



PORTLAND
FAMILY BIKING
GUIDE



A **how-to manual** for
all stages of **family biking**

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Biking during pregnancy can be a great way to help curb nausea, improve energy levels, and maintain an active lifestyle. Of course, every pregnancy and every woman is different. Here are a few things to keep in mind if you're considering biking during your pregnancy:

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Make sure biking during pregnancy is a healthy choice for you, and that your doctor is on the same page.

CONSIDER YOUR ROUTE

Does your journey take you on any high-traffic or high-speed streets? Re-routing your ride to streets with fewer cars and designated bike lanes could reduce ride stress.

CONSIDER YOUR COMFORT

It might be time to invest in an upright bike or make adjustments to increase your comfort and riding confidence as your body changes.

LISTEN UP

You know your body best, so be sure to listen to it. Today might be a better day to bus in or take the MAX.

A quick online search will lead to a fair amount of information about cycling while pregnant. A good place to start is the Family Biking Guide from the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition. They offer multiple pages of in-depth advice.

sfbike.org/family

BIKING WITH BABIES (0-12 MONTHS)

There are few standards available regarding biking with a baby nine months or younger. If you are ready to give it a try, we suggest looking up options and advice online, or asking friends and families already riding with infants. Here are a few things to be aware of before you start:

NECK STRENGTH: Until your baby is able to hold her head up on her own, she shouldn't be carried in an upright bike seat. Adequate neck strength usually won't occur until nine months or later.

HELMETS: There aren't many infant-sized helmets currently available on the market, and wearing a helmet during this stage of growth while in a car seat can be damaging to an infant's neck and spine. That said, Oregon law states any child under 16 must be wearing a helmet while on a bicycle (ORS 814.485).

SET-UP OPTIONS

Cargo box bikes or *trailers* compatible with car seats.

Some cargo box bikes and bike trailers have the option of strapping an infant-sized car seat into their infrastructure.

LOADING / UNLOADING YOUR BIKE:

Never leave your bike unattended with your child in a bike seat! A double-sided kickstand can assist in stabilizing during loading and unloading, but always keep a hand on the bike during the process.

HEAD SUPPORT:

Bike rides tend to lull children to sleep. Make sure her head and neck have enough support when she nods off.

ACCESSORIES:

Various brands offer accessories for seats like rain/element covers, handlebars, headrests, adjustable footrests and more.

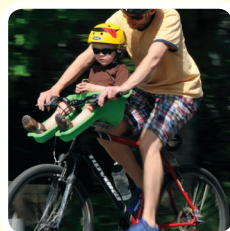
BIKING WITH TODDLERS (1-3 YEARS)

Once your child can sit up without falling, hold her head up on her own, and fit into a helmet, she is most likely ready to ride in a front- or rear-mounted bike seat, cargo box bike or trailer.

SET-UP OPTIONS

Front-mounted Seats

Typically have lower weight limits, so these work best as an option up to age three. Allows you to see what your toddler is up to while riding. Can attach to your bike stem or frame.



Rear-mounted Seats

Typically have higher weight limits, so you can use them longer than a front-mounted version. Conversations with your child are still possible, but you lose the ability to see what they are up to while you ride. Attaching a rear rack on your bike is necessary before attaching a rear-mounted seat.



Cargo Box Bikes

After your child can sit well (usually after 12 months) she may be ready to ride in a seated position in the box of a cargo bike. Shorter legs may require props under her feet for support. Cargo box bikes have lots of extra room for your family gear.



Trailers

Trailers are easily attached to your bike and don't demand much change to your current set-up. It is not as easy to chat with your child while riding, but she will have good coverage from the elements and can nap easily. There's also lots of room for extra cargo.



Test Your Set-up

Be sure to first try out whatever option you choose without your child to make sure you feel comfortable with the added weight and can ensure everything is properly attached. As the parent, test rides are good places to check your knee clearance with front-mounted seats and to practice mounting and dismounting.

What to Expect From Your Child

Depending on your toddler's temperament, she may take some time getting used to biking. It also may be a struggle to get your child to wear a helmet, but she will likely forget it's on once the bike is moving. Eventually, a helmet will be accepted as a required riding tool and your child will be reminding *you* to put yours on.

