

# Advice and Information for Child Graduates of the Bicycle Riding School

Congratulations to the recent graduate for learning to ride a bicycle! We hope that they will have a lifetime of joy and healthy exercise from biking, while maybe helping save the world with one less car!

## Practicing - Open Space and Bike Path

We recommend practicing more in a paved open space to get really solid and steady before venturing on to something like a bike path or sidewalk, which takes more control and precision. Look for open spaces in your community to practice like paved school yards, empty parking lots, basketball or tennis courts, or possibly quiet streets (with adult supervision, of course).

Before heading onto a bike path, your rider should be able to:

- Reliably start on their own without swerving too much
- Ride relatively straight
- Consistently come to a controlled stop when asked, and independently when close to an obstacle
- Look back over their left shoulder while staying reasonably straight, without swerving much

When the rider is steady enough for a bike path, look on the Resources page of our website for our handout *Pointers for Riding on a Bike Path*, if you didn't get a copy at graduation. To see a list of bike paths in Massachusetts, visit [TrailMap.MAPC.org](http://TrailMap.MAPC.org) and unselect all filters except "Paved Paths".

**Sidewalks:** We don't really recommend riding on sidewalks. Sidewalks are meant for pedestrians moving at walking speed, and cars frequently cross sidewalks to enter/exit driveways and parking lots without looking for a person moving at the speed of a bicycle. Pedestrians should not have to worry about a bike swerving or hitting them. If riding on sidewalks, give people walking lots of space or just stop and walk your bike when a pedestrian is close.

**Helmet:** Helmets are required, by law, for children 16 and under. We absolutely require our students to wear helmets and do not recommend riding a bicycle without one. You can get a helmet at a bike shop, sports store, or box store like Target. The helmet shouldn't squeeze the head too much or flop around. Ideally get a helmet that adjusts, so it can fit more snugly and grow with your child. The straps should form a V under the ears.



**Pads and gloves:** It's up to you whether you want your rider to wear pads and gloves after they have learned with us. If they are still wobbly, really nervous, or easily discouraged, this can minimize injuries. You can get these at a sports store, box store and some bike stores. They tend to run small, so make sure they fit! The kids pads we like best are Super Savers JR from [Triple8.com](http://Triple8.com), except for the smallest kids who will want [Triple8.com](http://Triple8.com) Little Tricky pads. (We find that Bern pads aren't very comfortable. We also don't like pads that have straps that go through a loop and come back to fasten. They don't stay up and are harder to put on.)

**Bell and kickstand:** These often need to be bought separately. They are good to have but not necessary. Your local bike shop will usually install them for free if you buy them when you buy your bike there.