What's The Right Size Bike For You?

A Perfect Fit Is Possible- It's often easy to find a bike that fits perfectly. This is possible because manufacturers make frames in a wide variety of sizes and because bicycles can be fine-tuned with seat and stem adjustments.

The Stand-over Test - On bicycles designed for road use, you usually want about one to three inches of clearance (depending on the size and design of the bike). On off-road models, which usually have sloping top tubes and long seat posts will require more clearance, look for three to six inches (depending on size and design). Cycling should be as easy and comfortable as possible. Make sure the seat is properly adjusted by a volunteer or parent. The saddle position is important for satisfaction or suffering for the rider. When you're in pain, the tendency can be to make drastic changes to alleviate the suffering. But, if you change the seat position too much, while you may ease the pain temporarily, you'll surely create other problems and you might even cause an injury to your knees, back, hands or posterior. Here are some guidelines to adjusting the seat, and a few recommendations if seat adjustments don't solve your saddle sores.

Keep The Seat Approximately Level- One of the simplest seat adjustments is angling the seat slightly up or down. Never set the nose more than three degrees lower or higher than parallel. Women usually prefer the seat slightly tipped-down, while men usually prefer their seats slightly tipped-up. Rest a straightedge on the saddle's top while making adjustments so you can gauge the amount you're tipping it and keep it within the three-degrees range. If you tip it further, you risk injury.

Don't Move The Seat To Adjust Handlebar Reach- Sometimes, if it feels like the bars are too far away, you might be tempted to slide the seat forward to reduce the reach. This solves the reach problem, but your seat position should be based on your relationship to the pedals, which will minimize chance of injury and maximize your power when you're riding. The correct way to make size adjustments such as reach is to change the stem length (the part that holds the handlebars) after you determine your appropriate saddle position.

Try A New Seat- Something to consider if you're searching for a solution to pain and not finding it in saddle adjustment, is that your seat might be the incorrect model for your anatomy. It must provide support for your pelvic bone structure along with the way you sit on and pedal your bike. If it's a poor fit, no amount of adjusting will solve the problem. Continue to try different seats until you find the one that is right for you.

The Basic Adjustment- For optimum comfort and pedaling efficiency, position your saddle so that when your crank arms and pedals are parallel to the ground, a plumb line dropped from the bony protrusion just below your forward knee either bisects, or falls 1 to 2 centimeters behind the pedal axle. This setting varies according to personal preference and riding position. For example, if you like to pedal fast (95 rpm plus), place the plumb line directly over the pedal axle. If you pedal more slowly (80 to 90 rpm), you'll probably prefer a rearward position.

Mind Your Feet, Too- Keep in mind that how you feel pedaling can be affected by how your feet are positioned over the pedals. If you're using the wrong size toe clip or you have your shoe cleats misadjusted, no amount of seat adjustment will make you pedal optimally. Ideally, your shoes, cleats and toe clips will be selected and adjusted so that the balls of your feet rest directly over the pedal axles (centers) when you're riding.

Training Wheels Are Okay- A lot of parents wonder if training wheels are a good way for kids to learn to ride their first two-wheeler. Proper installation and sturdy training wheels ensure easy handling, optimum safety, and a positive learning experience.

Bike-Buying Considerations- When buying a bike for your child, don't make the mistake of purchasing one that's sized too large. That's a common tendency because it's natural to want the bike to last as long as possible for your growing youngster. The problem is, if the bike is too big, it's going to be scary and dangerous to ride, which could turn your child off biking altogether. Pick out a bike that's safe and that will provide a great first biking experience. Don't worry about outgrowing the bike. Bikes are sturdy enough to last through several children. If you don't have a sibling, niece or nephew to pass the bike on to, ask you local bike store if they have a trade in program.

Protecting Your Ride

Bike thieves are sneaky and resourceful so you have got to be careful when locking your bike.

Here Are Some Tips To Help:

1. Lock It Up: Lock your bike to something that can't easily be cut, broken or removed. Don't lock your bike to something like a loose or short pole. The thief might be able to pull the post out of the ground or lift your bike over the top.

2. Location, Location: Where you leave your bike is important. Secure your bike in a visible, well-lit area and you'll force the thief to operate in plain view. Don't routinely lock your bike in the same place all the time. A thief may notice the pattern and pick your bike as an easy target. Similarly, if you leave your bike outside a movie theatre, a thief may realize there's a strong chance that you won't be out until the movie is over, which gives him time to get the tools he needs to steal your bike. If you store your bike in your garage, leave the door closed and consider locking the bike to something because you never know who might spot the bike when the door is open.

3. Use Your Lock: When using a U-lock, position your frame and wheels so that you fill as much of the open space within the lock's U portion as possible. The tighter the lock up, the harder it is for a potential thief to use tools to break your lock. Always secure your components and accessories, especially quick-release wheels and seat posts, with a secondary cable lock. Don't rush when locking your bike, check your lock before leaving to be sure you've secured it properly. For the greatest theft defence, use two locks such as a U-lock and a locking cable.

4. Get It Back: If your bike is stolen, don't assume it's gone for good. As long as you can identify the bike there's a chance of recovery. Immediately prepare a flyer with a photo and description of your bike. Include any details that make identification easier such as special accessories or markings on the bike.

5. Sign Your Bike: One thing that will help if you happen to find the bike is to put your name or license number on it somewhere secret. One hidden location is inside the handlebar (write your name on a piece of paper and slip it inside). You might also write your name on the underside of the seat. These marks will help you prove ownership in the event that you discover your bike at a swap meet or police auction. Locate the serial number of your bicycle. Write it down and make sure parents file it somewhere safe.