

Life Cycle Guide

Child Seats

Choosing the right seat

Choosing the right seat will depend on the type of cycling you plan to do, the age of your child and your budget. All child seats are unsuitable for young babies and shouldn't be used until your child can sit up unaided and support the weight of their own head.

There is no specific safety standard governing child seats as a legal requirement of sale in the UK. There is a German TUV standard, to which many seats will conform. Seats **MUST**, however, be CE marked. It is worth noting that full suspension type bikes are not compatible with any type of child seat, and that bikes featuring a rear disc brake will not safely take a rack mounted seat.



Types of seat

1.1 Rear mounted seats

Rear fitting seats are by far the most common and offer the widest variety of choice. Once a child can sit up and hold their head up, then they can be safely transported in a rear mounted seat. It can be a great way to rock a younger child off to sleep. All seats have a weight limit and you should look at this before choosing your model. The basic seats generally have a weight limit of 18kg (40lb). In real terms this is the equivalent of an average 4 to 5 year old, however most parents will find children too heavy to carry by this age, as the bike becomes harder and harder to handle the heavier your child becomes.

Having a seat on the back does affect the handling of the bike, especially with a heavier child, and the bike can wobble when stopping and starting. Steep hills can also be a strain and you will want good low gears on your bike. You will need to ensure your brakes are in excellent working order at all times.

There are a number of different styles available. The more expensive models include features like reclining backs and adjustable headrests. Other features that vary from model to model including: cushion covers; storage compartments or bags; tool free fitment; grab bars; rain covers.

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Other things to look for when choosing a seat:

- Quality stainless or chromed fixings;
- 5 point harnesses (2 straps over the shoulders, one between the legs and a full width waist strap);
- Availability of spare parts and accessory items like spare fixing brackets or pannier racks;
- Adjustability - Foot rests which extend as your child grows;
- Foot retention straps.



a) Rack Mounted Child Seat

This type of child seat is the most secure and safe as it is held firmly in place by the pannier rack, which in turn is mounted to the bicycle at 4 points. This type of seat is likely to be most comfortable for longer journeys, as there is no movement or sway that is common with seat tube mounted seats. However, the disadvantage is that you cannot use your cycle panniers on your pannier rack, so if you are going long distances, you will need to fit front loading panniers.

Rack mounted seats are suitable for children aged from about 6 months to about 4 years.

b) Seat Tube Mounted Child Seat (Single Point Mounted)

This is a particularly popular type of seat as they are often cheaper than rack mounted child seats. The seat is attached to the bicycle via a cantilever bracket which is fixed to the seat tube of the bicycle frame. A result of the one point attachment assembly is that the child seat is not fixed rigidly in place, and so there is a natural suspension action. This means the seat bobs up and down gently offering a perhaps more comfortable ride for the younger / lighter child. Seat tube mounting carriers generally have the lower weight rating and generally have a weight limit of around 22 kg. They have the advantage that you can use panniers on your bike at the same time - useful for carrying all the clobber that goes with having young children.

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Information sheet

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1.2 Front Mounted Seats



Your child sits in front of you and you place your arms around the seat to hold the handlebars. Because your arms have to go around the seat and your vision of the road needs to be clear, front-mounted seats are more compact than rear-mounted seats.

Front seats have the advantage of allowing more interaction between you and your child. However, the seat is carried quite high from the ground and this raises the centre of gravity of your bike potentially altering its handling, especially if your child is a wriggler. Front seats can make the bike harder to ride and smaller or less confident riders will struggle to ride these safely.

Front seats are suitable for younger children up to about 2 or 2.5 years. If you are going to buy a front seat, Life Cycle would recommend buying a more expensive model that includes headrests, and footrests and providing more support to your youngster. Features, such as quick removal when not required are also useful additions, as is a spare fixing kit allowing the seat to be used on more than one bike.

Front fitting seats are less common in the UK and can be hard to find in the shops. Most independent bike shops will order you one, or they can be found online. Try: www.kidsonthemove.co.uk or www.weerideuk.com.

Expect to Pay...

Front seats range from £70 to £130 depending upon the features you require. To save money you might buy a second hand child seat, however, be careful to check the quality of the seat before purchase. Don't buy anything that looks worn and has signs of damage, cracking or has missing parts.

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