

Life Cycle Guide

Balance bikes

Balance Bikes

A Balance bike, also known as a running bike, like-a-bike or pre-bike, has no pedals, chain or cranks. When your child is sitting on it his/her feet are flat on the ground which will make a young child feel secure and safe. The child uses their feet to propel themselves along, quickly learning the skills to glide, scoot, start and stop confidently.

This is an ideal first bike, which a toddler as young as 18-months can get to grips with. As well as learning to balance, it will help children learn co-ordination, spatial awareness and motor skills, all essential for riding a pedal bike.

With most balance bikes children use their feet to stop. More expensive models have a hand operated back brake.

Benefits of a balance bike

A balance bike is great fun for your toddler. It will enable them to get around quickly and independently. They can accompany you to the local shops or park on their balance bike, particularly when they get to the stage of refusing to go in a buggy.

A balance bike also has the advantage that it will teach your child the skills they will need to ride a pedal bicycle from an early age: balancing, steering, judgement of distance and speed and stopping when and where you ask them.

When they move to a pedal bike, they will already know how to balance and steer, and to make the transition quickly and easily.



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Choosing the right balance

There are many balance bikes on the market. Some are made of wood and are decorated to look like animals; others are made of aluminium and look more like pedal bikes. Weight is a key consideration, the lighter the bike the easier your child will find it.

You should try and choose the lightest model within your price range.

More sophisticated balance bikes have brakes. This is not completely necessary, as the child's feet are always on the ground and stopping the balance bike with your feet is easy. However, having a brake will introduce children early on to braking skills - essential for riding a pedal bike.

Expect to pay...

From £40 - £350 depending on quality, features and weight.

Where to buy...

Balance bikes come in a range of sizes, so measure your child's inside leg and buy a suitable sized bike. They are available at some independent bike shops, however you will find a much greater range online.

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