

Advice for Getting a Bike for New Adult Riders

Bike Style/Type: Most of our students do best with upright handlebars (so you're not leaning over too much), medium width tires, and an open/step-through frame. This is most commonly found on **hybrid bikes**. We teach on a class of bike called "**comfort bikes**". Some students can easily transition to **mountain bikes** (knobbier tires, straight bars, more leaned over) but many find it difficult and prefer the comfort of a more upright geometry. We do not recommend that any of our students go directly to a **road bike** (skinny tires, very leaning over, downturned handlebars).

Fit/Sizing:

Riding a bicycle that is the correct size and fits you well is probably the most important factor in how easy it is to ride your bike.

General: If the seat has to be all the way down, the bike is likely too big. If the seat has to be all the way up, the bike is likely too small.

Seat Height: Don't let the people in the bike store convince you to put your seat higher than you are comfortable with. As you learned to ride, your seat was raised higher and higher. When you graduated, you were probably able to sit on the seat and have the balls of your feet firmly on the ground. That's ok for now. As you get more comfortable riding, your seat can continue to go up until you reach the ideal height (knees slightly bent when your feet are on the pedals and the pedal is in the lowest position). There's a concern that you will hurt your knees if your seat is too low, but if you're not going 20 miles or more a day, you won't ruin your knees. It's more important to be able to reach the ground from the seat until you're good at getting on and off from a standing position.

Frame Size: Frame size varies across manufacturers and bike styles, sometimes measured in inches, centimeters, or standard sizing (XS, S, M, L, XL). Use the manufacturer's sizing chart to pick out your size; we recommend going on the smaller side. People under 5'2" often have the hardest time finding a frame that fits; we recommend trying the smallest frame available from the manufacturer.

Reach: You should be able to comfortably reach the handlebars and not feel like they are too far away.

Tire thickness: The thicker your tires, the more comfy the ride, but the harder you have to push. The skinnier the tires, the farther you will go for a given amount of push, but you will feel the bumps more.

Pedal-forward bikes: If you have limited knee mobility, a pedal-forward or flat-foot technology bike might be good for you. On these bikes, your legs can stretch forward rather than down, for example the Electra Townie.

Wheel size: Most likely someone under 5'3" will want to ride a 24" wheel bike, which are sometimes classified as a kids bike but are completely fine for shorter adults. Taller people will want 26" wheels, or hybrid size 700c which is basically 27" or even 27.5 like our new Cannondale.

Specific bikes:

Most bikes at "nice" bike stores cost around \$600-\$700+. Here are some bikes that we've had good success using with our students.

- Cannondale Adventure ("Sally Ride" in our fleet) is the most comfortable bike we've recently acquired. I got it at Cambridge Bicycles in May 2024.
- Specialized Expedition Low Entry ("White Cat", "Black Panther", etc) has been the most comfortable adult bike that we've used over the course of many years. These are what we mostly use at the bike school, except for with short adults. They are currently only available with a top tube but you may be able to find a used model with an open/low entry frame.
- Specialized Roll Low Entry ("Malala") is the new version of the Expedition; the main difference is that it has wider tires and may not be as comfy.
- Giant Liv Flourish ("Rekha") comes in different sizes, including for shorter riders, 5'3" or under
- Trek Verve Series: Susan rides a Verve 3 and we had a Verve 1 in the fleet, but it wasn't quite as comfy.

Other bikes that have been recommended to us are: Cannondale Treadwell, Breezer Uptown,, Giant Liv Sedona, Schwinn Fordham, Electra Loft, Trek FX, Specialized Crossroads, Univega Weekend Escape, Jamis Citizen.

More affordable bikes our students have found and liked: Hyper Commute Women's Comfort Bike (\$198 at Walmart), Retrospec Beaumont (\$270), a little bit affordable: Nishiki Tamarack (\$300 at Dick's Sporting Goods), Schwinn Trailway 700c/28 Hybrid (\$330 at Target) Gravity Swift 7 speed (\$300 ordered from Bikes Direct) (If you find an inexpensive bike you like, tell us, please. These prices are from June 2024).

Buying a bike

The Equipment section of our website lists all our bikes, so you can find out what size and model bike(s) you rode here. This may help get you started. A lot of the bikes in our fleet have been discontinued and are no longer being made.

Don't buy a bike without riding it, if you can help it. Try whatever you want, but don't buy something just because it's affordable, available, or you feel pressured into buying it. In general, we recommend going to your local bike shop - one that is easy for you to get to and where you feel welcomed and comfortable (and has a safe space for you to test out a bike!). The staff can help you and if you don't find anything you like or don't like the shop, go somewhere else!

If you buy a bike online, you will probably be able to sell it online, in case you don't like it. Keep in mind that bikes need to be assembled, if you buy them online, and your local bike store will charge labor costs for doing this. Also, if you buy a bike online, your local bike shop may have a surcharge for working on it if it's a brand that they don't normally sell.

Some students get cheaper bikes at department stores (i.e. Walmart, Target). Cheaper bikes are harder or impossible to fix and won't last as long. If your budget is limited and you want a brand new bike, Schwinn (available at Target) is the highest quality.

Otherwise, you can find a moderately high quality used bike for a reasonable price. Try looking on Facebook Marketplace and Craig's List (keep in mind with these two options that often nobody has safety checked the bike), Cambridge Used Bicycles, Bikes Not Bombs (Jamaica Plain), Dedham Bike, or Cycle Loft (Burlington). Play It Again Sports in Stoneham and Reading sell used bikes and take trade-ins. If you see a Specialized Expedition your size, grab it.

Lights - You might as well get lights right away, even if you doubt that you'll be riding at night. They don't cost much and vastly improve your safety, especially in rainy weather or at dusk..

Pads - If you want pads, the ones we prefer are Super Savers from Triple8.com. If your bones may be getting brittle, try to get used to wearing wrist guards.

If you eventually get going long distances, you may want a bike that is not a comfort bike. A few of our students have wished they had bought a more aggressive (leaning over) bike designed for long distances, but most of our students like comfort bikes. If you've purchased a comfort bike and now wish you'd bought a different style of bike, we might consider buying your comfort bike!

I wish this were easier. Good luck with it. Contact me if you have questions or want to report a bike you like.