

A close-up photograph of a red road bicycle. The focus is on the black handlebars with grips, the front fork, and the front wheel with a black tire. The background is plain white.

CYCLING

GUIDE

The Ultimate Exercise

If you're looking for an inexpensive exercise hobby that will help build strength without putting stress on your joints, then cycling is the perfect workout.

Depending on how serious you want to get with the sport, cycling requires little more than a dependable bike, a helmet and your imagination. It is an activity that can take you around the world or even just around your neighborhood. It is dynamic, fun and easy on your body – a combination not often found in other workout routines.

GREAT CARDIO

Cycling's versatility allows you to crank up the difficulty level once you've mastered a certain route or routine. In fact, experts urge you to challenge your body by adding resistance to your stationary bike or some hills to your road route as your workout plan progresses. Cycling can improve your overall endurance, fitness and cardiovascular health. It also tones and works all of your leg muscles, which will have a positive impact on day-to-day activities such as walking or climbing stairs.

LOW-IMPACT

Cycling is one of the few exercises that is easy on your joints and knees. It requires low-impact pedaling movements that can actually help alleviate pain from chronic conditions or arthritis. High-impact activities such as jogging can cause knee, ankle and shin pain because of the repetitive impact with the ground. Your feet never have to leave the pedals during cycling, making it an ideal activity for a joint-friendly workout.

BEAUTIFUL WORKOUT

One of the most unique aspects of cycling is the scenery that can accompany it. Unlike other sports that require a court or field, cycling can literally take you anywhere. Mountains, country roads, cityscapes and everywhere in between – cycling can open your eyes to beautiful views of the nation's most scenic locations, all while you get a great workout in the process.



Get Fitted for Your Bike

Steel vs. aluminum frames. Durability vs. speed. Standard vs. high-grade accessories. All are important factors when selecting a new bike.

But nothing is more crucial than selecting a bike that fits your body. A great-fitting bike means you will ride more comfortably, more efficiently and more relaxed. There are many options for figuring out your perfect fit, none more effective than visiting your local shop of professionals who are eager to help you capture the perfect cycling experience.

WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR

Professionals will generally look at your body, sitting style and stature to link you to the perfect bike. They may take a couple of body metrics to measure your body, including your inseam to determine your proper frame size. They may also ask you to sit on a variety of models. Be honest about how each model feels and how comfortable you would be taking it out on the streets or off-road. Your thoughts and feedback will help guide your purchase.

WHICH QUESTIONS TO ASK

Your bike dealer shouldn't be the only one asking the questions. Come prepared with a few queries of your own to make sure you get the most out of your fitting.

Maintenance: Before getting saddled with a model that requires more maintenance than you feel comfortable undertaking, ask about upkeep. How many tune-ups are recommended to keep the bike in top shape? Can you handle the maintenance yourself?

Guarantees: Does your bike shop guarantee the fitting? Once you've ridden your new bike for a couple of weeks, many shops will allow you to swap out certain parts that may be causing problems. They may also offer free adjustments, so be sure to ask about their guarantee policies.

Health Issues: Especially if you're looking to alleviate some pain from chronic issues or arthritis, you should ask your bike specialist to help find the best model for your health needs.





Tune It Up

So you just picked up your shiny new bike, and you're ready to hit the pavement.

Over the coming weeks and months, your new prized possession will need routine maintenance that you can perform yourself or leave to a trusted local mechanic. No matter how you decide to service your ride, it is important to stay on top of general maintenance if you want your bike to last long into the future.

TUNE IT UP

A long winter season means little or no riding, and it is important to make sure your ride is up to the challenge of an adventure-filled summer. Take your ride into your local bike shop to knock off the rust before you hit the trail. Mechanics will true the wheels, lube the chains and make other adjustments. Keeping the chain clean and lubricated is one of the best ways to keep your bike working well.

PROPER STORAGE

Did you leave your ride out in the elements over the winter? That's a big mistake that could cost you big bucks. Rain, snow and other adverse weather conditions can mean major repair costs come springtime. Mechanics may have to perform a complete overhaul to get your bike into riding shape. If you don't have the space to protect your investment, consider renting a storage unit or keeping it in a trusted friend's garage.

TIRE PRESSURE

Maintaining your tires can be the simplest – yet most often overlooked – act of responsible bike ownership. Keeping optimum air pressure levels can help make pedaling easier, protect your rims from damage, prolong tire life and reduce the risk of a flat. Fill up your tires at least once a week to avoid tire pressure problems. Many bike shops feature an air hose that customers can use to conveniently fill their tires.

Consider the Extras

Cycling is fun. And doing it in style is extra fun. Myriad products are on the market to help turn your ordinary bike into a tricked-out machine of beauty.

Some of the most eye-catching products can be just that on the roadways, though, so be sure to keep your ride's accessories within reason so it doesn't distract drivers.

COMMUTER BAGS AND MOUNTS

Riding your bike to work? Heading out on a long journey? Find a specialty bag that features multiple waterproof pockets for all of your devices and business papers. You can also find sleek frame mounts for affixing your bag, taking away the need for strapping extra weight on your back during your ride.

