

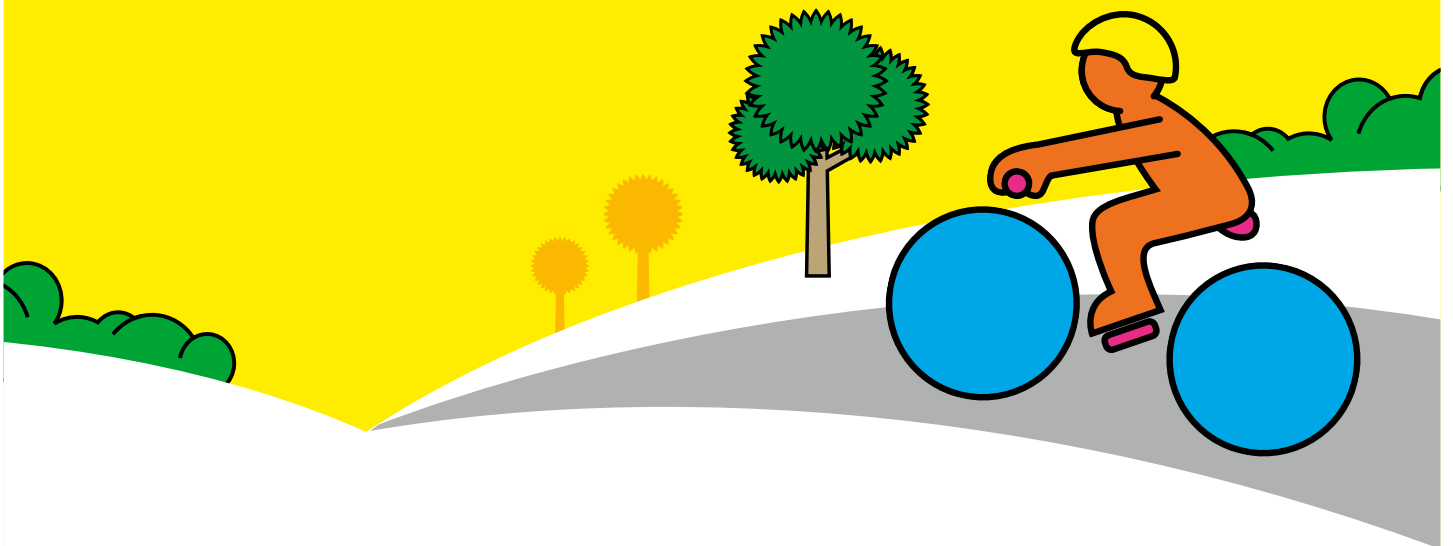
bike 4 life

tips for safer biking

Cycling is a fantastic way to get up and about, stay healthy and spend enjoyable time with family and friends.

But before setting off on your bikes, there are some important things you need to know and do.

This guide is all about helping you to keep your kids safer on their bikes, without spoiling their fun. There's advice on what to wear and things to look out for on the road, and there's plenty of information for adults too!



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teaching kids to ride

Most kids can't wait to master the skill of balancing on a bike. They can start learning to ride from as young as 3 but remember, it takes time and patience to teach someone to ride a bike, and takes some kids longer than others.



As a parent or carer, you know your children and may feel confident teaching them the basics. If not, check out the national cycle training scheme Bikeability (www.bikeability.org.uk), designed to teach children and adults to ride.

If you are going to teach the kids yourself, here are some steps to help you:

Step 1 - Lose the pedals: 90% of riding is about balance. Most adults will have learnt to ride with stabilisers, but experts now think they delay the learning process because they do all the balancing. A learner bike - which has no pedals so they can't hit the learner's legs - or a regular bike with the pedals taken off is the quickest way to get them riding.

Step 2 - Get ready: Make sure the learner can put both feet on the floor. They should wear a helmet and be prepared for scrapes by wearing long-sleeved tops and trousers.

