

Biking for Beginners

A useful guide



Life Cycle  UK



Hello!

Thank you for your interest in our *Biking for Beginners* cycle training lessons.

You're in good company! People of all ages and backgrounds are getting trained. Some are complete beginners who cannot ride a bike at all. Some are returning to cycling after a break of many years. Some are already regular cyclists but want to develop their skills further.

Whatever your ability, Life Cycle can help you learn to ride safely and confidently and to get the most from your bike. We offer a personal service with tuition tailored to your individual needs and concerns. Training is one-to-one – that's you and your instructor, and training takes place at a time and in a place convenient for you. We cover Bristol and Bath.

These pages explain what you can expect from a training course, and what you need to do by way of preparation. If you need further information please phone the Life Cycle office.

Booking a lesson

You can book a cycle training lesson by phoning us. We will ask you a few questions about your cycling ability (or lack of it!) and take payment. Please have your credit- or debit-card handy. Alternatively you can post us a cheque (made payable to Life Cycle UK). Lessons cost £30 for one hour, or if you live in the city of Bristol it's just £5 for your first lesson.

Once you have booked and paid for your training session one of our instructors will contact you to arrange a convenient date and time. Please keep to that appointment. If you have to cancel you must give us at least 48 hours notice otherwise we are unable to return your fee.

When booking, it is important that you tell us if you have any health-related condition that might be affected by exercise. If you think you are unfit, are on medication or have not exercised for a few years we recommend that you check with your doctor before booking a cycle training lesson.

Your booking is subject to Life Cycle UK's Terms and Conditions, which may be viewed via our website.

Life Cycle UK ● The CREATE Centre ● Bristol BS1 6XN ● 0117 353 4580

www.lifecycleuk.org.uk



Your instructor

Life Cycle UK's instructors are all experienced cyclists and have been trained to the Government-approved National Standard. If you have any questions about your cycle training then don't be afraid to ask your instructor. Look upon training as a partnership, but remember that your instructor has considerable expertise – please follow his or her instructions as requested.

We have both male and female instructors and can match you with a person of the same gender as yourself if you wish.

Your ability

Your instructor will ask you about your experience of cycling and how you rate your abilities. If you can ride a bicycle they might also ask you to demonstrate your ability by performing a few simple manoeuvres. They will ask you to get on the bike, start and stop, cycle straight ahead, look over your shoulder, take one hand from the handlebars and use your gears. Don't worry – this is not a test! It simply helps your instructor to plan the training session and shape it to your specific needs.

People tend to fit into one of three categories. Have a look at the table below and see which one best describes your abilities.

Your ability	Level	Where your training will take place	What you will learn
You cannot ride a bike or you <u>can</u> but only just. You have trouble staying upright and you wobble erratically. You might not be able to use the pedals.	Level 1	Off-road, away from traffic on a large empty car park or a school playground.	How to get on and off your bike, how to balance, how to start and stop and some basic control skills.
You can ride a bike but you're a bit wobbly and certain manoeuvres need improving. Your confidence when cycling in traffic might need a boost.	Level 2	On a range of local roads We can practise a particular journey, such as your route to work, if you wish.	How to turn corners, avoid obstacles, look behind, cycle one-handed and give hand signals. How to negotiate simple junctions. To improve your control skills further.

You can ride quite competently but wish to learn new skills.	Level 3	Busier roads, complex junctions, roundabouts.	Cycling quickly and safely in a range of conditions. Greater skill in manoeuvring and dealing with traffic. We also run special training lessons called <i>Urban Cycling Skills</i> for advanced riders.
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Your bike

You must have a roadworthy bike. Please read our *M-shape bike safety checklist*, which explains what we mean by “roadworthy”. Copies are available on request or can be downloaded from the Life Cycle UK website. You must inspect your bicycle well in advance of your training lesson and it must pass all of the safety checks. If you are unsure, take it to a reputable bike shop. Before going out on the road your instructor will carry out a basic safety check - the training session will be cancelled and no money can be returned if your bike is not in a roadworthy condition.

If you are a complete beginner and do not own a bike you can still book a training session for an additional charge of £5.00 to use the instructor’s bike. In Bristol you can also hire a bike from the Ferry Station, see <http://ferrystation.co.uk/bike-hire/>

Setting goals

Your instructor will ask you why you’re doing this training and what you want to get out of it. Please think about this. Do you have a particular trip or purpose in mind, such as cycling to work? Do you want to go cycling with family or friends? Are you looking to get fit or lose weight?

