

Life Cycle Guide: Helmets

There is currently no law requiring cyclists to wear helmets in the UK. It is down to individual choice whether or not to wear a helmet. Life Cycle strongly recommends that individuals consider the benefits of wearing a helmet and make an informed decision about whether to wear one or not.

The best way to protect yourself when cycling is to ride with due care and attention to the road environment, and not to take risks. This is the most important thing you can do to protect yourself when cycling and will help prevent you from having an incident in the first place. If you are not confident about cycling on the roads, Life Cycle recommends that you have cycle training.

If however you do have an incident a helmet can protect your head from injury, or can reduce the severity of any injury sustained to your head.

If you chose to wear a helmet or wish your child to wear a helmet it is important that you follow some basic rules, the toughest helmet in the world won't be much good if it slips around on the rider's head when they fall.

Some forms of cycling have higher risks attached - mountain biking over steep, rough terrain or BMX stunt riding - and the wearing of helmets for this sort of activity is always recommended.

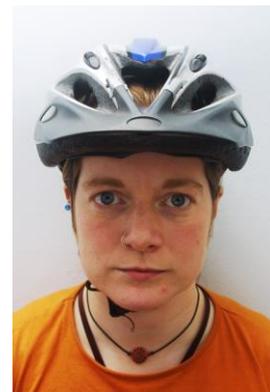
Top tips for choosing a helmet:

- Only buy a helmet if it carries a sticker showing it meets acceptable standards e.g. BS (British Standard) /EN (European) BSEN 1078 or Snell Foundation B90.
- It is essential that it is comfortable and fitted correctly sitting at the front of your/ your child's head and never in a "sling" back position. A badly fitted helmet can be a liability not a protection, and can result in other injury e.g. to the neck, so see our tips below on correct fitting.
- 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.
- Cooling is important. A quality helmet will have air vents to keep you comfortable.
- Make sure the helmet looks good too: you will be more inclined to wear it. Appearance is likely to be important to children/teenagers who can be extremely style-conscious and reluctant to wear a helmet they regard as unfashionable.
- If a helmet has been dropped, hit, involved in a collision or damaged in any way it should be thrown away and replaced.
- All helmets should be replaced every 3 years, even if they have been well cared for.

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Top tips for fitting a helmet correctly

1. Measure the head around its circumference, about one inch above the eyebrows. Match your head size to the size of the helmet (printed in the helmet, on a label or on the box).
2. Place the helmet squarely on your /your child's head and fasten the straps. If it's loose, use the pads or straps to get a close fit. It should feel snug all the way around, but not too tight.
3. Once the pads are fitted, place the helmet back on your head. Keep it level, about one inch
4. The front strap should be as vertical as possible. The rear strap should join the front strap, just under the ears. Where the helmet has a rear adjustment fitting, this must be tightened.
5. Fasten the buckle, which should rest under the chin, not on the jaw line. Take great care not to pinch the skin under the chin, as this is a sure way of putting a child off wearing it.
6. Try to move the helmet on your /your child's head. It should not move very much. If the helmet falls to the side, or towards the back of the head, then it is too big and won't protect your head. It could cause more damage in the event of an incident.



Correct fitting of a cycle helmet

Further sources of information on helmets:

For information on wearing of cycle helmets see:

<http://www.cyclinguk.org/campaign/cycle-helmets-evidence>

<https://www.headway.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/cycle-helmets/>

www.lifecycleuk.org.uk

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