

In 10 steps to cycling

Aim of this programme

In this programme you will learn the basics of cycling in 10 easy steps. It goes from scratch to comfortable and safe cycling in a non-traffic environment. As soon as you have mastered these skills, you will be ready to proceed to the next level of your learning to cycle journey, in which you will acquire the skills to cycle safely in a low-traffic environment.

Before you embark on your learning to cycle journey..

Make sure that your bike is in perfect shape (both brakes are working!) and your saddle is adjusted at your height. As long as you are in the learning process of cycling, you should be able to reach the ground with both feet while sitting on the saddle. As soon as you have gained more confidence, it is important to set the saddle higher. The general rule here is that putting the ball of your foot on the pedal in its lowest position, your knee should be only slightly bent. This will give you more ease in riding and less stress on your knees.

Make sure you only proceed to the next step when you've mastered the skills in the previous step. This could take some time and sustained practice. Everyone has his/her own pace. Be patient with yourself!

Please note that you are all the time doing these exercises at your own responsibility. No accountability for any injuries is taken from my side.

If you have difficulties with or questions about performing certain exercises, or you are in need of more personal coaching, please contact me: werner@bikingbodyplanet.com

Success!

Step 1: Walking along your bike

-> This is a very important first step to allow you to get used to your bike.

-> Stand next to your bike, keep both hands on the handlebar and pull with your fingers on the brake levers.

-> Release the brakes (but keep your fingers relaxed over the brake levers) and start walking while holding both hands on the handlebar. Progress by holding one hand on the handlebar and the other hand on the saddle.



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-> Walk straight and progress by making turns and crossing obstacles (make sure you always look forward, not to the ground).

-> Shift sides while walking.

Step 2: Braking

-> This skill should be perfectly mastered. Make sure that at all times your fingers are loosely over the brake levers when you are cycling or walking along your bike. This ensures you to immediately apply your brakes when needed.

-> ALWAYS brake with both hands!

- > Add this exercise to the walking exercise: stop at a cone (or any other object) or at the whistle signal of a friend.

Step 3: Paddling alternately with your feet

-> Mount on your bike holding the handlebar with both hands and applying the brakes. Put yourself on the saddle and make sure you can easily reach the ground with both feet simultaneously.

-> Release the brakes and push yourself forward alternately with your left and right foot. Look forward.

-> Gradually increase the time between your push offs.

Step 4: Paddling with both feet together

-> Sit on the saddle and push yourself forward with both feet together. Look forward.

-> Gradually push harder and roll further. This goes easier on a slightly sloping plane.

-> Combine with braking: ALWAYS brake first before you put your feet on the ground!

Step 5: Stepping and pushing off

-> Sit on the saddle, apply your brakes and put one foot on the pedal at its lowest position. Release your brakes and push off with the other foot. Look forward.

-> Gradually increase the time you keep your push off foot from the ground.

-> Combine with braking: ALWAYS brake first before you put your feet on the ground!



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-> As soon as you feel confident, try to put your push off foot on the pedal as well. Then apply your brakes and put your both feet back on the ground.

-> Gradually increase the time you have both feet on the pedals.

-> It is crucial that you ALWAYS brake first before you put your feet back on the ground! It can take some time to master this, but it will prevent you from falling from your bike when stopping.

-> In brief the whole process looks as follows:

Sit on the saddle, one foot on the pedal in lowest position, look forward, make 3 steps (push offs) with your other foot, put this foot on the pedal as well, roll, brake, put feet back on the ground.

-> As soon as you gain confidence, make one or more turns with both feet on the pedals.. you are cycling now!!

-> This step is the most difficult and at the same time most crucial one in the process, because it challenges your skill of balancing on two wheels. Please don't feel tempted to ask a friend to give you a helping hand. This would only lengthen the process of finding your own balance. Take your time and be patient with yourself. Sooner or later you will master it. Only proceed to the next step when having nailed this one.

Step 6: Starting

-> Now that you have mastered the skill of balancing on two wheels, it is time to adapt your way of setting off with your bike. It goes as follows:

Sit on the saddle, apply your brakes, put one foot on the pedal in the "10 o'clock position" (looking from the left side of the bike), look forward, release your brakes, push off firmly with your foot on the pedal, add your other foot, cycle.

-> It is a good habit to apply your brakes when mounting your bike and only release them when setting off. This will prevent your bike from moving under you and it is at once a test of the condition of your brakes.

-> By this time you should be ready to gradually raise your saddle. Don't forget!