Step 3 - Getting going: Find a smooth area and stand 5-10 metres away from the learner. Ask them to stand with one leg either side of the bike and, pushing with their feet, to steer towards you. Tell them to keep pushing and look at you instead of the ground - it will help them to go straight. To begin with, get them to use their feet for stopping.

Step 4 - Keeping going: At this stage the learner is likely to push along with their feet the whole way. Get them to repeat the exercise but this time see if they can coast without using their feet some of the way. As they get better they'll go further and rely less on using their feet.

Step 5 - Stopping: When they are used to stopping with their feet, get them to practise with the brakes. Make sure they know which brake works which wheel. Remind them to use the back brake first so they don't go over the handlebars!

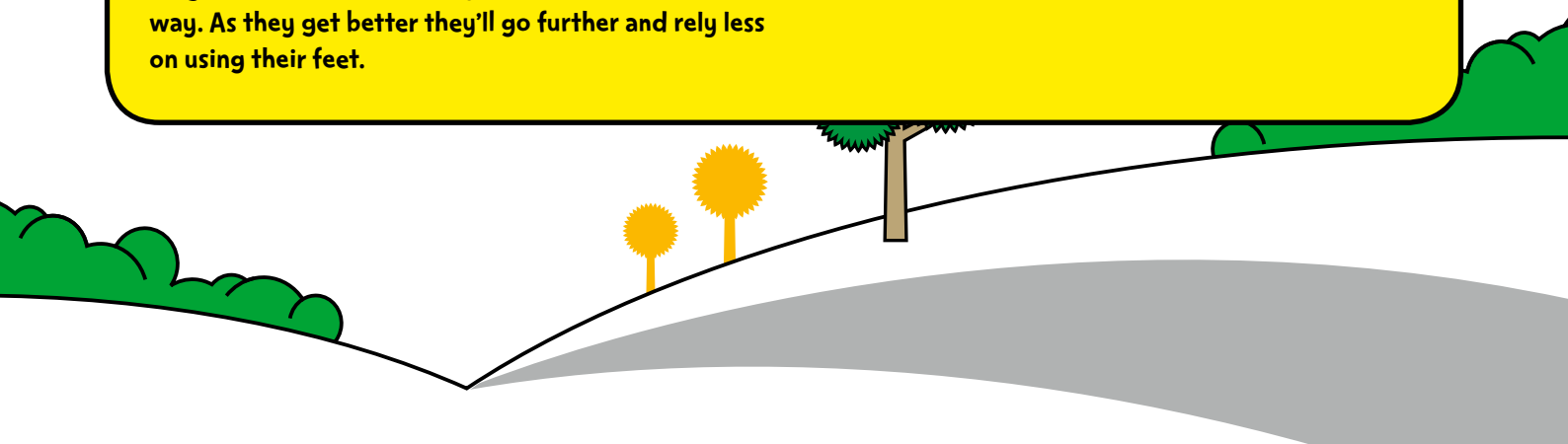
Step 6 - Now pedal: Once they have mastered coasting, steering and braking, replace the pedals and ask them to rest their feet on the pedals as they coast. When this feels natural, encourage them to pedal. This might take an hour, a few hours, or even a few days - just remember to take it at their pace.

Step 7 - Steering: When they can pedal, encourage them to turn the handlebars to one side and ride around you in a circle. Remember to tell them to look where they want to go and to turn the handlebars in that direction.

Step 8 - Practice: Like anything, the more they ride their bike, the better they'll get.

My kids are too young to ride

Don't forget that even if your kids are too young to ride a bike they may be able to enjoy the outing in a child seat or bike child trailer. Advice and guidance on the correct seat or carrier and the age from which children are able to go in these should be obtained from cycle retailers.



before you set off

There's lots of advice on getting your family's bikes ready in the 'Getting and looking after your bike' guide [here](#).

Once you have your bike, you need to be ready and safe for the road (or path) ahead! Here are our top tips:

1. Get the right bike setup

Make sure the bike is the right size for the user. A child must be fully in control of their bike. They should be able to put the ball of one foot on the ground when they are sitting on the saddle.