Children nearing two and older are usually ready to try their hand at riding a bike. See *Your Child's First Wheels* in the next *Biking With Pre-Schoolers* section.

BIKING WITH PRE-SCHOOLERS (3-5 YEARS)

If you're using a front-mounted seat, it will probably be time to move to a rear-mounted seat, assuming your child is near the weight limit. Rear-mounted seats, trailers and cargo box bikes are still good travel options with toddlers (see page 3), but as they move past age three, there are additional set-ups to consider.

SET-UP OPTIONS

In order to advance to any of the following pre-schooler options, your child will need to stay awake for the whole ride AND sit safely on a bike without restraints. Keep your first rides shorter so everyone can get used to the new set-up.

Tag-alongs or Trailercycles

Tow your child on a one-wheeled bike that attaches to the seat post of your bike. It gives your child the option of pedaling or just coasting along for the ride.



Bike Tow Bar

Tow your child and her full, two-wheeled bicycle behind yours with a tow bar, or unhook and let your child ride by herself.



Long Bikes

Rear-mounted seats, backrests, and handlebars can all be attached on this bike's back extension for multiple child and cargo carrying options.



Tandems

There are multiple styles of family tandems available with possibilities of children pedaling in front or back and in upright or reclining seat positions.



Riding With Two or More Children

Here's where you can get creative. Look around online or ask your local bike shop about riding with multiple children. Chances are you've already got some experience riding with one child and have a good idea of what works best for your family. Combinations of many products already mentioned should do the trick.

Your Child's First Wheels

Toddlers around two years and older are often ready to begin biking on their own. Start your child on a balance bike or a bike with training wheels to build confidence before she starts pedaling independently.

Balance Bikes

Small bikes without pedals or training wheels teach the fundamentals of balancing and steering a bike. Sitting upright with feet flat on the ground helps your child feel more comfortable and steady as she begins learning to balance.

MAKING YOUR OWN BALANCE BIKE

Lower the seat and remove the pedals of another small youth bike and Voila! you've created your own balance bike (a local bike shop can assist with those adjustments if you don't have the tools).

Training Wheels

Training wheels help a bicycle stay upright while your child learns to pedal and begin maintaining balance. Gradually raise the training wheels as your child becomes more proficient at riding, then remove them once she's gotten the hang of it. Consider playing a game where she rides as far as she can without the training wheels touching the ground.

Riding Practice

Try out new riding skills in car-free places like parks, multi-use paths or events like Sunday Parkways. Practice safety skills early by staying to the right and teaching awareness of other path users.

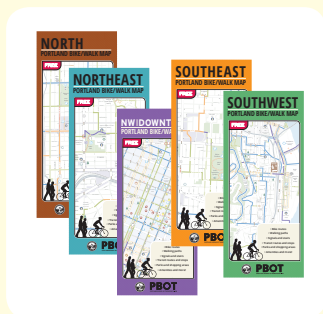
Making the shift from casual riding to commuting can seem really big and mysterious, but it's fairly straightforward once you've tried it a few times and created your own routine. Biking to school is an excellent way to get there quickly while spending quality time with your children.

Find a Route

Choosing appropriate routes for your bike trips can make your rides safer, more pleasant, and more kid-friendly. The route you normally drive usually isn't the best route by bike. Find trip planning assistance here:

Portland Neighborhood Bike/Walk Maps & Citywide Portland By Bicycle Map

The City of Portland offers five free neighborhood Walk/Bike Maps and a Citywide Bicycle map. Order them online or pick one up at your friendly local bike shop.



portlandoregon.gov/transportation/at

Safe Routes to School Family-Friendly Maps

Safe Routes to School offers school-specific maps showing recommended routes and crossings within one mile of your child's school.

saferoutesportland.org

Portland's Neighborhood Greenways

A number of quiet local streets have route signs and markings to help bicyclists find their way. They often connect directly with neighborhood schools and parks. Check out the Citywide or Neighborhood Bike/Walk maps to plan your route.



Kids on Your Bike

When commuting with kids on your bike, there are a few things to think about to make your trip a little easier:

Plan Ahead

Dropping your child off and continuing on to work usually includes figuring where to leave her helmet, how to haul your gear, and more. Planning ahead and surveying the drop-off scene at school can be helpful. Turning this plan into a regular routine can also make mornings less stressful.

