

# How to Size a Bike for a Child

Explore this Article ■ [Measuring Your Child's Inseam and Height](#) ■ [Comparing Tire Sizes](#)  
■ [Finding the Right Fit for Different Bikes](#) ■ [References](#)

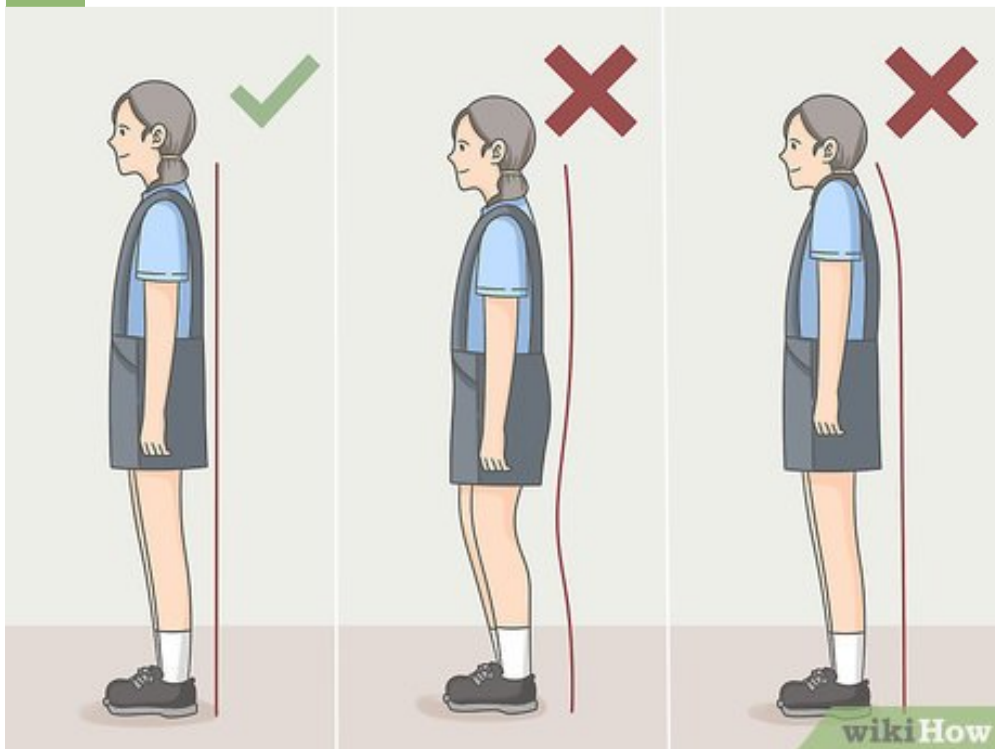
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Getting the right fit for your child's bike is important for both their safety and comfort. A bike that doesn't fit can lead to unnecessary falls and scrapes, and your child might not have the enjoyable biking experience you want them to. In order to size a bike for your child, you'll want to look at the seat height compared to their inseam measurement and then find the right size for the tires. Soon, your kid will be riding around on a bike that fits them perfectly.

## Part 1

### Part 1 of 3: Measuring Your Child's Inseam and Height



**1** **Ask your child to stand straight against a wall in shoes.** In order to measure your child at the same height that they will be when they ride a bike, they should be wearing shoes. Have them stand straight against a wall, with both feet flat on the ground.<sup>[1]</sup>

- Your child should not be bending their knees or pushing up their shoulders. A natural, relaxed posture will give you the most accurate measurement.



**2 Place a hardcover book between their legs at crotch level.** Ask them to put the book between their legs so that the book has its spine facing up and the pages facing down. Help your child push the book up until it reaches their crotch, and then ask them to squeeze it between their legs.<sup>[2]</sup>

- If your child is bending down to hold the book, you won't be able to get an accurate measurement.

**Alternative method:** If you would prefer not to use a book, or if your child is uncomfortable with it, you can simply measure from the floor to the point just below where your child's leg meets their crotch, though this may be less accurate.