PHONE MOUNT KIT

These handy little kits mount directly on your handlebars, allowing you the convenience of following your path via GPS, answering the phone or changing the song on your playlist – all without having to reach into your pocket.

LIGHTED FRAMES AND TIRES

Many manufacturers specialize in the production of glow-in-the-dark frames or



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LED-laced tires. These features double as stylish and safety-driven, especially for night riding.

CHALK-TRAIL ADD-ONS

This accessory is for the child cyclists in your life. It is a sim-

ple attachment that hooks onto the back of the bike and contains sidewalk chalk, allowing riders to add a little artwork to the pavement.

FOLDABLE HELMETS

Wearing a helmet is defi-

nately the most responsible way to enjoy your ride, but it can also be a hassle to store your headpiece once you reach your destination. Foldable helmets shrink into about half the size and offer you a way to reduce the space required to store it.

BIKE SHELVES

These shelving units not only hold your bike, but also serve as beautiful wall art. Designed with a durable center unit for mounting your bike, these units also have space on top for displaying vases, books or decorative pieces.

Stay Safe on the Road

Yes, cycling is one of the best exercises you can participate in to stay healthy, build endurance and strengthen your muscles. But as more cyclists hit the roads and trails, safety is a paramount issue.

Bike injury and fatality rates in the United States are roughly 20 times those of the cycling-friendly countries of Western Europe, according to The League of American Bicyclists.

THE NUMBERS

The number of bicycle-related traffic deaths has been steadily on the rise, eliciting the call for more cycling traffic lanes and enhanced awareness of the issue. In 2011, 672 Americans died in bicycle accidents. This was up nearly 9 percent from 2010, according to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration. Most of these accidents occurred in collisions with motor vehicles.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Both cyclists and drivers deserve a safe commute, and remaining cognizant of your surroundings can help you achieve this goal. Especially in areas with no designated cycling routes, extra attention must be paid to ensure the safety of everyone sharing the road. Obviously, cyclists should always wear helmets and reflective gear, while drivers are urged to slow down as they approach cyclists and change lanes if traffic allows.



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GET INVOLVED

In addition to watching out for your own personal safety on the roads and paths, you can spread the message to

your friends and family members. Organizations such as People for Bikes (peopleforbikes.org) are focused on improving safety, bike lanes

and community support for cycling. The group has invested nearly \$10 million in grants, lobbying and support of national organizations and

events. Volunteering for or donating to like-minded organizations can help enhance the cycling experience for everyone involved.

Road Racer or Mountain Biker?

So you want to buy a bike, but you're not sure where to start. First things first. Where do you envision yourself riding?

Will you be taking your cycling to the streets, pedaling along paved roads and bike paths? Or will you be heading to the mountains, cycling through shallow streams and challenging landscapes?

There are also bike options for people looking for the occasional spin around the neighborhood. Many bike shops will offer free test rides to help you decide, and you should rely on the expertise of the shops' bike experts to guide you through the purchase decision. Doing so can help save you money and time, as well as the frustration of not ending up with the best bike for you.

Below are some of the specifications of road and mountain bikes. Once you decide the main function your bike will serve, you are ready to start looking into specific models.

ROAD BIKES

Experts will point you in this direction if you're looking for smooth transition from your stationary bike or spinning class. Road cycling is particularly healthy for people with poor joints or chronic pain, because most riding will be done on smooth, paved surfaces. If you're looking for speed, road bikes are generally your best option. With streamlined frames and skinny tires, most road models are aerodynamically designed to deliver higher speeds than their mountain-bike counterparts.

MOUNTAIN BIKES

If you're looking for adventure and durability all wrapped up in one package, mountain bikes are your answer. This option isn't for riding particularly fast, but more for jumping curbs and going off road. So, if you're planning on taking 20-mile trips with your friends, you will be likely left far behind on your mountain bike. But if you're looking at riding on a variety of surfaces – dirt paths, brick streets and sand – talk with your local dealer about finding the right mountain bike.



Ride Your Bike to Work

May is National Bike to Work Month, and what better way to ring in warmer temperatures than by hopping on your bike for your morning commute?

CARBON FOOTPRINT

Riding your bike even a couple of days a week can help decrease the amount of harmful emissions from your vehicle, especially if you drive a gas guzzler. According to a recent study by Bikes Belong, if people switched to bikes for half of their short trips, they'd create a societal health benefit of \$3.5 billion per year from the increase in air quality. That's a kickback that can help protect our environment and future generations for years to come.

CYCLE PREPARED

You will probably find that your co-workers are supportive of your cycling endeavor. It can be a great conversation-starter and maybe even encourage others to join your fitness routine. That is, if you remember these hygiene tips. Because not following them can start a different kind of conversation from your co-workers, one centered on your drenched shirt and unseemly odor.

OTHER TIPS

Avoid Overly Hot Days: Nothing brings out the sweat like a cycling workout in 90-degree weather. While great for burning calories, hot weather is not a recommended time for riding your bike to work.

Bring the Essentials: Even during the pleasant spring or fall weather, you are likely to work up a bit of a sweat during your commute. So don't forget a towel, deodorant and some cologne or perfume.

Get to Work Early: Arriving 15 to 20 minutes early will give you plenty of time to spruce up before your co-workers arrive.