Be Prepared (psst...bring snacks!)

Similar to traveling with your child by any other mode, be prepared for whatever the weather might bring when considering apparel and accessories. Having snacks on hand when you show up after daycare or school can make the ride home more enjoyable.

Teach Street Safety Skills

Riding together is a great time to talk about what stop signs, road markings, or other traffic controls mean when on a bike, or narrating subtle biking skills/practices like *"I'm slowing because that's a blind corner."* This will make your job easier later on when teaching your child to bike independently.

Kids Riding Independently

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND BEYOND

The graduation from simply being able to ride with ease (braking, turning, navigating hills) to being confident with street rules takes a lot of practice and diligence. When practicing on quiet streets or sidewalks, walk or ride alongside your child and talk about street rules with an emphasis on safety.

Five important skills to make sure everyone is confident

SKILL #1: Street and traffic safety, especially around crossings and driveways; this includes watching for cars, understanding right of way, and more

SKILL #2: Riding predictably in a straight line

SKILL #3: Looking back without swerving

SKILL #4: Stopping and speed control, especially on hills

SKILL #5: Riding on uneven and varied surfaces, especially gravel

Practice Makes Perfect

Before you begin the weekday school run, practice your route on a weekend morning when traffic is usually lighter. This can help gauge your travel time and also how well your child is prepared for riding in the streets.

Start Small

Neither you nor your child may be ready to jump full on into daily bike commuting. Start by riding once a week or on late-start days until you are both ready for more.

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School offers encouragement programs and bike safety education to help support walking and rolling to school. Participate in one of the following events or programs to help you and your student get excited about biking!

BIKE TRAINS: Groups of students riding to school with one or more parent chaperones. Designated routes allow students to join in anywhere along the way. More than one = fun!

INTERNATIONAL WALK+BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY: Join students and families across the globe every October to celebrate getting to school in an active, healthy way!

WALK+BIKE CHALLENGE MONTH: Oregon students can challenge other classes, schools, or their faculty to see who can walk or roll to school more often in May.

Find out more about Portland's Safe Routes to School programs online at saferoutesportland.org, or by calling **503-823-5358**.

SIDEWALK RIDING

Riding on the sidewalk can be a great place for younger children to learn bike skills, and can often seem safer than riding in the street. However, driveways and intersection crossings can be dangerous.

Here are a few things you can teach your child to improve their safety on the sidewalk:

GO SLOW: A slower pace is a safer pace.

CHECK EVERY INTERSECTION AND DRIVEWAY: Cars are used to pulling all the way up to the road before stopping and may not stop to look for people riding or walking on the sidewalk or in the intersection. Small people are particularly difficult to see due to visual barriers such as vegetation and other vehicles.

ONLY CROSS THE STREET AT CROSSWALKS: Just like a pedestrian, cross where cars will most expect to see someone.

YIELD TO PEOPLE WALKING: Be courteous when passing – it's their terrain!

THE LAW: Oregon law (ORS 814.410) permits bicycles to ride on the sidewalk under the same rights as a pedestrian so long as they operate in a safe manner.

Unsafe behavior to avoid includes:

- **Darting into traffic**
- **Riding at higher speeds** than an ordinary walk
- **Failing to audibly warn a pedestrian** when passing them
- **Not yielding to pedestrians**
- **Endangering any person or property** with careless riding behavior

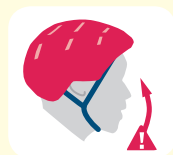
Any youth in Oregon under the age of 16 is required to wear a helmet when riding a bike (ORS 814.485).

As legal guardian of your child, if you carry a child under 16 years old on a bicycle when they are not wearing a helmet, you will be held legally responsible (ORS 814.486).

A person is exempt from both ORS 814.485 and 814.486 if wearing the protective headgear would violate a religious belief or practice of the person.

Helmets only work if worn correctly. Avoid these common mistakes when fitting your child's helmet.

TILTED: Your child's helmet should be level on her head, about a two finger width above her eyebrows.



LOOSE STRAPS: Straps should be snug against your child's chin, with just enough space available for one or two fingers to fit.



PROPER FIT: Adjust the buckles on the side straps so they form a "v" underneath the ears.



Does your child's helmet move when she shakes her head?