**3 Measure the distance from the floor to the book's spine.** Using a measuring tape or a measuring stick, find the distance from the floor to the top of the spine of the book. So long as the measuring tool starts flat on the floor and the book is pressed up to your child's inseam, you'll have an accurate reading of their inseam measurement.<sup>[3]</sup>

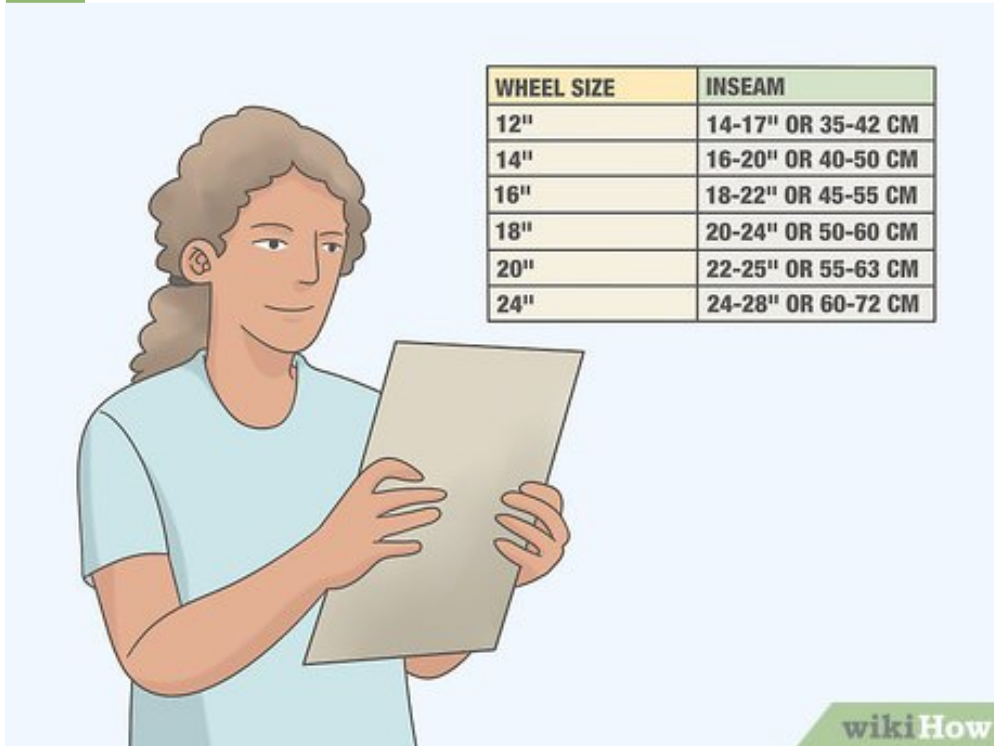
- Always write down the measurement so that you don't forget the number.



**4 Find your child's height while they are standing there, too.** While your child is already standing straight up against the wall, you should find an up-to-date height measurement. Simply use the measuring tool to find the distance from the floor to the very top of the back of their head.<sup>[4]</sup>

- The book can be set aside, as it isn't necessary for this measurement.

## Part 2 of 3: Comparing Tire Sizes



**1 Consult a tire size chart.** There are many sizing charts available for you to look at and find the right fit for your child's inseam measurement, height, and age. The tire diameter is the measurement most companies use to size their bikes, but it can vary a great deal for children.<sup>[5]</sup>

- You can find a tire size chart at <https://www.twowheelingtots.com/> or <https://rascalrides.com/>.



**2 Compare your child's inseam measurement to the range of tire sizes.** The inseam measurement should guide your bike size decision. Your child's height and age will help you narrow down the options. While each inseam range is paired with 1 tire size, there is overlap between the ranges. That's where age and height will come in.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### **Inseam and Tire Sizes:**

- An inseam between 15 inches (38 cm) and 18 inches (46 cm) pairs with 12 inches (30 cm) tire sizes.
- A child whose inseam is 15 inches (38 cm) to 20 inches (51 cm) will fit a 14 inches (36 cm) tire.
- 16 inches (41 cm) to 22 inches (56 cm) inseams match with a 16 inches (41 cm) tire.
- A child with a 19 inches (48 cm) to 25 inches (64 cm) inseam would fit better on a 20 inches (51 cm) bike.
- A child between 23 inches (58 cm) and 28 inches (71 cm) should consider a 24 inches (61 cm) bike.
- The largest bike size made for children is the rarer 26 inches (66 cm) tire size bike, which fits a child with an inseam from 25 inches (64 cm) and up.



