

10 Tips for Parents for Biking to School

As a life-long commuter cyclist, I love biking around - it's a great way to squeeze a little activity into the day, it makes me happy and it's something I'd like to pass onto my kids. But riding to get somewhere at a specific time can sometimes be stressful – for kids and for parents (especially for those that don't ride very often) but it doesn't have to be.

Here's a few tips to make it a happier experience:

1. Ensure your [children's bikes](#) (and yours!) [are fitted](#) and in good running order – Remember the ABCs (Air in tires, Brakes work, and Chain lubed).
2. [Check your child's helmet for a good fit.](#)
3. Before biking to school, make sure you and your child get out and bike around the neighbourhood or another safe, easy location where you can ride for the enjoyment with no time pressures.
4. Be sure to practice:
 - a. braking (remind your new cyclist to start braking with the rear brake to slow down and then use the front to come to a complete stop);
 - b. riding in a straight line and turning with control;
 - c. gear shifting – the bigger sprockets make it easier for going up hills, the littler ones are for speeding on flatter stretches;
 - d. Older children can practice hand signals.
5. Choose your route in advance (and if possible, do a test run). Your kids may enjoy helping to plan the route.
6. On the morning that you bike to school – leave early! (earlier than the time you estimate it will take to get there) And try not to be stressed if it turns out you're running behind (keep in mind the whole point is to make this a positive experience).
7. Remember to role model good [road skills](#) (older children that have good handling and braking skills can be supported to ride on the road but it's OK to let your child cruise the sidewalks as long as they watch out for pedestrians).
8. Don't forget water, a bike lock and a plan for the return trip!
9. Most of all remember your patience, and...
10. Have FUN!

We live on the coast – at sea level and sometimes schools are up a hill that is so steep that it feels more like it's perched on the side of the Coast Mountains. So, route choice is everything – and with kids, it always is. Living in a small town in some ways makes it easier to bike with kids because the traffic flow is much lighter and drivers are more likely to give you wide pass (and a neighbourly wave). No matter where you live, when selecting the route for your family bike ride, you will want to consider: traffic volume, hills, intersections and relative length. Sometimes taking a more circuitous route that is flatter, with less traffic and easy crossings is worth going the extra distance.

Biking to school is a great way to get started on a fun, family activity that will take you places. Enjoy the ride!

