The best place to practice this is in a quiet parking lot or playground. Stand behind them while they ride along a straight painted line. Hold up numbered cards and have them practice looking back over their shoulder and telling you the number on the card without swerving off the painted line. Children should not ride their bikes on the street alone until they can master this skill. If they can handle it, teach them signaling too, but signaling is too complicated a skill for younger kids.

## 4. Never follow another rider without applying the rules.

Many fatalities occur when one rider blindly follows another. Statistics show that breaking one of the three rules above caused the crash, but the real reason was following another rider. Running stop signs or red lights, riding out of driveways or zipping across lanes all seem natural to the second child in line because they are more focused on following the first rider than on the traffic or the rules. This will not be an easy lesson to absorb!

## Before you get on your bike, put on a helmet!

Every year about 800 people die in the U.S. from bicycle crashes. Most of them die from head injuries. Many more have their brains scrambled and live for a long time or even for the rest of their lives with something that doesn't function right up there. Brain damage can cause learning disabilities or personality changes and rob your child of the ability to think clearly. Hospital emergency room studies show that a helmet can prevent that about 85 per cent of the time. So you don't want your child riding a bike without one, even on your block, the sidewalk or a bike trail. The fall is always from the same distance above the pavement.

**Now on to the fun on the back panel!**

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## Here are the steps:

- **First, teach them the four rules to avoid fatal crashes!**
- **Then teach them to wear a helmet,**
- **Then, help them learn to balance and ride according to the rules.**



Some parents begin and end with teaching balance. But step one is the most important: teaching your child how to avoid the situations that produce hundreds of dead children every year. And you probably are aware already that a helmet is essential when they make a mistake. Teaching them to balance is the easiest part for most kids. Then you have to practice the four basic safety rules in actual riding. It can take you an extra couple of hours, but the result is well worth the effort!

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

## The Fun Part: Time to Ride

**Gear:** Start with a helmet, gloves to protect the skin on their hands and perhaps even skaters' knee and elbow pads for the first rides. Adjust the bicycle for them and be sure they can reach pedals, bars and brakes comfortably.

**Brakes first!** Show your kid how to stop the bike. Hold them up and gently move them forward as they use the brakes to stop until you are sure they know how.

**Balance:** Run alongside the bike, holding it up by the seat with one hand on the handlebars to show how you turn them to keep the bike upright.

**Riding:** Nobody learns without practice. Riding with your child is probably the best way to practice the rules. Go over the rules, then ride, stopping occasionally to review what they have just done and praise their good performance. Notice that if they are behind you, your rule about not following automatically will be severely challenged, even if you ride through a red light or directly into the path of a car! As with almost any other skill, practice is required to ingrain techniques. More than one session will be needed. But the result is worth your time.

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute  
4611 Seventh Street South  
Arlington, VA 22204-1419 USA  
(703) 486-0100

email: [info@helmets.org](mailto:info@helmets.org) Web: [www.helmets.org](http://www.helmets.org)  
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## Teaching Your Child to Ride a Bicycle



**More than wearing a helmet,  
More than just balance,  
Teaching your child survival rules!**