

# Bicycles and small wheeled devices

Kidsafe SA Inc. | March 2017

Riding bicycles and other small wheeled devices such as skateboards, in-line skates, roller skates and micro-scooters is fun, good exercise; and a great way for children to develop their balance and motor skills, and become more independent.

It is important to remember that bicycles and small wheeled devices are not toys; they are vehicles which children use, often in public spaces and on roads. Parents have a responsibility to make sure that their children are safe when they ride a bike or any small wheeled devices.

Each year hundreds of young children are treated in hospitals around South Australia as a result of incidents involving bicycles and small wheeled devices. Falls and collisions with other people or objects are the most common cause of injuries.

Many cycling injuries occur on public roads, usually when a child falls off their bike after crashing into a pole, gutter or fence. With small wheeled devices, most falls are due to the device not having adequate brakes, which results in loss of control.

## Cycling in rural areas

Many people think that rural areas are safer for children to ride their bikes. Children living in rural areas are just as likely to lose control of their bike or small wheeled device - and deal with a range of different road surfaces, such as dirt, gravel, pot holes, and slippery surfaces. Vehicles are also permitted to travel at greater speeds on some open roads.

## Common types of injuries

- **Scrapes and fractures** - usually to the hands, wrists, elbows and knees as the rider tries to break their fall.
- **Cuts and breaks** - to the mouth, gums and teeth when the rider hits the bike's handlebars or other objects.

## More serious injuries

- **Head** - when riders hit the ground or collide with objects.
- **Abdominal** - can occur if a rider's abdomen is pushed into an unprotected handle bar or other sharp object when they fall.

# Helmets

Helmets are one of the most important pieces of safety equipment a child can wear. When worn properly, a helmet reduces the impact of the head hitting the ground or an object, and the risk of brain injury by around 90%. It is important for children to know that helmets must be worn when riding a bike or small wheeled devices, even when riding around home.

## Choosing a helmet

Helmets should feel comfortable and have good airflow when worn, particularly if you live in a warm climate. The helmet should display an Australian Standards sticker, to show that the helmet has been tested and approved (AS/NZS 2063).



### STEP ONE - SIZE

**Measure** your child's head.

**Try** the helmet on. Does it fit snugly? Does it sit flat or rock side to side?

Use the helmet's sizing pads to **secure** the helmet to your child's head. Mix and match for the greatest comfort! If the helmet has a universal fit ring instead, adjust the ring size to fit your child's head.

Remember to buy a helmet that fits your child's head **now**, not a helmet to 'grow into.'

Remove sizing pads as your child's head grows, and when it gets too small **replace** it for safety.

### STEP TWO - POSITION

The helmet should sit **level** on your child's head and low on your child's forehead – one or two finger-widths above their eyebrow.

### STEP THREE - BUCKLES

**Centre** the left buckle under the chin.

Straps can be pulled from the back of the helmet to **lengthen or shorten** the chin straps.

**Hint:** it's easier to make these adjustments when the helmet is off.

### STEP FOUR - SIDE STRAPS

**Adjust** the slider on both straps to form a 'V' shape under, and slightly in front of, the ears.

**Lock** the slider if possible.

### STEP FIVE - CHIN STRAP

**Buckle** the chin strap.

Tighten the strap until it is **snug**. No more than one or two fingers should fit under the strap.

### STEP SIX - FINAL FITTING

Does the helmet **fit** right? Tell your child to open their mouth wide...big yawn! The helmet should pull down on the head. If not, refer back to step 5 and tighten the chin strap.

Does the helmet rock back more than two fingers above the eyebrows? If so, unbuckle and shorten the front strap by moving the slider **forward**. Buckle, retighten the chin strap, and **test** again.

Does the helmet rock forward into the eyes? If so, unbuckle and tighten the back strap by moving the slider **back** towards the ears. Buckle, retighten the chin strap, and **test** again.

# Bicycles

Make sure that the bike is the right size - a bike that is too big or too small is a safety hazard. Get your child to sit on the bike; their toes should touch the ground on both sides.

## Do bike safety checks

1. Brakes - make sure brake blocks are not worn down and are fitted properly.
2. Chain - the chain should be frequently oiled and properly fitted.
3. Tyres - look for bald spots, bulges and cuts. Make sure they are pumped up to the correct tyre pressure.
4. Pedals - pedals must spin freely.
5. Bell or horn - bells or horns should be loud enough for others to hear.
6. Lights and reflectors - make sure lights and reflectors meet Safety Standards (lights AS3562; reflectors AS2142). They must be secure, properly aligned, clean and in good working order.
7. Seat - the height of the seat should be correctly adjusted so that the rider can sit on the seat with their toes able to reach the ground.
8. Handle bar grips - handle bar ends must be covered with intact grips. This reduces the risk of your child being impaled onto the handle bar ends if they fall.