Even if the rider is only carrying small items, they must be safely stowed away on a proper rack or in a small backpack away from the bike.

2. Wear the right protective gear

A helmet is the most important bit of safety equipment. Buy a new one (so you know it hasn't been weakened in an accident before) and make sure it fits properly.

Long-sleeve tops and trousers can also offer added protection, as do elbow and knee pads.

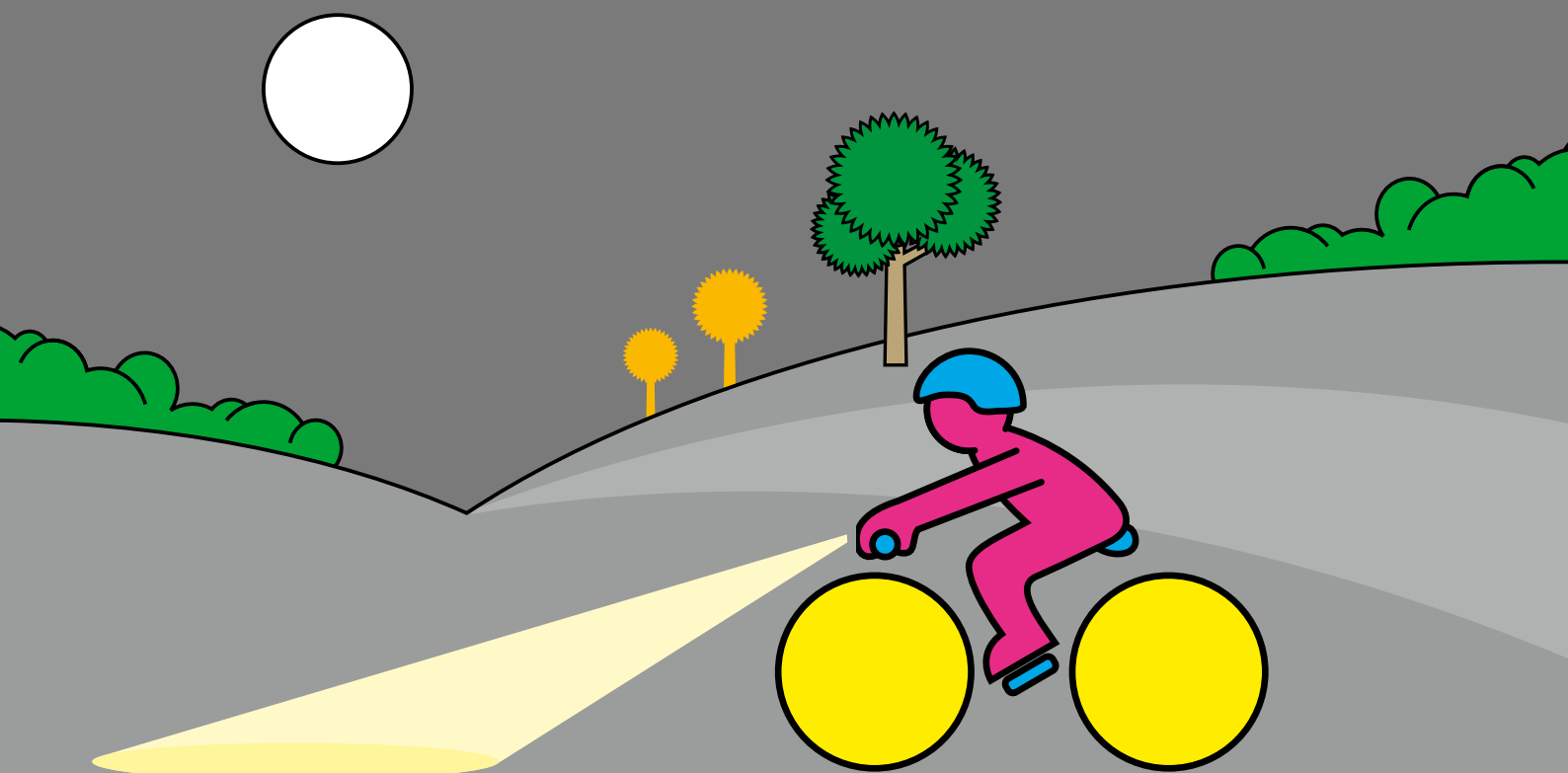
3. Be safe, be seen

To give you the best chance of being seen by other road users, wear light-coloured clothing. Better still, wear fluorescent clothing or bands in the daytime and reflective clothing at night. Fluorescent tops can also be printed over with fun designs which encourage kids to use them!

Riding in the dark

At night, wear reflective clothing, such as a jacket, so drivers, pedestrians and other road users can see you in the dark. Make sure you have a **white front light**, a **red back light** and a **red rear reflector**, and that they're clean and are working each time you set off. It's also a good idea to carry spare batteries for longer journeys.

You can get all this equipment from your local bike shop or online cycling retailers.



riding on the road

