

## Getting started in cycling

Cycling is addictive and it won't be long before you out on regular rides. There is a lot to learn, but fortunately known of it is difficult, all you will need is a few pointers on how to start, which is what this article is about.

### 1. Buying your first road bike

The first step once you have decided you are keen to get into cycling, is to purchase your first bike. There are hundreds if not thousands of different bikes, which can be intimidating.

- Why do you need a bike – if its for riding off road or rough paths, then you will need a bike with wider wheels and tyres, if its for racing then a bike that is nice a light is important and has narrow wheels and smooth tyres.
- Decide on budget, its fair to say the more you pay the better quality components you will get, this often means they are lighter and more efficient, so spend as much as you can afford.
- Next shop around, its amazing what bargains are out there, it maybe right to start with a second hand bike, which again there are many. That way you can perhaps get a better speced version of last years bike. for less. Often families of bikes have the same frame but with veying quality components, which might mean you can upgrade these if you really get hooked.
- Make sure you try the bike before you buy, often bike shops will get you in a bike of the right size for you to try before you buy. There advice on bike size will help you idetify the right sized second hand bikes, if that's the way you want to go. But make sure you try before you buy.



## 2. Fitting the bike to you

If you bought your bike from a shop then Hopefully, you had your bike set up for you. If you didn't there are several local bike fitters that can help with a perfect adjustment. The cost for these can be above £100 and if you have just paid out for the bike, you may not be in a position to afford this, at this time..

The basics of a bike fit are :-

- Saddle height. Setting the height of the saddle is a simple task. With the bike held upright and the pedal at the 6 o'clock position, ie with the pedal at the lowest point. Place the heel of the foot on the pedal and adjust the saddle height until the leg is straight. Then check the saddle is correct, now placing the ball of the foot on the pedal and ensuring there is a light bend in the leg, followed by a ride of the bike, ensuring the hips do not rotate.
- The easiest way to ensure the saddle is in the right position forward or backward, is to sit on the bike and put the pedals at the 3 o'clock position. Then adjust the saddle position until your knee is vertically over the ball of your foot. If not then adjust the saddle backward or forward accordingly.
- Being able to reach the brakes and the shifters, in both when resting on the hoods or in the drop position. May need you to adjust the position of the brake levers on the handle bars. Adjust these to be comfortable on the ride, which may take several attempts. As important though is the ability to stop, so when making adjustments to the position of the levers, make sure also that the new position still allows to reach the brake to stop. Reaching the brakes may also require you to adjust the length of the stem. Stems are available in varying lengths, ask for advice at the bike shop on which one would be suitable for you, and ride the bike before committing to the purchase of the stem.
- If after a ride you are suffering with soreness from your saddle, again try some different models. There will be one out there that suits your physique and bike shops will loan you one to try, so work with them as you should not suffer from soreness from the saddle.



### 3. Tyres and inner tubes and punctures

Tyre and inner tube problems, are the biggest issue beginners find with their bikes. Fixing puncture nowadays isn't difficult. It just takes practice.

- Practice how to repair a puncture at home, before you go out on the ride. Its warm and dry and allows you to get familiar with the tools you will need, before it happens on the road.
- Make sure you replace old or worn tyres. Ensure you have pumped the tyre up sufficiently and if you can replace the inner tube with a new one, when you return after a ride where you have had a puncture. If you do this you will reduce the problems you will have on the road.
- Check your tyres are pumped up to the right pressures before each ride. Guidance on the correct pressures can be found on the side wall of the tyre.
- Make sure you have a puncture repair kit with you on a ride. This should include a pump, spare tube, tyre levers (minimum of 2) and puncture repair patches. Patches are available now that do not need the older style rubber adhesive and powder.
- If you start to do a lot of riding its also a good idea to have a spare chain link just in case you have a chain break. Along with a chain splitter tool and again practice what you need to do to repair a chain in the luxury of your house, before hand.



#### 4. What to wear

If you bike you don't have to wear special clothes. The lycra based clothing a lot of cyclists wear however, do make riding a bike more comfortable.

So you might want to consider :-

- A cycle jersey, these have the advantage of being made of quick drying material, they have pockets on at the rear to allow you to easily store those cycling essentials.
- Padded shorts, these are designed to help make rides more comfortable by helping to prevent saddle soreness.

Alternatively you could buy bib shorts which help with longer rides or even padded trousers. Whichever you choose do not wear anything under them as this will not help you gain the benefits that the pads offer.

- Gloves help in several ways, they keep your hands warm in the winter, which makes braking and gear changing more comfortable. They also protect your hands in the event of an accident and from soreness on longer rides.
- Helmets are not compulsory but are a sensible addition on any bike ride and will help keep you safe if you have an accident.



Hopefully this article has given you basics to allow you to start riding. Further details on all the different aspects that affect riding can be found in additional articles posted on our site.