



Roll Up to a Bicycle Skills Clinic

What Is A Bicycle Skills Clinic?

A bicycle skills clinic, sometimes called a bike rodeo, offers a chance for elementary school students and their families to learn and practice bike handling skills in a fun, safe, and encouraging atmosphere. During a bicycle skills clinic, students visit volunteers, teachers, or bicycle organization staff at activity stations set up with chalk and traffic cones. At each station, students learn how to bicycle safely and confidently.

Bicycle skills clinics range in size and scale. Some clinics are large community events with skills courses, safety demonstrations, games, and other activities, while others are smaller, requiring fewer volunteers and resources. Clinics may be set up on school grounds, at a park, on a closed off street, or at another community facility.

Organizing and Running a Bicycle Skills Clinic

Organizing a bicycle skills clinic is fun and rewarding. Beginning your preparations two months before your event will give you time to gather materials, plan, and promote your event.

Here are some simple steps for organizing and running your school's bicycle skills clinic:

Prior to the Event:

- Meet with school administrators, the PTA, families who walk or bike to school, bicycling organizations and stores, and law enforcement to schedule a date and to recruit volunteers.
- Find a location and gather materials. See below for what you will need.
- Advertise your event. Send flyers home with students, make announcements during class, and include information in newsletters and other communications with families. Make sure to specify what students need to bring (e.g. a helmet or their own bike).
- Talk to a local bike shop to see if they can help to check helmets or tune up bicycles.
- Figure out how you want to structure your event to make the stations flow well, encourage participation and learning, and track students' learning.



King Chavez Elementary School, California, after-school bike club KCicletas.

Photo by Francisco Contreras

Age Range and Skill Level

A bicycle skills clinic is intended for students who know how to ride a bike with or without training wheels. Make sure to specify the intended age group and what level of instruction will be provided to them. Some bicycle skills clinics can be adapted for teaching first time riders. Scoot bikes (bicycles without pedals) can be used to teach people of all ages how to ride a bike within a few hours.

Adaptive Bicycles

Make the clinic accessible for students of all abilities. Ask your city recreation department, neighboring schools, or local bicycle organization about borrowing adaptive bicycles and best practices for usage. For obtaining adaptive bicycles, contact AMBUCS Inc. [AMBUCS](#) provides Amtryke therapeutic tricycles to individuals unable to operate a traditional bike. Funding for adaptive bicycles is available through [Shriners](#) and [Kiwani](#), these organizations will donate funds to purchase adaptive equipment for youth with disabilities, including adapted bikes and other recreational equipment. For information on adaptive bicycles refer to [The Guide to Disability Cycling](#) or visit the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability \(NCHPAD\)](#).

The Day of the Event:

- Set up stations using chalk, cones, and other low cost temporary materials. See below for the materials that you will need.
- During the event, separate kids into groups based on bicycling experience and have them rotate through the stations. If kids will be arriving at the event at different times, you can use a first come, first served approach. Assign a volunteer or staff to provide instruction at each station. Keep track of each child's skill level at the stations. Consider giving students "passports" that are stamped after they successfully complete each station.
- Note: If students do not have their own bicycles or are not able to bring them to the event, borrow enough bicycles (from bicycle organizations, bike shops, or families) for 10 students to rotate through the stations. Divide your stations into those that require bikes and those that do not. While students are waiting to ride bikes, practice street safety skills such as right of way at a four way stop, recognizing and using crosswalks, and being alert and attentive.
- Provide families, teachers, and students with a [Safe Bicycling Tips](#) handout to take home after the bicycle skills clinic.
- Make it fun! Have a party afterwards to celebrate the students' successes. Give rewards for completion of the stations. Serve healthy snacks and raffle off donated prizes.

After the Event:

- Plan a follow-up ride or bike to school day event to continue practicing.
- Consider creating a permanent skills course by replacing chalk and cones with paint. Permanent courses on school blacktops can be used for multiple events and by students and community members after school or on the weekends.

What You Will Need

- Paved flat surface (parking lot, closed off street, or ball court)
- Cones, chalk, construction tape, tape measure
- Basic bike tools, bike pump, water, sunscreen, and a first-aid kit
- Cardboard signs and clipboards with instructions at each station
- Volunteers or staff: two or more per station and one photographer
- Bicycles (decide if students will bring their own or if a local bicycle organization can loan bikes for the day)
- Helmets (provide helmets for students that do not bring one)
- Spectator area for families to watch the students
- Bike safety handouts



Permanent skills course at Winship Middle School in Eureka, California.

Stations

The following are some basic stations you should consider including in your bicycle skills clinic. Each station focuses on a critical skill that kids need to be safe and responsible bicycle riders. Modify the stations to fit your settings and the age and ability of riders.

Safety stations:

- Gear check. Fit helmets, practice the ABC Quick Check, and check other gear.
- Safe biking behavior. Overview of safe biking behavior and traffic laws. Local law enforcement might lead this station.

Basic skills stations:

- Mounting and dismounting. Demonstrate and have kids practice how to get on their bikes, safely slow down, and get off their bikes in a controlled manner.
- Changing directions, turning in circles, tight turns, turning around. Set up cones, chalk lines, etc. to create obstacles for kids to navigate.
- Steering through tight spaces. Create a narrow street with cones and have kids practice controlling their bikes.
- Balance practice. Set up a straight stretch for kids to practice balance by riding slowly.

Traffic skills stations:

- Being aware of surroundings. Demonstrate scanning the road for cars and other hazards while not losing control of the bike. Ask kids to practice by riding in a straight line while checking in front and behind them.
- Stops and starts, intersection crossing, and right of way. Set up a mini-street with stop signs, driveways, and other things kids will encounter while biking. Practice controlled starting and stopping, safe behavior when approaching an intersection, and how to share the road with cars and people walking.

For details about how to set up each station and more information on organizing bicycle skills clinics, see [An Organizer's Guide to Bicycle Rodeos](#) and the [Safe Kids Worldwide Bike Rodeo Guide](#).