Riding a bike in traffic can be daunting for many people. But by following some simple rules and being aware of what's going on around you, riding can be a safe way to get around while having lots of fun, saving money and helping the environment.

Here are our top tips for riding safely on the road:

- Make sure you know the hand signals for turning left or right so that other road users can see what you're doing.
- Before starting, turning, overtaking or stopping, look behind you to make sure it's safe.
- Keep a safe distance from vehicles and remember that drivers of lorries and buses sit high up and may not be able to see you, even in their mirrors.
- Don't ride in the space between vehicles and the kerb because they may turn left and cut across your path.
- Watch out for pedestrians crossing the road into which you are turning. If they have started to cross they have priority, so give way.

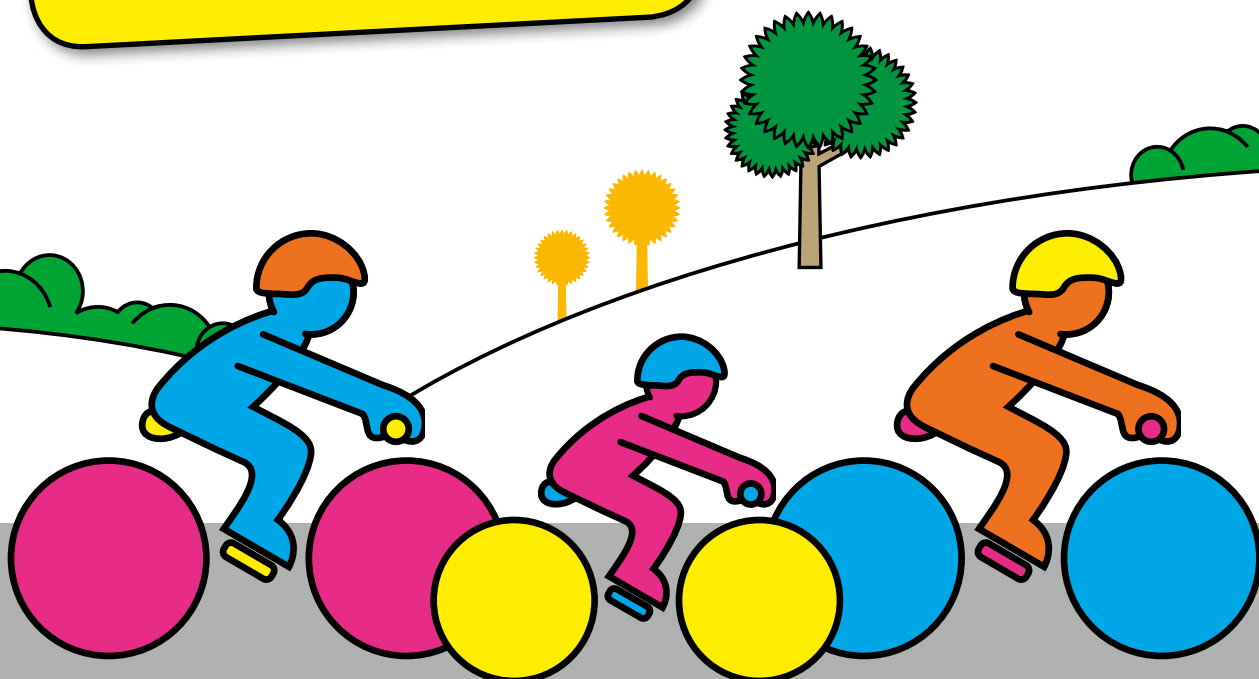
- If you want to turn right from a busy road, it's often safer to stop on the left-hand side at the junction and walk your bike across the road.
- If you're overtaking stationary or parked cars, be aware that they may pull out or open their doors in front of you, so keep a door's width away from them.
- Look out for pedestrians crossing, especially from behind parked cars.
- Make sure you obey traffic lights, road signs and pedestrian crossings.

