

Cycle helmets advice sheet



Correct fitting.

Cycling is not an inherently dangerous activity. However, some forms of cycling have risks attached – mountain biking over steep, rough terrain for instance – and the wearing of helmets for this sort of riding is sensible. For everyday cycling it is up to individuals whether they want to wear helmets or not. There is no helmet compulsion law in the UK.

If you decide to wear helmet, buy the right size. Get measured in a bike shop and try on various helmets in your size to find the one that feels snug. Use the interchangeable pads you may get with the helmet to customise the fit.

The helmet's front brim should be a finger's width above the eyebrows. The helmet should be level rather than tipped to the front or rear. Once fitted, and the retention straps tightened, the helmet should take the scalp with it when pushed, rather than slip across the head.

Use only those helmets intended for cycling. Do not use helmets designed for climbing or canoeing or other sports. These can be heavy, offer little side impact protection and have no proper ventilation slots.



Incorrect fitting.

All helmets sold in decent bike shops will be tested to certain 'crash test' standards. If a cycle helmet has been manufactured after 30 June 1995 it should bear a CE mark to say that it meets European standards. Other recognised standards are BS EN 1078, ANSI Z 90.4 and SNELL.

Cooling is important. A quality helmet will have plenty of air vents to help keep you comfortable. Make sure the helmet looks good too: you will be more inclined to wear it if it does. Appearance is likely to be an important consideration for children who can be extremely style-conscious and reluctant to wear a helmet they regard as unfashionable.

Any helmet that suffers a sharp blow should be replaced, even if it appears to be undamaged. Some manufacturers replace accident-damaged helmets at a reduced price. Helmets more than three years' old should also be replaced as a matter of course as the materials degrade over time. Helmets can also be weakened by direct sunlight or by cleaning with solvents.

Remember: Wearing a helmet will not protect your head in all eventualities. It may offer some protection in the event of a minor fall or collision. You should not cycle faster or more recklessly because you wear head protection.