

Planning a Bike to School Day Event

Hosting a Bike to School Day event is a great way to generate excitement about bicycling and reinforce safe bicycling skills. The event gives students and parents a chance to celebrate biking to school and for some, a chance to give bicycling a try.

For step-by-step guidance for planning a great Walk or Bike to School Day, visit www.walkbiketoschool.org/getting-started.

Start small, or start big!

Bike to School Day events come in all shapes and sizes. The trick is to create the day that fits your community's interests and circumstances.

Starting Small

Small events can be a great way to judge interest in bicycling and lay the groundwork for going bigger next year. These ideas can be used alone or in combination.

1. Encourage parents to bicycle with their children to school on Bike to School Day. You may want to especially target parents who ride on a regular basis and encourage them to invite other students in the neighborhood to join them.
2. Have a central place for students and parents to meet, such as a park. Then the group can complete the journey to school together.
3. Once bicyclists arrive at school, hold an activity to celebrate bicycling.



Starting Big

Larger events may involve more routes and more adult volunteers. A big event also might include activities that extend beyond on the day of the event to a week- or month-long celebration.

1. Have students, parents and other adults coming from the same neighborhood form bicycle trains in which adults and students ride along routes to pick up students along the way to school. For more information about bike trains, visit walkbiketoschool.org.
2. Hold a bicycle skills clinic (or bike rodeo) so students can demonstrate or learn basic safety skills (police departments and bicycle advocates are helpful here).
3. Offer free or low-cost helmets prior to the event to ensure that everyone has access to this basic piece of safety equipment. Look for a partner like a local children's hospital, police department or Safe Kids coalition to help coordinate a "bike helmet fit check" and helmet giveaway or sale.
4. Provide a bicycle maintenance clinic where student may bring their bikes for a checkup prior to the event. A poorly maintained bicycle can cause a crash that may have been prevented with some simple checks. Enlist the help of a local bike shop to repair broken chains, tighten brakes, and fix flat tires. As an alternative, encourage parents to conduct an "ABC Quick Check" before the ride begins. See the League of American Bicyclists' ABC Quick Checklist: <http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/beginningcycling.php>
5. Encourage students to be creative by decorating their bikes with streamers, signs or balloons. They can put stickers, school decals, plastic flowers or other fun decorations on their helmets. This can happen after school or as part of art class. Adults should help students make fun but safe decisions (make sure the bike is still safe after decorating).
6. Announce the start of a bike club for the school. Bike clubs can organize rides and train students to be bike mechanics who work on their own bicycles or repair bicycles that have been donated for others to use.

Considerations for Planning the Event

Some considerations are unique to bicycling events and help keep safety a priority:

Bicycle Safety

There are helmet laws in many cities and towns across the U.S., and some schools have their own rules requiring helmet use. Even if there isn't a requirement that children wear helmets, it is something you will want to promote (or possibly require) as a part of your event.

Students need to know basic bicycle safety skills. See www.walkbiketoschool.org for handouts for students and parents and information about how to hold a bicycle skills clinic or organize a bike train.

Bicycling routes

Potential bicycle routes need to be examined for safety issues. Talk to your local police department or resource officer about the event. If there are busier streets along school routes, it could be helpful for officers to provide assistance during the event by restricting traffic movements, aiding with street crossings, or other measures. However, if the roads surrounding the school are quiet, neighborhood streets, you may not need much help. Some schools use cones to create special lanes for cyclists as they approach the school.

Sometimes riding on the sidewalk is a good option. Children under age ten generally do not have the ability to manage traffic situations on their own, and may be safest riding on the sidewalk or a bike path. Some communities permit children to ride on the sidewalk and some do not, so check before making a decision.

For any group ride, review a short list of ground rules with the participants. Cover a few "what if" scenarios. For example, young bicyclists might need to stop in the middle of the ride. Tell students that if they need to stop for any reason, they should yell out to the group first. Student riders should stay behind an adult ride leader at all times. It's also a good idea to have a small first aid kit handy when bicycling with kids, just in case.



Bicycle storage

Check out the school's bike racks (if they exist). Will they be sufficient for the number of students who are expected to participate in the event? If not, identify a location where bikes can be stored securely on the day of the event. Some schools have used their gymnasiums for this purpose.