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How to teach Learn to Ride

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Planning

Location:

Ball court, flat open paved space or sports hall.

Equipment:

- Cones – ideally round flat non-slip rubber discs.
- 15mm pedal spanner – to remove and re-fit pedals. *Optional
- Track pump.
- Allen key for adjusting seat post height.

Progression:

Sloped area to practice using brakes.

Paperwork:

Risk assessment and register.

1. Preparation & introduction

Preparation

- If you are confident to do so and the pedals come off easily without need for extra tools, use a 15mm pedal spanner to loosen the pedals to the rear for removal. Left pedal is left hand thread. L/R marked on the pedal.

*It is possible to teach scooting without this step

- Make sure all tyres are inflated to recommended pressure (see sidewall of the tyre).
- Go through the bike, helmet, and equipment checks.



Introduction

Outline the session plan

Key learning points for Learn to Ride:

- Gaining balance through scooting.
- Starting and stopping safely.
- Pedalling for longer than a minute.

Next steps:

- Use cones to fine tune the control of the bike.
- Use sloped area for use of brakes for controlling speed.

2. Procedure

Outcome: To understand brakes and get on and off bike

- **Brakes:** Squeezing the brakes can be tested whilst walking alongside the bike before someone sits on the saddle. Explain that brakes are for control of speed not just stopping – adjust pressure on the levers.

Note: Lower the seat post to a level where feet are flat on the floor and slight bend in the knees. (*Use quick release lever or Allen key to loosen bolt – then retighten*).

Demonstrate getting on and off the bike:

On:

- Stand on the clean side (opposite chain side).
- Press both brake levers to keep the bike stable.
- Tilt towards the participant.
- Swing right leg over the seat and sit on the saddle or step through the frame if more comfortable.

Note: Check seat height is correct (feet flat with a slight bend in the knee).

Off:

- Press both brake levers to keep the bike stable.
- Lean the bike to the left with more weight on the left foot.
- Stand up off the seat and swing the right leg over the seat back to standing on the left side.



3. Finding balance

Outcome: Glide for three seconds or more, then introduce pedals

• Start position:

Seated, legs should be in a triangular position to keep the person stable on the bike.

• Move:

Scoot either by walking or lifting both feet at the same time.

• Move:

Sit on the saddle and lean the bike side to side, taking one foot off the floor on the opposite side to steady yourself.

Objective:

They can scoot with both feet gliding off the floor for at least three seconds.

Tip:

Focus on the core of the body as balance comes from there.

4. Pattern to embed

If you have removed the pedals reattach them now

Outcome: Learn PUSH-STEP-BRAKES

- Press brake levers.
- Get pedal ready (see image) pedal in line with the down tube of the frame.
- Look forward.
- Release brake levers.
- Deep breath (let them know there is no rush and to relax).
- **Push** down on the pedal with the right foot.
- **Step:** Take one step with left foot.
- **Brakes:** Press brakes to stop. Explain which is front and back brake.



Outcomes:

- Push the pedal hard enough to take one step with the foot.
- Comfortable with speed.
- Using brakes to stop in a controlled way.

Natural Progression:

- Repeating this movement will make the left foot find the pedal automatically.
- If not, prompt them to push the left pedal to build up the sequence.

Tips:

- Check the bike is in medium gear.
- Advise them to look where they want to go and not at the ground or where they don't want to go.



5. Other techniques

If the Push-Step-Brakes stage is a challenge then use this interim method

Scooting with one foot:

- Right foot on the pedal at six o'clock.
- Press down to keep it in position.
- Scoot with the left (see image).

Outcome:

- The left foot glides off the floor for three seconds.

Progression:

- Prompt to take left foot to pedal or
- Go back to stage no.4 Pattern to embed.



Support balance to build confidence:

- Seek permission to hold the back of their clothing first. This is so you can pull them back to centre if they veer off.
- Whilst supporting them, get them to turn both pedals. This helps to embed the pattern of movement as a behaviour, and aids them to move on to the next stage.
- If you feel you are doing a lot of dragging, they have not yet mastered gliding. Go back to learn to glide.



