











Learning to ride a bike doesn't have to be scary or difficult. This really simple method can be used with children or adults. It works by helping the rider to develop their balance without having to think about pedalling. Once they have developed their sense of balance it takes just a couple of simple steps to put get them used to the pedals and riding on their own.

Before you start:








-  Find a flat open space to practice in. Tarmac is good but rather hard, grass is softer but can be uneven, whatever the surface make sure there are no obstacles to bump into.
-  Make sure the bike you are using is small enough for the rider to touch the floor flat footed when they are sitting on the saddle. Adjust the saddle height as necessary.
-  Take the stabilisers off the bike and check that the tyres are pumped up.
-  If the rider is wearing a helmet, check that it is fitted correctly. It should be level on the head with the straps fastened securely under the chin.
-  Remove the pedals from the bike. If they are very tight then ask your local bike shop to do it for you.

Developing balance:

-  With the rider sitting on the saddle get them to walk the bike along with their feet. This will be a bit wobbly to start but quickly becomes easier.
-  Get the rider to walk on the bike in a straight line between two points, when they get to the end they will need to turn around, this is good steering practice. Keep practicing up and down the line.
-  As the rider becomes more confident walking on the bike encourage them to walk a little faster and to take longer strides. Once they start to lengthen their strides their balance will really start to develop.
-  The next stage is to get the rider to scoot the bike along by running while sitting on bike. Once they can scoot the rider will naturally take both feet off the floor and will begin to cruise along for short distances.
-  This scooting stage is really important and should not be rushed. Once the rider can scoot they can have lots of fun practicing steering, learning to stop safely and developing their balance further. Many riders stay at this scooting stage for quite a while

Riding with pedals:

Lots of scooting practice makes riding with pedals much easier. The rider should be happy and confident with scooting their bike along before you go any further. Once the rider has developed their balance on the bike you can start to introduce the pedals.

-  Put one pedal back on to the bike, usually the right one but if the rider wants the left one that's OK. The pedals will have L and R stamped in to the end of the screw thread so you can put them back on the correct side.
-  Get the rider to scoot themselves along with one foot resting on the pedal and the other foot pushing on the floor. Do this for a few minutes until it feels natural and the rider can steer and brake at the same time. If the rider is not happy take the pedal off and go back to the scooting stage.
-  If the rider is happy with the pedal on the bike put the other pedal back on too.
-  Set one pedal (usually the right pedal) to the pedal ready or 2 o'clock position,
-  With one foot on this pedal ask the rider to push down on the pedal and push off the floor with their other foot. Get them to cruise a short distance then use their brakes to stop. Repeat this stage a few times so that the rider gets used to setting the pedal position and moving off.
-  Once they are moving off happily they are ready to start pedalling. Get the rider to start off as above, as soon as they are moving get them to lift their other foot to the pedal to keep them self going. As they have already developed their balance this step to pedalling should come naturally. If it doesn't go back a couple of stages and work up to it again.
-  Celebrate the new rider's success and keep practicing stopping, starting and steering while riding.



For more information about learning to ride a bike, riding with children, cycle training opportunities and the Bike It project have a look at:

www.sustrans.org.uk

and

www.cycleshrewsbury.co.uk