



Raleigh Family Biking Guide



A HOW-TO MANUAL FOR ALL STAGES OF FAMILY BIKING

Table of Contents

Biking while Pregnant	1
Check with your doctor · Consider your route · Consider your comfort · Listen up	
Babies (0–12 Months)	2
American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance on Babies (0–12 Months)	
Biking with Toddlers (1–3 Years)	3
Set-Up Options · Test Your Set-up · What to Expect From Your Child	
Biking with Pre–Schoolers (3–5 Years)	5
Set-up Options · Riding With Two or More Children · Your Child’s First Wheels	
Biking to School	8
Find a Route · Kids on Your Bike · Kids Riding Independently	
Helmets	11
Resources	12

Biking while Pregnant

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. Early in pregnancy will be an easier time to continue biking, but as your pregnancy progresses you may find riding becomes uncomfortable. Today may be a better day to take the bus.

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 at sfbike.org/family.



Babies (0–12 Months)

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents do not take children under one year of age on a bicycle. Do not carry infants in backpacks or frontpacks on a bike.

They recommend waiting until your child has good neck strength (about 12 months of age) before carrying them in a bicycle carrier or in a bicycle-towed child trailer with an infant helmet. North Carolina law states any child under 16 must be wearing a helmet while on a bicycle. (NCGS 20-171.9)

According to Dr. Tord Alden of Children’s Memorial Hospital in Chicago, “During the first year the infant is developing the myelin sheath, which insulates the neurons and sets the stage for all the development and learning that the brain does next. If you had to pick a time when it is most important to protect the brain from excess vibration or bumps and jostling about it would be during that first year after birth.”



Biking with Toddlers (1–3 Years)

Once your child can sit up without falling, hold their head up on their own, and fit into a helmet, they are 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.
- Allow 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 may be necessary before attaching a rear-mounted seat.



CARGO BOX BIKES

- After your child can sit well they may be ready to ride in a seated position in the box of a cargo bike.
- Shorter legs may require props under their 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 they'll have good coverage from the elements and can nap easily.
- There's also lots of room for extra cargo.



Biking with Toddlers (1–3 Years)

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, they may take some time getting used to biking. It may also be a struggle to get your child to wear a helmet, but they'll 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.

Quick Tips

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.



Photo Credit: Catherine Kurilla

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 TRAILER-CYCLES

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 their 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.



TANDEM

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



Biking with Pre-Schoolers (3–5 Years)



Riding With Two or More Children

Here's where you can get creative. Look around on line 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 they start 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.

Quick Tips

MAKING YOUR OWN BALANCE BIKE

Lower the seat and remove the pedals and crank arm of a small youth bike and voila, you've created your own balance bike! (A local bike shop can assist with the 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 they've gotten the hang of it. Consider playing a game where they ride far as they 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 a bicycle rodeo. Practice safety skills early by staying to the right and teaching awareness of other path users.

Biking with Pre-Schoolers (3–5 Years)

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 their 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

Graduating from 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.



Photo Credit: Toole Design

Biking to School

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, pleasant, and more kid-friendly. The route you normally drive usually isn't the best route by bike.

Raleigh Bike Map

Raleigh's free citywide bike map. Pick one up at your friendly local bike shop. Or visit bikeraleigh.org



Raleigh Neighborhood Greenways

Your school may connect to a greenway. See the map at:

www.raleighnc.gov/parks/content/PRecDesignDevelop/Articles/CapitalAreaGreenwayTrailSystem.html

Or search for *Raleigh Greenways* on your favorite internet search browser.



Biking to School

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 – they have the right of way. Using a bike bell or calling out “on your left” as you cycle past them on their left side would be helpful too! As a parent, make sure your child know which is the left side.

The Law: City of Raleigh codes states no person shall ride a bicycle on any of the following pedestrian malls; Fayetteville Street Mall, Moore Square, or the GoRaleigh Station. (Section 12-1006)

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



Biking to School

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 with a parent 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 an event or program to help you and your student get excited about biking!

Check at your child's school to find out more about this program; or go to www.saferoutesinfo.org

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 May or October to celebrate getting to school in an active, healthy way!



Helmets

Any youth in North Carolina under the age of 16 is required to wear a helmet when riding a bike (NCGS 20-171.9)

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 (NCGS 20-171.9)

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.



Bicyclist Hand Signals



Turning Left



Stopping



Turning Right

As Viewed From Behind

Does your child's helmet move when she shakes her head? If so, try one or more of the following.

- Re-adjust 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.

Bike Raleigh

The goal of BikeRaleigh is to make bicycling safer, more comfortable, and more convenient for people of all ages and abilities. Have questions or suggestions about biking or bike infrastructure in Raleigh? Please contact us!

bikeraleigh.org

GoSmart

GoSmart Raleigh provides the tools, resources, and experience you need to great around confidently on foot, by bike or transit.

raleighnc.gov/gosmart

Commute Smart Raleigh

The City of Raleigh offers an easy solution to help alleviate traffic congestion and employee stress with Transportation Demand Management (TDM). Commute Smart consultants can work with your employees for free and provide information and resources to make a car-free commute easy and approachable.

raleighnc.gov/commutesmart

Bicycle Commuter Guide

Download the guide at:

raleighnc.gov/commutesmart

The guide has more details about things to consider when commuting by bicycle including weather concerns.



Photo Credit: Toole Design

For More information on bicycling, visit our
Active Transportation website bikeraleigh.org



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Commute Smart Raleigh

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