Learning goal: Cycle for a minute unaided

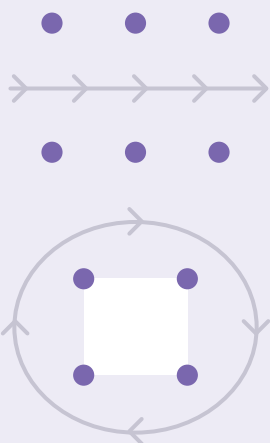
6. Progression

Outcome: Steering and turning

- Place cones in a square the size of a ball court and ride outside of square.
- Place two lines of cones to create a straight pathway about two metres apart. Ride between the cones to follow path.
- For progression, use a sloped area to control speed by using brakes.
- Explain to press left brake before the right brake.

Tips:

- Advise not to pedal through the entire turn as they'll go too fast to make a controlled turn.
- Go clockwise and anti-clockwise so they don't get too comfortable with one direction more than the other.
- Introduce coasting on a bike, using the momentum to carry you without pedalling.



Progression Games

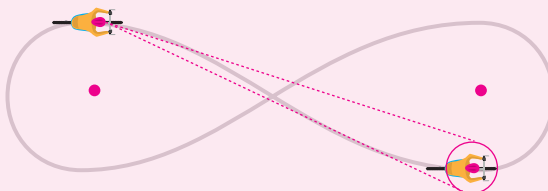
Objective of games

These games prepare the rider to learn skills e.g. signalling and turning head to look backwards over the shoulder.

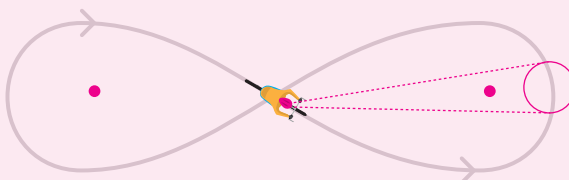
Game 1 – Figure of eight

Two cones spaced four metres apart. Ride a figure of eight between the cones.

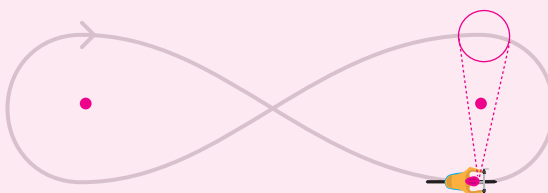
1. Start position



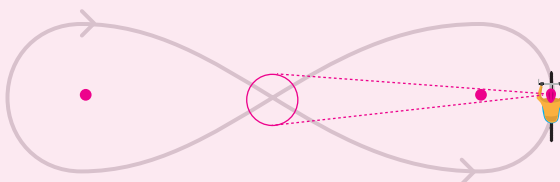
2. Follow the figure of eight and move the line of sight



3. Continue ride



4. Further progression round the figure of eight



Learning point:

As rider is steering and turning, bring their focus to take their vision to look further ahead along the route they want to cycle, to build confidence.

Progression point:

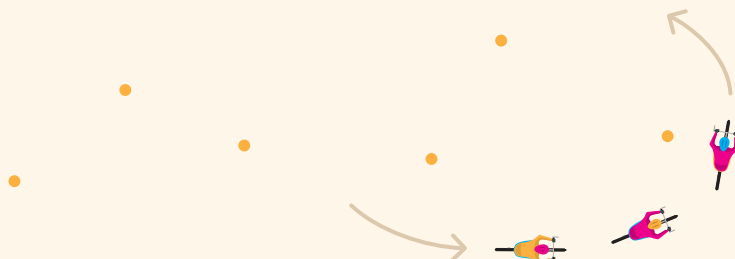
Decrease the space between the two cones/slow speed to practice control.

Tip:

Advise rider to not look down, always look a few metres ahead.

Game 2 – Follow the leader – Set off and ride and ask others to follow

Have a flat area with some natural obstacles or put cones down. Leader starts off and selects a route of their choice. Change the rider at the front to build experience and confidence.



Learning point:

This introduces the rider to start being aware of external factors and responding to them whilst working on balance, coordination, and observation.

Progression point:

Get each rider to lead/change pace/make the route they take more challenging. If a rider puts a foot down they are sent to the back of the line.

Tip:

Advise rider not to look down, always look a few metres ahead/put less confident riders towards the front.

Game 3 – Waving/high fives

Two riders on opposite sides of line of cone, start at opposite ends of line. When they reach each other, wave or high five.



Learning point:

This gets the rider to start taking their hands off the handlebars to prepare them for signalling.

Progression point:

Start with waving, then progress to high fives. Both left and right hands. Can start to pass bottle.

Tip:

Make sure high fives aren't too forceful.

