

How to Bike Through Sand

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Biking on sand is quite different from cycling on the road. The ride is bumpy, the steering is wobbly, and your tires struggle to grip the loose surface. Fortunately, the right adjustments and a bit of practice can almost make up for these effects. Get ready for a short read and a long glide across the beach.

Method 1

Method 1 of 2: Choosing and Adjusting Your Bike

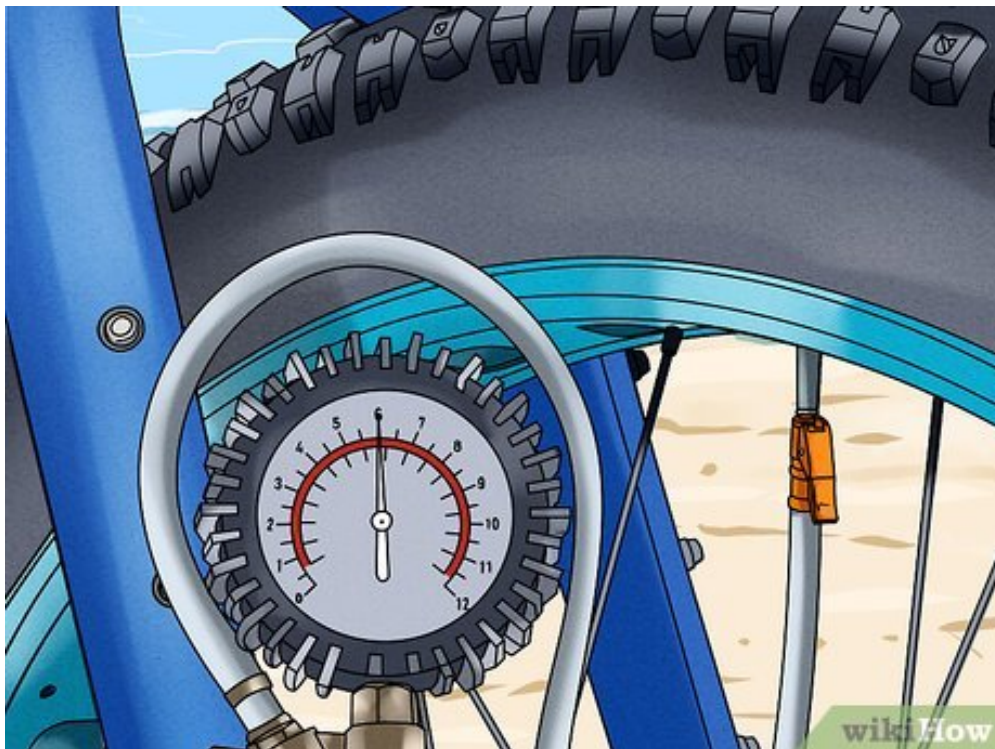


1 Get a **fat bike** if you ride through sand often. Fat bikes have 4 in (10 cm) tires on 26 in (66 cm) rims. They are the best choice for riding through sand, so if you like to cruise around the beach or tackle sand dunes, investing in a fat bike is a wise decision.^[1]