## Riding tips

### Be safe and stand out

- Use protective equipment such as helmets and wrist, knee and elbow guards. These are designed to strengthen and protect the most common points of contact when children fall.

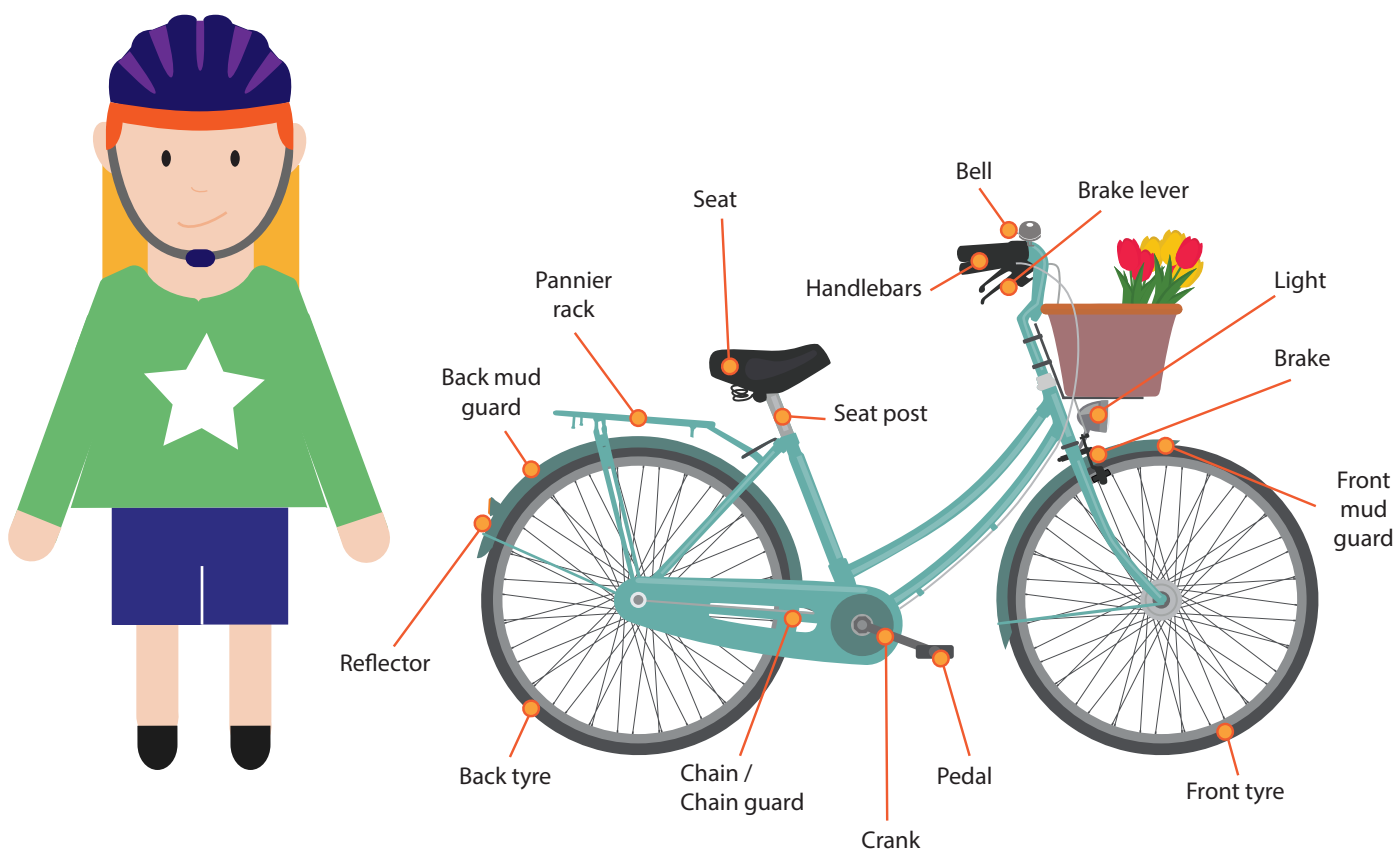
- Wear items that increase visibility to other road users such as pedestrians and vehicles - this can include bright coloured clothing, reflective tape, flashing lights and reflectors, and visibility flags.

