

Some guidelines for buying a bike for new riders

Most of my students do best with upright handle bars and open frames. If you look for a comfort hybrid, you'll probably be fine. A hybrid is a bike with medium sized tires, between skinny racing tires and fat mountain bike tires. But in terms of the riding position it's not a combination. A racing bike, with dropped handle bars is hard for most new riders. A mountain bike usually has straight bars, which means they're a little low as well, though not as bad as the dropped bars. Hybrids have more upright bars. A comfort hybrid has a geometry that is easier to balance. It's got more of a rake in the fork and the seat is more behind the pedals than a more aggressive riding position. You never want to buy a bike without riding it, so you can try whatever you want, but don't buy something just because it's affordable or available.

I have 6 Specialized Expedition bikes in my fleet because I find them so comfortable for new riders. They are not hybrids because their tires are thick, but the position is like a comfort hybrid. Ace Wheel Works and Belmont Wheel Works used to sell them. Now they are not being made. The closest thing is the Specialized Roll, but the tires are thicker. I'm sure there are other comfy bikes. See what you find. Specialized Crossroads is similar to our Expeditions but with thinner tires and a little bit less easy to ride. Belmont Wheel Works has a nice alley behind the store where people not yet riding on streets can try out bikes.

The thicker your tires, the more comfy the ride but the more you have to pedal. The skinnier the tires, the farther you will go for a given amount of push, but you will feel the bumps more. Many people decide that a hybrid is a good compromise.

Don't let the people in the bike store convince you to buy a bike that seems too big to you. You won't want your feet flat on the ground for long, but you will want the balls of your feet to be firmly on the ground, when you're sitting on the seat until you learn how to stand up to get off the bike. If the people in the store give you a hard time, tell them you'll put the seat up later, or they'll have nightmares about you hurting your knees. But, if you're not going 20 miles or more a day, you won't ruin your knees. It's more important to be able to reach the ground from the seat. You can learn later how to stand up and get off the bike without being on the seat, if you start going long distances or just want to ride like serious riders do.

Good luck with it. Call or write me if you have questions.

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