The M Check

Bike safety check



- 1 Is the rear derailleur fitted correctly and does it shift smoothly?
- 2 Ensure that the axle nuts/quick release are tight. No side-to-side play in the hubs.
- 3 Are the brakes fitted securely?
- 4 Ensure spokes aren't loose.
- 5 Are the tyres inflated and free from glass, thorns and nails?
- 6 Is the saddle fitted securely and at the right angle?
- 7 Is the frame free from rust damage and cracks?
- 8 Is the seat post clamp tight?
- 9 Is the front derailleur fitted correctly and does it shift smoothly?
- 10 Do the cranks spin freely with no side-to-side play?
- 11 Are the pedals fitted correctly?
Are the brakes working correctly?
Check right lever (front brake).
- 12 Check left lever (rear brake).
Will they stop you in an emergency?
- 13 Ensure that the steering operates freely.
With no excessive play or obstruction.
Check the cables do not obstruct steering.
- 14 Are the right reflectors fitted?
- 15 Ensure front and rear suspension travel freely (if present).
- 16 Ensure that the axle nuts/quick release are tight. No side-to-side play in the hubs.
- 17 Wheels should be spinning freely and straight.

Make sure your bike is safe to ride. Always use the M check.



Helmet Check

Before the session, gather the group and ask them to have their bike helmets in their hands. Ask them to check:

- Is the helmet free from any visible damage (inside and out)?
- Does the helmet circumference fit the rider's head?
- Does the helmet cover the forehead and is it level?
- Does the chin strap buckle work properly?

Fitting a helmet

When you shake your head from side-to-side, a correctly fitted helmet will stay in place.

- 1 Place level just above the eyebrows.
- 2 Side straps meet below the ear to form a Y shape.
- 3 Less than two fingers space between your chin and strap.



Equipment & Clothing Check

Participant's equipment and clothing

Headwear Other than helmets, participants may, need to wear a hat to maintain warmth. Very thin hats and headwear such as material tubes, thin beanies and skull cap hats are recommended so that the helmet remains securely positioned on the head.

Upper body

Layers and materials appropriate to the conditions of day and season; during the winter, participant may need garments with close fitting necks.

Trousers

If wearing long trousers, tuck them tighter around the ankles, tuck into socks or close to the ankle with a band.

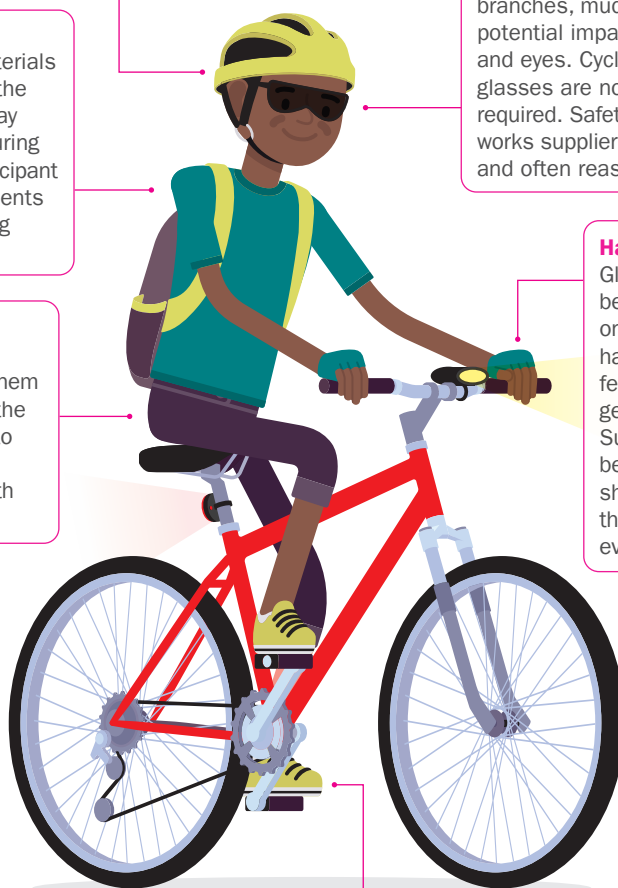
Eyewear Protective glasses are recommended. Low branches, mud and grit are all potential impacts to the face and eyes. Cycling specific glasses are not necessarily required. Safety specs from works suppliers are effective and often reasonably priced.

Hands

Gloves should be worn; winter ones should have sufficient feel to change gear effectively. Summer ones can be fingerless and should protect the palms in the event of a fall.

Footwear

Suitable sole, with a non-slip grip; not open toed/sandals; laces tucked out of the way.



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