

Choosing a bike and accessories

Buying a bike

It is very important that you buy a bicycle that fits your needs and plans. Determine if you want the bike for a specific purpose e.g. racing, commuting, off-road exploration, long distance touring etc. There are varying frame sizes to suit your body shape, accessories to tailor the bike to your specific needs, and differing levels of quality that, in general, match the cost of the bike.

There are many types of bikes, each with their own characteristics and uses. Here is quick summary:

Mountain bikes

Mountain bikes are best suited to off-road but can be used for commuting.

They have wide, knobby tyres, flat handlebars and between 15 and 27 derailleur gears.

Special slick tyres can be fitted that make it easier to cycle on the road.



Hybrid bikes

Sometimes called "cross" or "city" bikes, these look like slim-framed mountain bikes with narrower tyres and slightly raised handlebars.

Despite their appearance, they perform better on bitumen than off. Gearing varies from 15 to 24 speed, with 21 speed being the most common. They are good for commuting or short leisure trips.



Touring bikes

As the name implies, these are long-distance bikes capable of carrying cargo.

They are strong with a big frame triangle, drop handlebars and 14-27 gears.



City bikes

City bikes are the bikes of choice for people who choose comfort and style over speed.

This style of bicycle is very popular in the Netherlands and Sweden and is as much of a fashion accessory as a mode of transport.

They are ideal for short trips and are gaining popularity, particularly with women.



Power-assisted bikes

A power-assisted bike allows the rider to travel on a flat surface or up slight inclines without pedalling, and makes pedalling much easier on sharp inclines. They tend to be heavier than a standard bicycle and cannot legally be ridden on shared paths with the power engaged.

Power restrictions apply to these bicycles.

For the latest information on these restrictions please visit www.transport.wa.gov.au/cyclingrules



Folding bikes



There are a number of bikes on the market that can be reduced in size to allow easier carriage and storage.

They usually involve a folding sequence where the wheels, handlebars and frame hinge together into a tight package.

The advantage being that when fully folded, they take up less than half the space of a standard bicycle. However, compromises have to be made to accomplish this.

Often the wheels are smaller than other bikes and not suited to long distance riding.

Road racing bikes

This bike has a finer frame, shorter wheelbase and drop handlebars compared to a quality touring bike.

Being very light, these bikes are built for speed on the road.

This means they are not as structurally strong as other types of bike.



Customising your bike to fit

Whichever type of bike you choose, the frame size must be right for you. When you straddle a racing, touring or hybrid bike, the distance between your body and the top frame tube should be at least 3cm. For a mountain bike, this distance should be about 8cm.

Seat Height

Adjust the height of the seat by placing your heel on the pedal (at its lowest point) with your leg at full stretch. Lower the seat until your hips/pelvis no longer sway from side-to-side as you pedal.

Seat Position

Adjust the seat so that your feet are placed naturally above the pedals. Some riders prefer their seat tilted slightly forward or backward.

Handlebar Angle

Riding with the wrong handlebar angle can lead to numbness in the palms of your hands. Handlebars can be bought in various widths and are sized according to the type of bike. For racing or touring bikes, they should be about the same width as your shoulders. For mountain bikes, they need to be a little wider.

Handlebar Height

Set the height of your handlebars higher than the seat if you prefer a more upright riding position. Setting them at the same height as the seat will give a slightly forward riding position and some people prefer this.

Cycling accessories

Adding accessories to your bike can improve the quality, safety and enjoyment of your riding. Here are some of the most useful:

Clothing

Wear bright colours such as orange or yellow to ensure you are seen. While not essential for cycling, items such as Lycra knicks and gloves can increase your riding comfort.

Mirrors

These are helpful for cyclists. The most popular are small circular mirrors on stems that clip to the handlebars. Another small version attaches to the rider's helmet.

Locks and security options

Expect to pay \$70 to \$100 for a good bike lock. Remember to always lock your bike in a secure area, utilising the many u-rails or bike lockers as provided at train stations. For insurance information cycling groups, or check your home and contents insurance (make sure your bike is insured beyond your property boundary).



Child carriers

These are a great way to introduce your child to cycling.

Some models attach to the rear of a bike, on top of a carrier, while the more stable versions mount to the centre of the frame ahead of the rider.

Panniers and baskets

It is easier to let the bike, rather than the rider carry the load. Hence, a rear rack may be one of the first accessories for a touring or commuting bike.

There are also several types of baskets that can be attached to carry small items.



Bike carriers

The two common ways to carry bikes on vehicles are on a roof rack or a tow bar carrier. Both designs make it easier to transport your bike. When making a decision on which suits you, consider both safety and security factors.

Mudguards

Although not compulsory, mudguards are highly recommended for wet weather riding. When shopping for mudguards, look for units that won't bend easily or rattle.

Lights

If you ride at night, legally you must use a continuous white light at the front (look for a bright LED light) and a red light at the rear. Reflectors are also mandatory on bikes.

Pumps

Traditional models have a cloth covered extension tube that screws into the pump at one end and the tyre's valve at the other. Increasingly popular are high pressure pumps that fit directly to the valve without an extension tube. There are also floor pumps, as well as the local service station - but remember not to inflate the tyre too much. You will generally find bikes fitted with one of two types of valve - Presta (racing bikes) Schraeder (similar to a car valve). The two are not interchangeable, so you must ensure your pump fittings match the valve.



Water bottle cages

The need for cyclists to maintain their water level makes a water carrier an important accessory.

Tool kits

Tool bags should contain tyre levers, a small adjustable spanner, screwdrivers and a spare tube, as a minimum.

Computer

Cycle computers are small devices that clip on to the handlebars and provide information on speed, total time and trip distance. They are a great way to encourage regular cycling, or to set a training regime.

Helmets

When choosing a helmet, safety, fit and comfort should be placed ahead of price.

Choose a helmet with an internal shape that closely matches your head shape and size. Don't rely on the size pads to 'take up the slack' - they should only be used to achieve a fractional fit. Try the helmet first without the pads.

Use your index finger to check the gap between your head and the polystyrene inner lining. If it fits easily, the gap is probably too big. If the gap varies from front to side, it indicates a mismatch between the helmet and your head shape.

Once the sizing pads are in, the helmet must be stable on your head before the straps are fastened, there should be practically no movement - sideways, backwards or forwards.

Before leaving the shop, ensure you have adjusted and tightened the straps so that the helmet sits firmly on your head.

Helmets and the law

In Western Australia, the legal requirements for cyclists are:

- Helmets must have either the Australian Standard 2063 Part 1 or 2, or the USA Snell Memorial Foundation accreditation.
- The helmet must be worn at all times on roads and paths which are accessible to the public.
- The retention straps must be correctly fastened at all times.
- A child in a child carrier seat must also wear a Standards approved helmet.

