

Guidelines for new cyclists

First thoughts

- Don't buy a cheap bike. Go to a specialist dealer and **get it fitted** to you.
- Don't buy a secondhand bike unless you know enough technically to check and adjust it or you know someone who will do it for you.
- Unless you are going to ride off-road on tracks, buy a light 'road' bike not a 'mountain' bike.
- It is a good idea to join CyclingUK (was Cyclists Touring Club – CTC).

When you first start

- Use a lower gear than you think you should.
- Pump your tyres up to the right pressure, which will be printed on the tyre.
- Buy some padded shorts and long cycling tops so you can ride comfortably. Lidl and Aldi often have good cheap ones. Don't wear underwear under the shorts.
- Wear a helmet. I knew someone who died because he was not wearing one.
- Learn how to mend a puncture and adjust gears and brakes.
- Lubricate your chain regularly with a wet or dry PTFE lubricant.
- Take a spare inner tube and a small tool kit and pump with you in a bag under your saddle.
- Fit a bike computer. A cheap, simple one will be fine, but a Mio or Garmin-type GPS one is best.
- Record your rides (distance, time, average speed) so you can see your progress.
- Don't get stuck in a speed rut. Gradually increase your average speed.
- Take a re-usable 600 ml water bottle. After an hour, have a small mouthful every 15 minutes. More on hot days.
- Take some food such as trail mix or a high calorie bar.
- To start with expect to ache next day. It is normal and a good thing as it shows your muscles are improving.
- Once you are confident buy some cycling shoes and fit cleats to them.

Don't ride in or on:

- Gravel
- Wet mud
- Puddles
- Grass verges
- Wet white lines
- Drain covers

Take up road space.

Don't ride close to the edge of the road and remember you have an equal right to be on the road. Drivers are being told to pass no nearer than 1.5m to bikes.

Never pass close to a parked car

A door might swing open. This is especially risky when approaching from behind. You don't bounce off a door edge. Always pass further away than a door width.

Later

Ride some Sportives, such as the Tour de Broads. These are organised events with routes of between 10 and 160 kilometres and places to stop and rest with toilets, food and water. You will meet other riders, who are always delightful people, and you will have a pleasant surprise when you find out how much progress you have made. You often get a medal, like Muttley.

Learn how to maintain your bike to keep it running perfectly. In particular learn to clean, check and change your chain, to change brake blocks or pads and to replace gear and brake cables. Anyone can do it. The tools don't cost much and last a long time. Lidl sells a stand you can put your bike on while you work on it.

Get a 'turbo trainer' for the winter



This is a rack into which you clamp the rear wheel of your bike. You will then be able to keep up your bike riding indoors when the weather is vile. You can vary how difficult the pedals are to push, simulating riding up or downhill. Prices start at about £80 and Machine Mart sells a good one shown in the picture.

Prices (£) from:

* means often stocked by Lidl or Aldi, so add their apps to your phone

^ means best bought from a proper bike shop

Bike	500 ^
Floor (track) pump	10 *
Padded shorts	10 *
Tops	7 *
Shoes	25 ^
Saddle tool kit	7 *
Tool kit pump	5 *
Helmet	25 ^
Simple computer	5 *
GPS computer	100 ^ eg Mio
Tube	5 ^
Water bottle	5 *
Trail mix	2 *
Bike stand	25 *
Sportive	10 upwards depending on distance and organiser

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