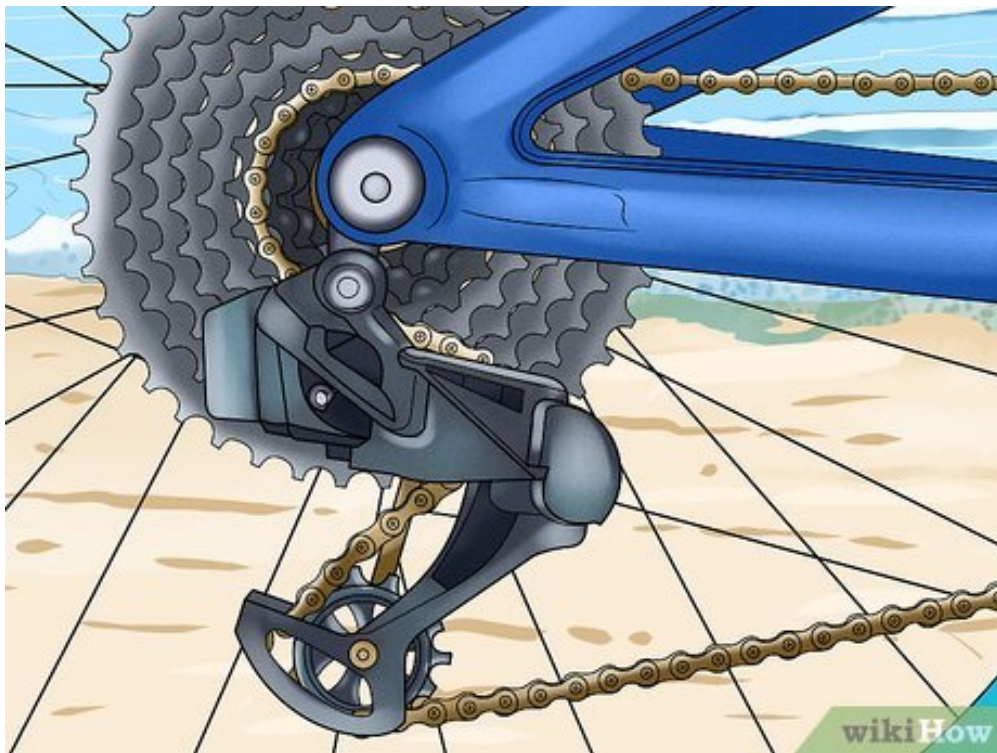
2 Opt for wide tires. Wider tires allow more contact with the ground surface, making balancing your bike easier. For best results, get tires between 1.75 to 2.50 in (4.4 to 6.4 cm) wide. Loose sand requires even chunkier support.^[2]

- Your rim diameter limits your tire width options. If you ride over sand often and your bike frame supports it, consider switching to a wider tire.
- Using wide tires impairs performance on hard surfaces. If you're riding a trail with mixed conditions, you'll have to compromise.

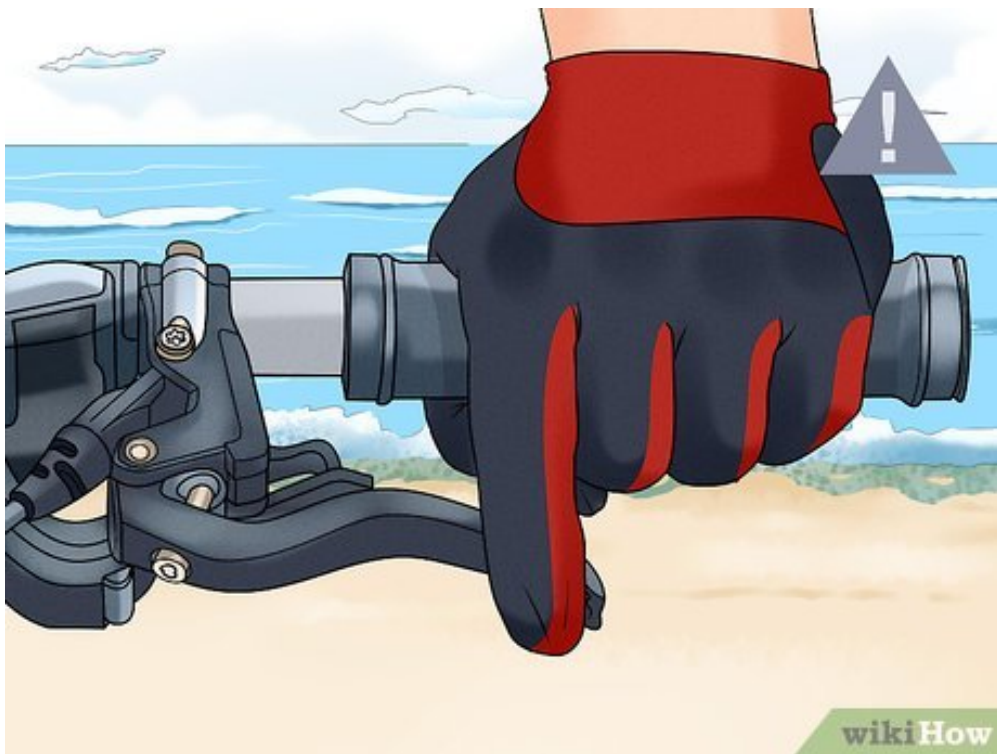


3 Use a lower tire pressure. Letting some air out of your tires can make riding through sand easier. When more of your tire is in contact with the sand, the bike will be less difficult to pedal and steer.

