



Parent Guide

Riding Tips for New Riders

Introduction

The Parents Guide is to be used as a beginning resource for parents as they consider riding with their student-athlete. Student-athletes will benefit mentally and physically by riding outdoors when the local guidance permits. NICA encourages student-athletes to ride with their families! It is important to think through a ride plan and be familiar with basic equipment prior to setting out. This guide will introduce topics needed to plan a successful family ride.

Safety

Safety is always the first concern. Planning a ride that is within everyone's ability will limit unnecessary risk and is important to having a safe and fun ride. It is also important to have properly fitted and working equipment to prevent mechanical problems and delays. Always review with every rider the safety rules prior to starting on a ride.

Reference: [Bicycling Safety Tips Flyer](#), MCBC

Equipment

Bike

- Select bike of appropriate frame size and adjust seat height to fit.
- Perform a bike safety check to ensure the bike is in safe working order before beginning a ride. Use the acronym ABCDE to run through a bike safety check.

Air - Check that the air pressure in the tires is appropriate for the rider's weight, riding style, and riding terrain. Squeeze each tire to make sure that it is not flat or over inflated. Use a pressure gauge for better measurement. This is also a good time to check the tire tread.

Brakes - Check that brakes are properly set-up and functional. The set-up includes checking that the position, angle and reach* of the brake levers are properly set for the rider. Look at the brake pads to make sure they do not need to be replaced. It is important to check that the brakes are functioning properly: spin the front wheel and apply the brake, make sure it is not squishy or too firm and stops the wheel. Repeat with the back wheel.

Chain - Check that the chain is properly lubricated, free of rust, and moving freely.

Derailleurs - Check that the bike shifts correctly and consistently. Go for a short ride on the bike and shift through the gears all the way up and all the way down.

Everything Else - Do a Drop Test by lifting the bike a few inches off the ground and drop. Listen for unusual rattles that need attention prior to riding.

This is only a check before riding. A bike should be thoroughly checked by a professional bike mechanic. There are many things involved with bike safety, function, and maintenance and a professional bike mechanic has the knowledge and skill to correct mechanical issues.

Helmet

- The helmet should fit comfortably and securely. The helmet needs to be positioned to protect the forehead. A properly sized helmet can be adjusted to fit securely with the side straps, chin straps, and stabilizing system on the back of the helmet. When buckled there should be only enough room to fit two fingers between the chin strap and the chin. A Helmet should not be worn if it is damaged. It is recommended to replace a helmet every three years. For further information see: [Giro Helmets 101](#)

Shoes

- Wear closed toe shoes when mountain biking.

Clothing - Wear comfortable clothing, but not too loose fitting. Shorts with a padded area help reduce chafing and irritation from the clothing seams. Shirts made of moisture wicking material keep the skin dry and comfortable. Bring an extra layer for unexpected delays or weather changes.

Glasses

- Safety or sunglasses should be worn to protect the eyes from glare or objects. They will also help keep dirt and mud kicked up from tires out of the eyes.

Gloves

- Gloves help protect the hands from abrasion, absorb sweat and keep your hands dry. Gloves with padded palms help cushion and diminish vibration.

Tool Kit

- It is important to carry a multi- tool, spare tube (patch kit), and pump to repair a flat and so minor bike repairs/adjustments can be made during the ride.

Bike Lock

- (optional) can be used when leaving the bike in a public location.

Reference [NICA Student-Athletes Practice Checklist](#)

Hydration & Nutrition

Hydration

- Always carry a water bottle or hydration pack during a ride.

Nutrition

- Carry a snack as an energy bar or gel.

Getting Ready

Set Expectations - as a 'team' member your student-athlete knows the rules of the road and proper riding etiquette. Have them tell you the riding code of conduct and review NICA's [Code of Conduct](#). Add rules they have missed, especially if riding on roads with automobile traffic. Remember you are the adult and the Risk Manager.

Let your student-athlete know your limits and that you want this to be fun, but as it took time for them it will take time for you to build stamina. With the help of their patience and encouragement you will want to ride more and will gradually improve enough to take longer and more challenging rides.

Be your student-athlete's role model. Biking takes energy, strength, patience, and endurance. Your stamina may not be up to your student-athlete's energy level. Remember your rider is watching how you handle frustrations and incidents. What is your attitude during these times? What is your process for working through these situations? Let your rider know the steps you are taking to resolve or conquer a challenge. Teach by your actions.

Plan a route/ Venues

A ride should be planned that considers the most inexperienced rider. Plan a route and distance that are within every rider's ability. Any physical distancing concerns about a route should be addressed prior to the ride. *Remember that risk management should be planned into every activity.*

Rides can occur on cross-country trails (know your limits and ride on the appropriate terrain), roads, and pump tracks. Bike skills can be practiced in empty parking lots and fields. Destination rides with a snack/lunch at the destination are a fun way to enjoy a ride.

Starting Out

Determine set stopping locations for everyone to regroup, these are often at intersections and landmarks. Plan to regroup a few minutes into the ride to check if there are any bike issues/ adjustments that need attention. It is important for riders to stay together during a ride so no one gets lost and mechanical issues can be addressed quickly. Start out as a group and Return as a group. Always ride with one or two fingers on each brake lever, eyes looking forward (not at the front tire), and weight centered over the bottom bracket.

Start Easy and Simple - Have Fun and Be Safe

Activities

There are other ways of enjoying being on a bike beyond riding a route. A park or empty lot is a great venue to practice skills and play games. Some ideas are to follow lines on the black top, practice U-turns around objects, set up cones to practice slalom style turns, and have slow races on a slight downhill slope. This is also an opportunity for your student-athlete to show you bike-body position, where eyes should be focused, and proper braking.

[Buddy Pegs Parking Lot Challenge](#) - In an empty parking lot ride in and out of parking spaces without touching the lines. To make a challenge singly or with a family member, from a start line ride in and out of four parking spaces and return back to start/home, record your time. If playing with a partner, the second rider starts when the first rider completes the course. When the second rider crosses back to home combine times. Compete against two other family members.

*Buddy Pegs [Pro Parent Tip Kids Bike Brake Lever Reach Adjustment](#)