

OUR TIPS AND TRICKS

PEDAL
PROJECT

Thank you for booking on to the Pedal Project course. It is always a great pleasure to see a child cycling for the first time, having learnt a skill they will have for life!

It is now essential they practise regularly in the next few days and weeks to make sure they consolidate their new skill as it can soon be lost without practice. Here we've put together some tips and tricks on how to make practicing easier at home.

The first thing to remember is that to keep that confidence high, regular practice is key.



Aim for 10–15 minutes every day for the first week



Then, at least once a week to stay confident



Remember: frequency beats duration



BIKE SETUP BASICS

Saddle height can make or break a first ride.

Start with the saddle low enough for your child's feet to sit flat on the ground and their legs straight. Too low makes pedalling difficult; too high makes starting and stopping tricky. As their confidence grows, raise the saddle slightly so they're on the balls of their feet or tiptoes.

Tyres: Pump them firm - around 40 psi. If you can squeeze them with your fingers, they need more air.



WHERE SHOULD YOU PRACTICE?

For those first few practices, it's important to start somewhere easy. Find a big open space with plenty of room to move and no traffic or obstacles. Great options include:

- An empty car park
- Tennis or basketball court
- Wide park path

The space should be a flat and smooth surface. Think tarmac or concrete.



Avoid: grass, uneven pavements, and hills early on as this can knock confidence early on.



STOPPING - USING THE BRAKES



Children should use both brakes together when stopping. The front brake stops rapidly and the back brake stops with control.



When riding along they should always cover the brakes with two bunny fingers, ready to use them when needed.



Encourage them to pull the brakes lightly to "feather" them - this helps them slow down smoothly rather than stopping suddenly. With practice, they'll learn how to balance both brakes for a controlled, confident stop.

STARTING - THE 1-2-3 START

Remind them to say it out loud:

1-2-3 → Knees up → Pedals → Look up → Faster!

Children often try to pedal from a standing start, but this won't work until they're more confident. Counting "1-2-3" out loud reminds them to push with their feet first to gain momentum before finding the pedals.

As they count the three pushes, it's important to follow these steps:

1. Encourage them to go as fast as they can.
 - If they struggle to gain enough speed, count to five instead.
2. On "3", say "knees up" or "pedals" to help them find the pedals.
3. As soon as they find the pedals, say "look up" and "faster."

Keep cues short and simple: "count out loud," "faster," "knees up," "pedals," "look up."



It is really important that you don't hold them or the bike, this causes them to lean towards you.

If they need a little help, walk just behind and to the side, and on the third push, give a gentle fingertip push to the middle of their back for a boost.



STARTING - THE PEDAL-READY START

A bit less intuitive but to be encouraged as they get more confident. They should follow these steps:

1. Lean left with the left foot on the ground.
2. Use the right foot to push the pedal back and down, then bring it up to about 2 o'clock.
3. Place the right foot on the pedal, look forward, and give a strong push to set off - they should then be able to pedal straight away.

Using the right foot is best, as leaning left is the safest habit when starting off on the road.



LOOKING BEHIND

You can help them practice by standing behind them and asking: **"How many fingers am I holding up?"**



Make sure you ask from a position where they don't have to turn their head too far around to see you.



CYCLING ONE-HANDED

When you think they are confident enough, it is good to practise cycling with one hand off the handlebars. This will help with signalling and bike handling.

They should be sat up straight with a loose grip on the handlebars. Then the key is to not move the hand too far or too fast off the handlebars. Just up and down briefly to start with.

Over time, you can practice small side motions.



FURTHER SKILLS AFTER THE COURSE

Practising looking behind and cycling one-handed are the two main skills they will need to eventually progress to cycling on the roads.

Cycling Proficiency is now called Bikeability. This course gives children the skills needed to cycle on the roads, such as how to manage junctions. It is often offered in school or by local authorities.

Another skill to practise is standing up while pedalling. This will help them with steep hills and also with the bike handling.