

Advice for Getting a Bike for New Adult Riders

Bike Style/Type: Most of our students do best with upright handlebars (so you're not leaning over too much), medium width tires, and an open/step-through frame. This is most commonly found on **hybrid bikes**. We teach on a class called "**comfort hybrids**". Some students can easily transition to mountain bikes (knobbier tires, straight bars, more leaned over) but many find it difficult and prefer the comfort of a more upright geometry. We do not recommend that any of our students go directly to a road bike (skinny tires, very leaning over, downturned handlebars).

Fit/Sizing:

General: If the seat has to be all the way down, the bike is likely too big. If the seat has to be all the way up, the bike is likely too small.

Seat Height: Don't let the people in the bike store convince you to put your seat higher than you are comfortable with. As you learned to ride, your seat was raised higher and higher. When you graduated, you were probably able to sit on the seat and have the balls of your feet firmly on the ground. That's ok for now. As you get more comfortable riding, it can continue to go up. There's a concern that it will hurt your knees if your seat is too low, 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, until you're good at getting on and off from a standing position.

Frame Size: Frame size varies across manufacturers and bike styles, sometimes measured in inches, centimeters, or standard sizing (XS, S, M, L, XL). Oftentimes there are charts with your height to pick out your size; we recommend going on the smaller side.

Reach: You should be able to comfortably reach the handlebars and not feel like they are too far away.

Tire thickness: The thicker your tires, the more comfy the ride, but the harder you have to push. The skinnier the tires, the farther you will go for a given amount of push, but you will feel the bumps more.

If you're short-ish (5'2" & under): You're going to want to get an XS frame. You may want to consider a bike with 24" wheels, which are sometimes classified as a kids bike but are completely fine for shorter adults.

Pedals-forward bikes: If you have limited mobility in your knees, a pedal-forward or flat-foot technology bike might be good for you. They allow you to have your legs stretch out without having your seat as high as you would otherwise need it to be. The Electra Townie is one example of this design, but there are others.

Specific bikes:

You don't need to buy any of these specific bikes, but here are some ideas of what we've found:

Specialized Expedition Low Entry: What we mostly use at the bike school. They are currently only available with a top bar (not an open frame - "Low Entry") but you may be able to find a low entry one used.

Specialized Roll Low Entry: comparable to the Expedition but with wider tires

Trek Verve Series: We have a Verve 1 ("Pearly White") and Susan rides a Verve 3.

Other bikes our students have found and liked: Breezer Uptown, Giant Flourish, Giant Liv Sedona, Schwinn Fordham, Electra Loft, Trek FX, Specialized Crossroads

Cheaper bikes our students have found and liked: Hyper Commute Women's Comfort Bike, Retrospec Beaumont

Buying a bike

You never want to buy a bike without riding it, if you can help it. Try whatever you want, but don't buy something just because it's affordable or available. In general, we recommend going to your local bike shop - one that is easy for you to get to and where you feel welcomed and comfortable (and has a safe space for you to test out a bike!). The staff can help you and if you don't find anything you like/don't like the shop, go somewhere else! During this pandemic, it's very hard to find bikes. If you buy one online, you will probably be able to sell it online, in case you don't like it.

Some students get cheaper bikes at department stores (i.e. Walmart, Target), which is fine but beware that a cheaper bike is harder to fix/sometimes can't be fixed and won't last as long.

Some of our students are looking to get used bikes. Here are some places that sell used bikes: Facebook Marketplace & Craigslist (keep in mind with these two options that often nobody has safety checked the bike), Cambridge Used Bicycles, Bikes Not Bombs (Jamaica Plain), Dedham Bike, Cycle Loft (Burlington).

If you get going long distances, you may want a bike that is not a comfort bike. A few of our students have wished they had bought a more aggressive bike designed for long distances, but most of our students like comfort bikes.

Good luck with it. Call or write me if you have questions or want to report a bike you like.

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