- If you have a fat bike, you can go as low as 4-6 psi. For a mountain bike, lower the psi to 18-20.^[3]



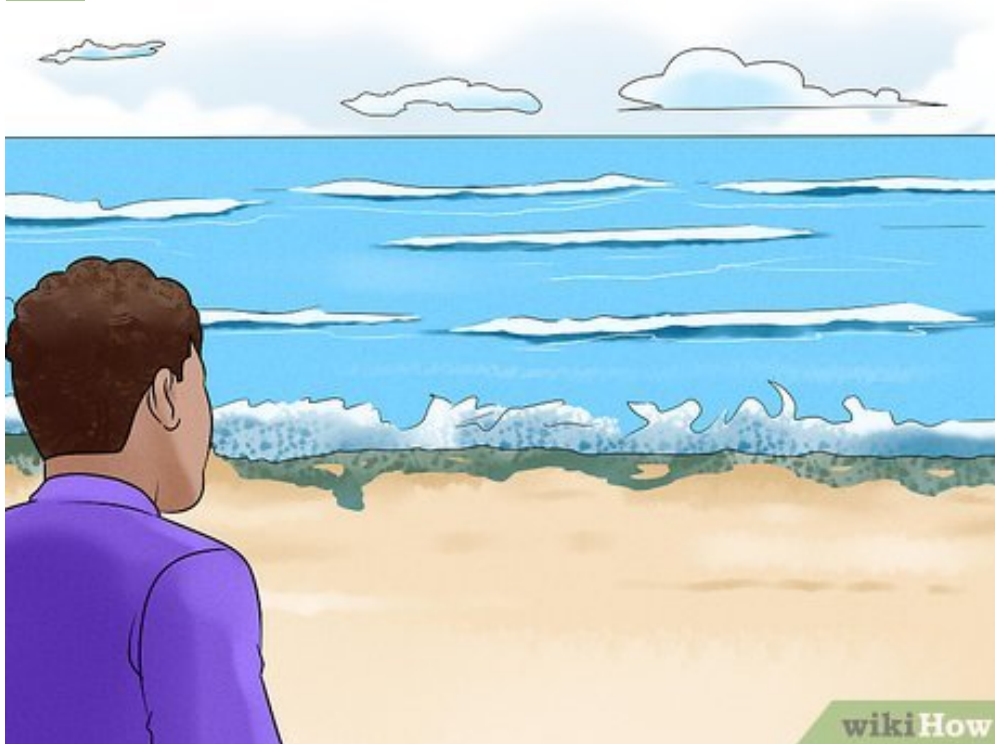
4 Stick to low gears. The lower gears produce more torque, reducing the chance that your rear wheel gets stuck in sand. This can feel frustrating in combination with thicker tires, but you need this extra push to stay on the surface.[4]



5 Minimize shifting and braking in the sand. Shifting and braking will slow you down and dig your wheels into the sand, killing your rhythm. Plan ahead and shift gears while you're still on solid ground.[5]

- You may shift when traveling down a sandy slope, since you'll have enough speed to carry you. Make sure you're in a gear for easy pedaling once you hit flat ground.

Method 2 of 2: Changing Your Riding Approach



1 Aim to ride on wet sand or thin layers of sand over packed soil. If you're new to riding through sand, try to stay away from loose sand, which will slow you down and make steering more difficult. However, riding on wet sand or a thin layer of sand over hard soil is similar to riding on slightly wet grass.

- Steep slopes are especially difficult. Stay away from them until you're more comfortable.
- If cycling at the beach, stay near the water but out of water range. You'll have more room to maneuver at low tide.