Step 7: Stopping versus slowing down

-> You can exercise using your brakes for slowing down or stopping in different ways:

- Ask a friend to whistle a signal: one > slowing down; two > stopping



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- Put a pair of cones about 1m apart and a few meters further again a pair of cones 1m apart. On top of the last pair of cones you could put a wooden plank linking them. Cycle in between the first pair of cones. Slow down as soon as your front wheel passes them. Then stop before you reach the last pair of cones. The wooden plank should not fall of the cones.

-> Remember you always keep your fingers loosely over the brake levers, brake with both hands and put your feet on the ground only after you have stopped!

Step 8: Making turns

-> As soon as you have mastered “start > cycle straight > slow down > stop”, you can start to exercise making turns. Begin with smooth bends (45°) and build up to sharper ones (90°) and finally U-turns (180°). Using cones or other objects you can make yourself a bike course. You could also start to exercise slaloming with your bike in between cones (put them far enough from one another at the beginning, and gradually put them closer).

Step 9: Looking around

-> Gradually we start to prepare ourselves to cycle in (low) traffic conditions. Being able to look around without differing from a straight line, is one of the main skills to obtain here.

-> You can train this skill by doing the following exercise:

Cycle in a straight line (you could set up a line of cones). Ask a friend to stand next to this line. As soon as you pass by, you ask him/her to raise one or more fingers (this could also be certain objects or papers with different colors, figures or drawings). When you pass by your friend, you look sideways and tell him/her what you see. You can make it more difficult to only look at your friend after you have passed him/her. Now you will have to look backwards over your shoulder. Make sure you train this skill at both sides (looking back to the left and to the right).

Step 10: Raising your hand

-> In traffic conditions we should be able to raise our hand sideways to indicate change of direction.

-> You can train this skill by doing the following exercise:

Cycle in a straight line (you could set up a line of cones). Ask a friend to stand next to this line. As soon as you pass by, you give him/her a low or high five. You could also put a table



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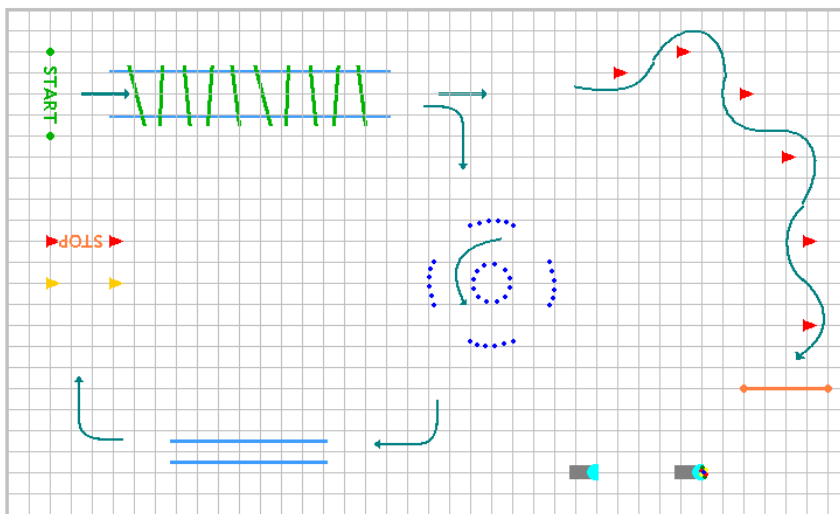
with cubes (or any other objects) on top of it along the line. The first time you pass the table, you take a cube, the next time you put it back. Make sure you train this skill at both sides (raising hand to the left and right).

-> A very interesting exercise in which looking backward and raising arm are combined, is called the “**back-arm-steer**” exercise. It is designed for traffic situations in which you have to pass an obstacle or change direction. It goes as follows:

Set up a straight line of cones. Put any obstacle (bag, table, bike,...) on this line that you will have to pass. Cycle in the direction of the obstacle. As soon as you approach the obstacle, you will first have to look **back** over your shoulder (to see if there is no oncoming traffic), then raise your **arm** (to indicate change of direction) and finally **steer** with both hands on your handlebar (to pass the obstacle). Make sure you train this skill at both sides (left and right).

Bike course

At the end of your journey it could be fun to set up a bike course (using cones, cords, tables, etc.). There are limitless variants thinkable. Here you find an example with start, cycling in a straight line over obstacles, slalom, roundabout (this one is set up for right-hand driving countries), picking up and putting back an object, cycling through a narrow space, stop.



Sources

Fietzersbond Belgium. In tien stappen tot fietsvaardigheid (In ten steps to skilled cycling).

Franklin, J. Cyclecraft. TSO, 2014.



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