

3. Preparing for cycling (including checking you are fit and ready to cycle, checking clothing and fitting a helmet, and checking your cycle and making sure your cycle fits you.)

National Standard reference: 1.1, 1.2.1, 1.2.3

Instructing points

Rider wellbeing

Think about whether you're feeling well enough to cycle and if you need any help.

Clothing and equipment

- Make sure that any clothing you are wearing is suitable for riding. Everyday clothes are fine, but think about the weather and how visible you are to others when cycling.
- Think about the most appropriate footwear to use.
- Ensure nothing can get caught in the cycle. For example, shoelaces should be tied, baggy trousers, jilbab, burqa and scarves should be tucked in, luggage is secure.
- If using a helmet, check that it isn't damaged and that it fits.

Helmets

- Helmets must conform to EN 1078. Check the sticker inside the helmet.
- Check the helmet for any signs of damage – there should be none.
- The straps should not be twisted.
- The position of the helmet on the head is important: it should rest roughly one or two fingers' width above the eyebrows.
- The helmet should be snug on the head. Use the rear adjuster strap (if you have one) to tighten it.
- The shape of the straps around the ears should form a Y shape.
- The helmet should be fastened under the chin with two fingers' width between the chin buckle and chin.

Basic cycle check

- When standing next to your cycle, keep a brake on to keep it under control.
- Check air pressure by squeezing the sidewall of the tyre.
- Check both brakes by rolling the cycle forward to check the front brake, then backwards for the rear.
- Spin the chain backwards to check for snags and stiff links, and that the chain is oiled.
- Check the frame, saddle and attachments.
- Check steering – handlebars should be secure (you can check this by holding the front wheel between your knees and trying to turn).
- Check the cycle fits. The balls of your feet should normally reach the ground when sitting on the saddle. Your leg should be almost straight when your foot is on the pedal set at its lowest point.
- Check that when covering the brakes your wrists are straight and you can reach the brake levers with your fingers.

Additional resources

Have a pump and toolkit ready for minor fixes or adjustments.

 **Video: How to fasten a helmet correctly**

 **Video: How to check a cycle**

Activity ideas

Introduction

Ensure the riders line up in a position where they can see the instructors and each other (semi-circles work well for this).

Find out riders' previous riding experience. This will tell you whether someone still has to learn how to balance on a cycle. They may not be able to take part in the later cycling activities but can still take part in this activity. Have a backup plan to support them.

Check seat height. Be careful not to make less experienced riders feel self-conscious. Remember that some riders may not have ridden for a long time, so may need to warm up to the activities.

Rider check

Ask riders how they are feeling and if they feel well enough to cycle. Then ask riders to look at their own clothing (or a partner's) and comment on its suitability by asking if there's anything that could get caught or hamper riding in any way.

With the riders still in a semi-circle, show them how to adjust and fit a helmet. Demonstrate this at the same time as riders fit their own helmets.

Then ask riders to pair up and look at one another to check if their partner's helmet fits.

Cycle check

Let riders know that you expect them to check their cycle at the start of each training session. Before explaining a simple cycle check, first ask riders, "What do you need to check before you ride?" This supports independent thinking and decision making.

Demonstrate each element of a simple cycle check (the 'ABCD' of Air, Brakes, Chain and Direction check works well for this). Then ask the riders to do the same in front of you. Ensure riders are aware that they should not use their cycles if they notice any problems and ask them to report any issues. If these are very minor you can demonstrate how to fix these to the group. If this will take you more time, have a backup plan for riders. This could be a spare cycle, a cycle share system or a good communication/cycle check form which clearly explains that the cycle is unsafe and you cannot support a rider to take part.

Activity ideas (continued)

After checking cycles once as a group, consider asking the riders to practise again. Ask them to partner up and help each other to check each other's cycles and name parts of the cycles to each other. You should be confident that the cycles are mechanically sound before letting the riders ride them, either by checking them yourself or by very close observation.

Cycle fit

Show riders how you fit your cycle. This will involve coaching them on how to get on and off their cycles: squeeze brakes, tilt the cycle to the side, swing your leg around the back. Then ask riders to get onto their cycles. A rider should be able to touch the floor with their toes. Consider asking them to work in pairs to check if their partner is comfortable on their cycle. Riders should tell you if they think their cycle needs an adjustment and tell you what to adjust.

If you are working with non-standard cycles, ensure you have a member of staff who understands the models of cycle you are working with and how to fit them.

Sample questions to check understanding

- Q. How can feeling unwell or tired affect your riding?
- Q. How should you dress for cycling?
- Q. What should you check on a cycle before riding?
- Q. What can you adjust on a cycle to ensure it fits you?

Differentiation

Inclusion

- Riders unable to check their cycle themselves can do so by telling someone what to check.
- Riders who don't speak English or are Deaf can mirror you as you teach.
- Some riders with special educational needs and disabilities may benefit from being asked to act as an assistant or to demonstrate to the group, which can help them focus.
- Certain hairstyles can make fitting a helmet difficult so instructors may need to be flexible and supportive in such cases.
- Riders of the Sikh religion who have a turban are not required to wear helmets.
- Ensure you know how to check, adjust and fit non-standard cycles (such as a hand-cranked cycle where present) and access support to do this if necessary.

Extension

Simplify

- Riders with less experience may benefit from a slightly lower saddle height at first. The saddle height can then be increased when they are able to stop with more control. Some cycles may require the rider to come off the saddle when stationary.

Differentiation (continued)

Challenge

- Riders learn to identify parts of the cycle.
- If you're delivering another session with the riders, ask them to arrive for the next session with their clothing ready for cycling.
- Riders to 'lead' the cycle check (with instructor supervision).
- Riders to complete the cycle check within a certain time frame, for example 20 seconds.
- Riders find out the right tyre pressure shown on the tyre and use a track pump to pump tyres to the correct pressure.
- Add further elements to the cycle check. For example, checking that quick releases/wheel nuts are tight, the saddle is secure, and gears (if present) are indexed.
- Riders learn how to park cycles both individually and in a group.

Risk benefit assessment

Risk

You have raised a saddle – a rider may not be used to a raised saddle and is unsteady.

Mitigation

Give the rider time and space to get used to the newly fitted cycle and consider raising the saddle height bit by bit.

Benefits

After practising with a saddle at a more suitable height, the rider can cycle with more control.