Together with your instructor, you should decide goals for each training session and for your training course as a whole. These will give you something to aim for and to measure your progress against.

Clothing

It is possible to cycle in almost any kind of clothing, but you will be more comfortable if you wear clothes that allow you to move freely. Avoid loose and flapping clothing or secure it to prevent items getting oily or damaged by your bicycle. Do not wear shoes with tread patterns that may stick too firmly to the pedals and avoid shoes with no tread that may slip from the pedals. Shoelaces need to be tucked away as they might become snagged in the chain. If you have long hair you may want to tie it back.



Choose clothing suitable for the day's weather. Several thin layers of clothing are a good idea. You can then remove or add items as needed.

On cold or damp days a hat is preferable to a hood. In warm weather be sure that you will not become overheated. Sunglasses are useful on brighter days.

Cycle helmets and fluorescent clothing

High visibility garments such as tabards are not required by law but may be useful on busy roads, in bad weather and in poor light.

Cycle helmets are recommended by the Highway Code but are not required by law. It's your choice. Amongst cyclists there are strongly held opinions both for and against helmets.

If you do wear a helmet, it should be of a recognised standard and be in good condition. It should fit you properly and be adjusted correctly.

- Measure your head around its circumference, about 25mm above the eyebrows. Match your head size to the size of the helmet (printed in the helmet, on a label or on the box).
- Place the helmet squarely on your head. It should sit about one inch above your eyebrows. If it's loose, use the pads provided to get a closer fit. It should feel snug all the way around, but not too tight.
- Keeping the helmet level, adjust the outside straps using the sliding clips so there is no slackness.
- The front strap should be as vertical as possible. The rear strap should join the front strap, just under the ears.
- Fasten the buckle, which should rest under your chin, not on the jaw line.
- Try to rock the helmet on your head. It should have minimal movement.
- Helmets with peaks are not recommended for urban roads as the peak can obstruct your view of traffic signals.

Weather

Except in the case of extreme weather your training session will go ahead. So please dress accordingly! If your lesson is to be rescheduled your instructor will phone you and arrange another appointment.



Your well-being

Cycling is an efficient and surprisingly easy way of travelling. But if you're new to it, it may be tiring at first. If you're becoming uncomfortable or tired, tell your instructor that you want to take a break.

How many lessons?

Life Cycle UK has taught complete beginners to ride in under 40 minutes, and most of our clients report a big increase in their levels of knowledge and confidence after just one session. However, real skill develops over time and with practice. We therefore recommend that you take a series of lessons.

After your lesson

At the end of your training session there will be an opportunity for you and your instructor to discuss the points covered. Your instructor will answer your questions, tell you how you're progressing and will probably suggest a few things for you to practise.

Your views

We value your feedback and suggestions. If you would like to comment on your training session in please contact us.

Some pre-reading.

The best way to learn to cycle is by doing it! But we also recommend the following:

Cyclecraft: The Complete Guide to Safe and Enjoyable Cycling for Adults and Children, by John Franklin.

A useful guide to cycling in a range of conditions. You can order a copy via the Life Cycle UK website.

http://resources.lifecycleuk.org.uk/product_info.php?cPath=32&products_id=192

Bike Easy: Top Tips & Expert Advice for the New Cyclist, by Peter Andrews.

105 nuggets of advice to make your cycling easier, safer and more enjoyable. You can order a copy via the Life Cycle UK website.

http://resources.lifecycleuk.org.uk/product_info.php?cPath=32&products_id=263



Other services from Life Cycle UK

- Keep your children safe and give them a great cycling experience. Our **Cycling Courses** teach 8-11 year olds essential skills. Courses run during the school holidays.
- Keep your bike running smoothly. We run regular BMWs – that's **Bicycle Maintenance Workshops!** In a friendly, jargon-free way we will show you how things work, how to fix faults and generally maintain your bike.
- **Find your way!** We have oodles of **free** cycle maps covering Bristol, Bath and many other towns and cities! Order your maps on-line and we'll post them to you.
- **Take a Stand!** We have **free** bike stands to give away to small businesses, shops, offices and community organisations.
- Send for **Doctor Bike!** Our bike mechanics will visit schools, community groups or workplaces to give people's bikes a check up. Minor problems are treated on the spot. Lots of useful, impartial advice given out.