### On the road

- Be aware of the road traffic rules and obey them – make sure your child stops before entering the road, looks for traffic in both directions, listens for traffic and thinks 'is it safe to cross the road?'
- Look before turning – make a shoulder check, signal, and wait for a break in traffic before turning.
- Walk don't ride across streets, crosswalks or railway crossings.
- Avoid busy streets and riding at night.
- Riders must give way to pedestrians and sound the bell or horn before passing others.
- Listen to your surroundings - it is extremely dangerous to listen to music while riding a bike. Do not allow your child to ride a bike with headphones in.
- Children under 10 years of age should cycle with a responsible adult. Most children under 10 years of age do not have the skills to ride safely without supervision on the roads.
- Know the dangers of the driveway - children should be taught that the driveway is dangerous and should not be encouraged to ride their bikes in the driveway. If riding on a footpath or road, riders should watch for cars turning in to, or coming out of driveways.

# Bike safety checklist

	Yes	No
Have you checked that your bike is working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the brakes work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the pedals move easily?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the bell or horn make a noise?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the tyres pumped up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you got your helmet on and fitted just right?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know where you can ride?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Helpful videos to keep you and your bike safe:

Putting your bike together: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=otA7VA2M3eg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otA7VA2M3eg)

Way2Go bike safety check: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RJ0VyFmeuw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RJ0VyFmeuw)

Safe helmet: [www.youtube.com/embed/fAvW5ukgyQU](http://www.youtube.com/embed/fAvW5ukgyQU)

# Micro-scooters

There are some safety concerns with micro-scooters.

- The small wheels and low clearance on some models make the rider more likely to lose control on an uneven surface. Scooters with larger wheels and inflatable rubber tyres are more stable.
- The braking system is intended to work by applying friction or pressure to the back wheel. This often fails, especially in cheaper models.
- Folding mechanisms can sometimes fail and fold under pressure or after some wear.
- Kidsafe SA does not recommend the micro-scooter for young children due to the combination of speed, poor braking mechanisms and the balance required which can be difficult for new riders to manage.



## Do scooter safety checks

1. Brakes and locking mechanisms - make sure brakes are not worn down and the locking mechanism is effective.
2. Sharp edges - check for sharp edges and objects.
3. Steering column - make sure the steering column locks easily and does not collapse, or is too short, causing the rider to stoop.
4. Handlebar grips - must be secure and not swivel, and should be intact so that the ends of the handlebars are covered.
5. Foot-boards – make sure foot-boards are non-slip.

## Hoverboards

Many hoverboards, also known as self-balancing scooters, gliders or motorboards, have been recalled due to serious safety concerns and incidents, including fires.

It is important to check that the model has not been recalled by visiting [www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au).

People riding hoverboards are at risk of falling and should wear appropriate protective gear, including helmets, shoes, kneepads, elbow pads and wrist guards.

Riders should check with local authorities before riding a hoverboard in a public place or on the road.

# Laws for bicycles and small wheeled devices

## What are the laws in South Australia?

It is important to remember that laws are in place to protect your children and should be reinforced to your children at all times. Police Officers can issue fines to riders and their parents for disobeying the road rules.

### Bicycles

- A safety helmet must be worn.
- Bicycles can be ridden on the road or on a footpath (unless there is a sign which prohibits bicycle riding). When riding on a footpath or shared path, a rider must:
  - > Keep to the left unless it is impracticable to do so
  - > Give way to any pedestrian on the footpath or shared path and sound a warning (by bell, horn or other means) when passing to avoid danger.
- Bicycles can be ridden at night with a properly functioning white front light, red rear light, and reflectors on the rear of the bike.

### Micro-scooters, skateboards, roller skates and roller blades

- A safety helmet must be worn.
- Can be ridden on the road, as long as there is no dividing strip, and no painted centre white line.
- Can be ridden on the footpath.
- Cannot be ridden at night.

### Child carrier seats and trailers

Parents and carers may choose to use a child carrier seat on the bicycle or small trailer to transport children. This is legal to do so as long as the following safety precautions are taken:

- The rider must be at least 16 years of age.
- An approved and securely fastened helmet must be used by children in child carrier seats and children sitting in a trailer being towed by a bicycle.
- Children must be under 10 years old to sit in the trailer being towed by a bicycle.

Tip: Avoid leaving helmets in direct sunlight or hot cars as this may cause damage.

### Second-hand wheeled devices and helmets

- If choosing to use a second hand bicycle, scooter or skateboard make sure it is in good condition and meets all of the safety requirements.
- Second-hand helmets may not always be the best option. A damaged helmet will not protect the rider and it can be difficult to see damage to the foam lining. You also have little choice for comfort and fit with second-hand helmets. It is important to replace any helmet that is obviously damaged, is showing signs of wear or has been involved in a crash - even if you cannot see any damage.

Kidsafe SA is here to assist you. This is general information and if you require specific advice please contact us to discuss further.

For more information contact Kidsafe SA:  
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