Along with **The Highway Code**, you can find specific information on how kids can stay safe on their bikes by visiting 'Tales of the road' [here](#).

Practical tip

Make sure you and the family get Bikeability cycle training to give you the skills and confidence to ride on today's roads. Find more information at www.bikeability.org.uk

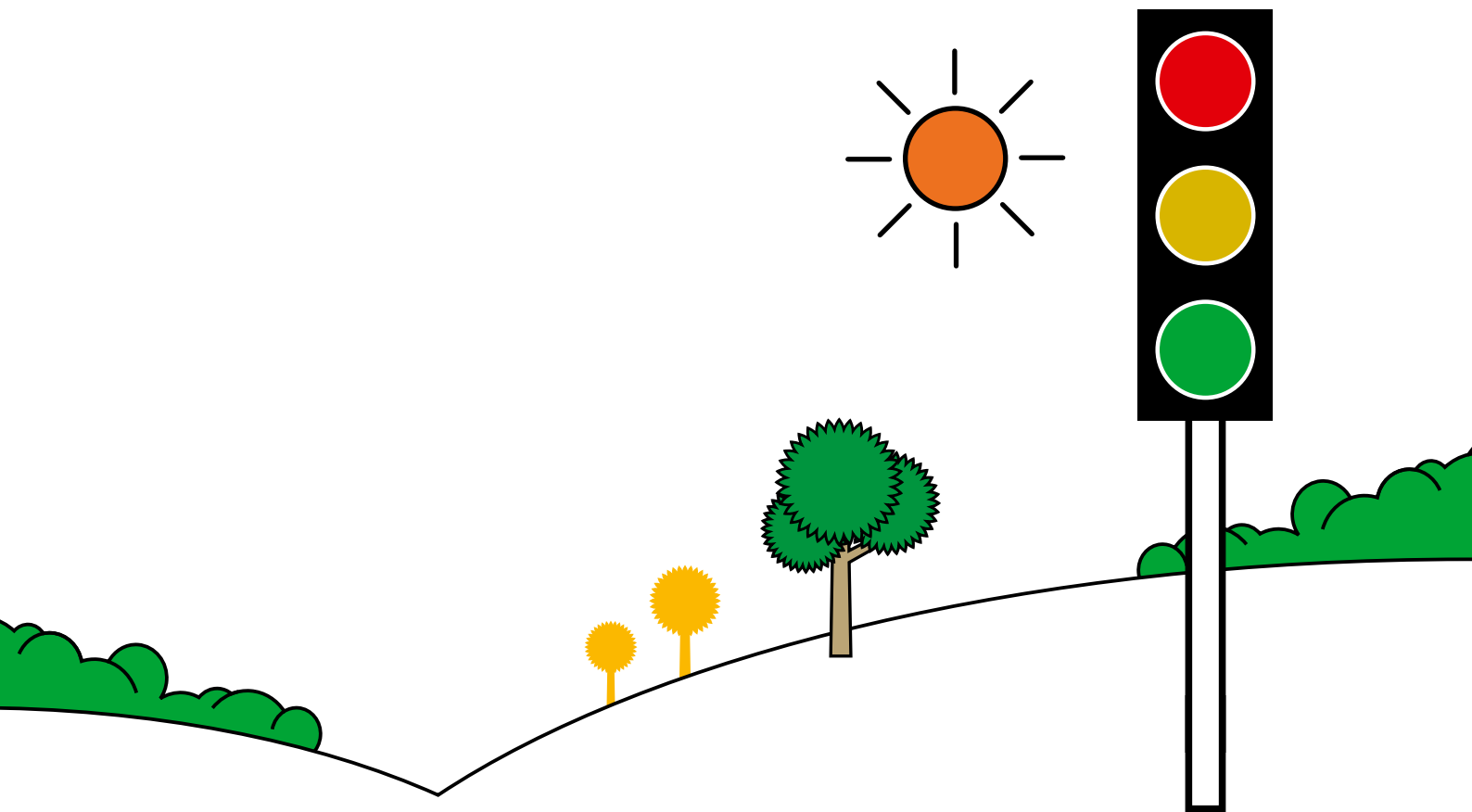
When you're next out in a car, look at the cyclists. Are there times when it's difficult to see them? Which ones are easier to see and why?