If so, try one or more of the following.

- **Readjust** the chin and side straps
- **Tighten** with an internal adjuster sometimes found at the back of the helmet
- **Attach** the foam pads that generally come with a new helmet to make the fit more snug.

A helmet lasts only one crash! Replace a helmet if it is over five years old or has any visible damage. Cracks in the styrofoam or missing bits of styrofoam are signs the helmet should be replaced.

A house rule requiring helmets worn when riding on **any** personal wheels can set expectations early on. Adults can set a good example by always wearing a helmet when biking.

Portland Safe Routes to School

A partnership of the City of Portland, schools, neighborhoods, community organizations and agencies advocating for and implementing programs that make walking and biking around our neighborhoods and schools fun, easy, safe and healthy for all students and families. **saferoutes@portlandoregon.gov; saferoutesportland.org; 503-823-5358**

Low-Cost Carrying Options

Purchasing used bike seats, trailers, or children's bikes on Craigslist can help cut costs. **portland.craigslist.org**

Low-Cost Helmet Sales

The Safety Center at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center offers below-retail cost helmets. Call ahead or look online for hours and directions.

503-413-4600; legacyhealth.org (search "Safety Center")

Legacy Emanuel's *Trauma Nurses Talk Tough* program provides below-retail cost helmets at events in the Portland Metro area. Call ahead or look online to find out more. **503-413-4960; legacyhealth.org (search "Trauma Nurses")**

Oregon Health & Science University's (OHSU) Doernbecher Children's Hospital sells low-cost, safety certified bike, skate and ski helmets at the Tom Sargent Children's Safety Center. **503-418-5666; safety@ohsu.edu**

FAMILY BIKING SITES

A quick online search can provide lots of information and advice about hauling kids by bike or biking as a family. Here are a few good places to start:

PDX Cargo Bike Gang A Facebook group of cargo/family biking lovers looking to promote community by group rides and get-togethers.

bikeportland.org A local biking news source often covering family biking topics. Use the search tool and type "family biking" to find related articles.

totcycle.com A Seattle-based site with posts, photos, and links about biking with your kids, and especially having young children on your bike.

familyride.us A Seattle-based blog promoting everyday family biking with two small passengers.

tinyhelmetsbigbikes.com Follow the adventures of a Sacramento-based biking family. Site includes a "Getting Started" section with tips on safety and what to pack for a variety of trips with kids.

growingupbike.com A family in Victoria, BC writes about their experience in a low-car lifestyle, in hopes to offer resources to families who use bicycles.

There are lots of family and kid-focused ways to get out and about on bikes in Portland.

PORTLAND SUNDAY PARKWAYS

A series of free events opening the city's largest public space – its streets — for residents to walk, bike and roll. Traffic-free streets connecting parks full of free activities makes for a great family day!
portlandsundayparkways.org; 503-823-7599

KIDICAL MASS PDX

A family-oriented biking group riding rain or shine all over the city, at a slow pace, and only a few miles at a time. Ride themes range from Kites & Bubbles to Family Bike Camping. **kidicalmasspdx.org**

BIKE FIRST! BIKE CAMPS

The Northwest Down Syndrome Association's Bike First! bike camps work with youngsters and adults with disabilities to systematically teach them how to ride a bike. Scholarships available from Portland's Safe Routes to School program. **nwdsa.org/what_we_do**

For scholarship information, contact Safe Routes:
saferoutes@portlandoregon.gov; 503-823-5358

COMMUNITY CYCLING CENTER BIKE CAMPS

Bike Camp is about the empowerment and independence kids feel from a summer adventure on two wheels. Campers develop safe riding techniques, mechanical skills, and road knowledge through hands-on experience. Camps available for grades 1 – 12.
communitycyclingcenter.org; 503-287-8786

PEDALPALOOZA FAMILY-FRIENDLY RIDES

A whole 3+ weeks of bike-related fun each June. Many of the events are family-friendly and are noted as such on the Shift website.
shift2bikes.org (under "Pedalpalooza") or pedalpalooza.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION on bicycling,
visit our Active Transportation website:

portlandoregon.gov/transportation/at

Many thanks to the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition for its inspiration in creating this guide!

PHOTO CREDITS: Thanks to Jonathan Maus / BikePortland.org and
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PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

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