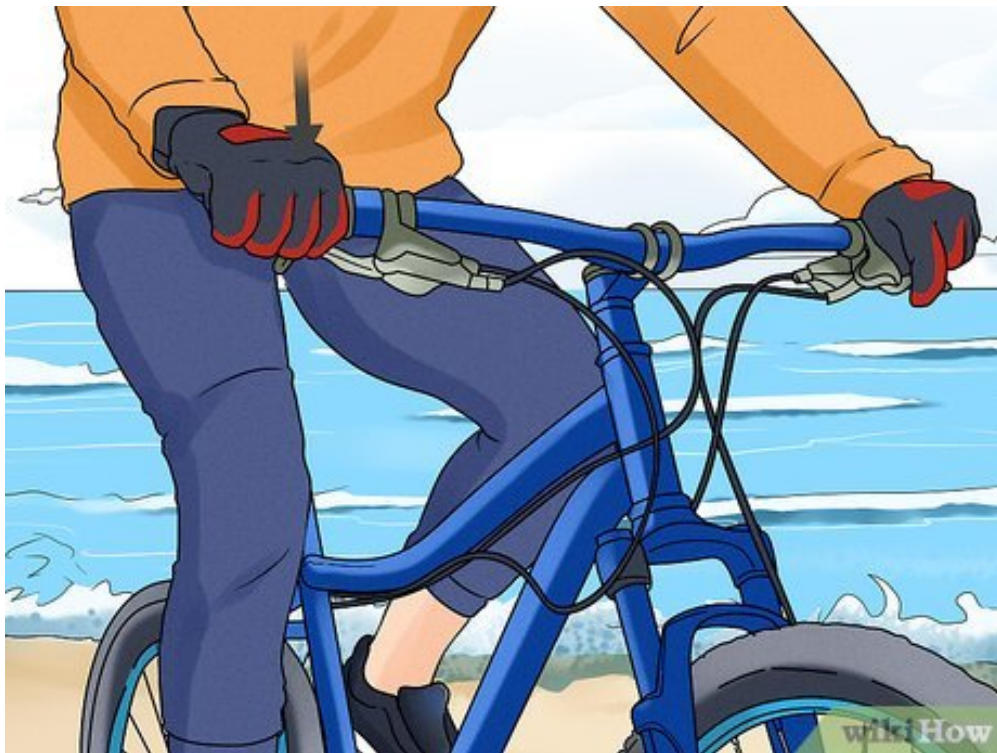
2 Lean back slightly. Resist your urge to lean over the front wheel. This will dig it into the sand, slowing you down or disrupting your course. Instead, sit back in the saddle and keep your weight centered over the rear of the bike.[6]

- While riding on dunes, you can even pull up a little on the handlebars.



3 Pedal with consistent force. Don't pedal in short, uneven bursts, or the change in speed may cause your rear wheel to slip and dig into the sand. Find a cadence that works for you and stick to it until the slope changes.[7]

- Ride slower than you normally would, especially as a beginner. It's easy to lose control over sand, and you don't want to go flying over the handlebars.
- If you're on hard ground and see a small patch of sand coming up, gathering speed may help you pass through it. Don't forget to take your weight off the front wheel as you approach.



4 Change direction using counter pressure. You won't be able to steer your bike the same way you normally would on a paved or dirt surface. When riding in the sand, gradually lean your body and use counter pressure to turn your bike.

- If you quickly turn your tire, it will dig into the sand.[8]



5 Relax. Loose sand makes for a bumpy, wiggly ride. Keep your body loose to absorb the shock and stay in control. Use a light touch on the handlebars, as well.[9]



Tips

- If you're having trouble balancing, try standing up to center your mass with more control.



Warnings

- Minimize rides during strong winds. The blowing sand damages your bike considerably.
- Sand will wear out your bike fast, especially the chain drive sprockets, bearings, aluminum rims, and paint job. Clean them out after a few rides, or after every ride near saltwater. Try a high pressure clean at a self-service car box, followed by lubrication where needed.
- Wear proper safety gear when riding. Find a proper helmet and, if needed, knee pads and arm pads.

References

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