Here are some more things to remember to help you stay safer on your bike:

- Use routes away from busy roads if you can. Some areas have special cycle routes for riders to use (have a look at the bike signs section in this guide).
- Never carry passengers on a bike meant for one person.
- Don't ride with a hood up as it will reduce your awareness of your surroundings, limit your visibility and muffle sounds.
- Never ride more than two side by side, and ride in single file on narrow or busy roads and when going round bends.
- Keep both hands on the handlebars unless you are signalling or changing gear. It's important to stay in control of the bike at all times.
- Don't listen to an mp3 player or use a mobile phone while riding. It will stop you hearing vital road sounds such as overtaking traffic or approaching sirens.

For more information and guidance on the rules of the road for cyclists, have a look at [The Highway Code here](#).



Roundabouts

Stay in the left hand lane and remember that some drivers may not easily see you. Make sure you take extra care when cycling across exits – you may need to signal right to show you are not leaving the roundabout and watch out for vehicles crossing your path to leave or join the roundabout.

Remember to give plenty of room to long vehicles on the roundabout as they need more space to manoeuvre. Do not ride in the space they need to get round the roundabout and it may be safer to wait until they have cleared the roundabout.

If you don't feel confident about using a roundabout, get off your bike and find a safe place to cross.

Bike signs

Some signs are made especially for riders and tell you where you can ride and who you might have to share your route with. At the bottom of this page you'll find the ones you will see most often.

Parking your bike

It's a good idea to invest in a good lock for your bike. Never park your bike where it could be in the way of other people and look out for signs that forbid locking your bike to private property.

To discourage theft, write your postcode on the frame (the police can often do this for you free of charge) so that it can be traced to you if it is found.

If you're leaving it for several hours you might want to take any parts that can be easily removed with you, like the seat.

It's a good idea to register your bike on www.immobilise.com because if your bike is stolen, details and an alert get sent to bike shops and the police. You can also add a picture of your bike.

Bikeability

Bikeability is the new name for Cycling Proficiency and gives kids and adults the skills and confidence they need to ride on today's roads. It can be lots of fun and, unlike the old test, a lot of it is done on the road to give real experience of riding in traffic.

Whether they're riding around with friends, learning some new tricks or even aiming for Olympic gold, Bikeability gives kids the confidence to explore their bike skills to the full.

There are three different levels of Bikeability:

Level 1 – Basic bike-handling skills that get them ready for road training.

Level 2 – Short trips on quiet roads with some traffic, particularly designed with trips to primary school in mind.

Level 3 – Longer journeys on busier roads (usually done at secondary school).

Bikeability is available through schools and local groups. To find out more about Bikeability in your area, visit www.bikeability.org.uk



Recommended route
for cycles



Cycles
only



Shared with
pedestrians



Separate lane
& pedestrians



Cycle lane



No cycling