**3 See if your child's height sizes them up.** Consider your child's height compared to the inseam size. The relationship between the inseam and height measurements is important to get exactly the right fit. Your child's height will help you decide which size is best for your child, especially if they are between 2 tire sizes based on inseam alone.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Height and Tire Sizes:**

- Heights from 36 inches (91 cm) to 39 inches (99 cm) match with 12 inches (30 cm) tire size.
- Children with heights between 37 inches (94 cm) to 44 inches (110 cm) ride better with a 14 inches (36 cm) tire.
- Heights from 41 inches (100 cm) to 48 inches (120 cm) pair well with a 16 inches (41 cm) tire.
- A child who is between 45 inches (110 cm) and 54 inches (140 cm) tall would fit better on a 20 inches (51 cm) bike.
- A child between 49 inches (120 cm) and 59 inches (150 cm) tall should consider a 24 inches (61 cm) bike.
- The 26 inches (66 cm) tire size bike fits a child who is 56 inches (140 cm) tall and up.



**4 Factor in your child's age to account for growth.** Since children grow at different rates at different ages, it's a good idea to size them up if they are on the cusp between 2 ages. For instance, a 2 year old with an inseam of 15 inches (38 cm) could fit on a 12 inches (30 cm) bike or a 14 inches (36 cm) bike, but a 2 year old who is almost 3 will grow into a 14 inches (36 cm) bike quickly, making it a better choice.<sup>[8]</sup>



**5 Go for the larger tire size if your child is between 2.** No matter what the sizing chart suggests, if your child seems to be right between 2 sizes, you should go for the larger one. Slightly-too-big bikes are generally more comfortable than far-too-small ones, and the fact that your child is growing both make it better to choose a larger bike.<sup>[9]</sup>



### Part 3 of 3: Finding the Right Fit for Different Bikes



**1 Check that your child can keep their feet flat on a balance bike.** If you are choosing to use a balance bike as your child's first bike, it's important that they can set their feet completely flat on the ground while sitting in the seat. Their knees should bend slightly as they sit, so try a seat height that's 1.5 inches (3.8 cm) less than their inseam.<sup>[10]</sup>

- Since balance bikes require children to use their feet on the ground, getting a fit that allows them to be flat is essential.

**Balance Bikes vs Training Wheels:** There has been recent debate over the merits of balance bikes versus training wheels. Many people now prefer balance bikes, because they help kids transition to pedal bikes more easily. However, training wheels can be removed instead of being replaced, and they give a child more practice pedaling while doing some balancing, too. It's up to you which bike your child learns to ride on.





- 2 Make sure your child can touch the ground on a bike with training wheels.** When children ride bikes with training wheels, many want to be able to put their feet flat on the ground. At minimum, your child should be able to touch the ground with their tiptoes.<sup>[11]</sup>
- This means the seat height should be between 0 inches (0 cm) and 3 inches (7.6 cm) above their inseam height.



- 3 Find a height that lets your child lay both feet flat for a first pedal bike.** Once your child makes the transition from balance bikes or training wheels to pedals, make sure they can rest their feet completely flat on the ground so they can learn to stop and start. This is easy to size, because the inseam will match the seat height exactly.<sup>[12]</sup>



- 4 Look for a height that lets your child use their tiptoes on a second pedal bike.**
- When your child is ready for a second pedal bike and knows how to start and use brakes with ease, find a seat height that allows them to touch the ground with just their tiptoes. Since they can use brakes, they should rarely need to use their feet to stop.<sup>[13]</sup>
- For sizing this, choose a seat height that is 2 inches (5.1 cm) to 4 inches (10 cm) higher than your child's inseam.

## References

1. ↑ <https://www.twowheelingtots.com/kids-bike-sizing-guide/>
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