An Organizer's Guide to Bicycle Rodeos

Acknowledgements

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Bicycle Rodeos

A Guide to Running a Successful Bicycle Skills Event for Children

Introduction

A rodeo is a bicycle skills event which provides an opportunity for bicyclists to practice and develop skills that will help them to become better bicyclists and avoid typical crashes. Some rodeos are designed as large, municipal events with skills activities, exhibits and games, while others are much smaller in format, requiring a smaller number of volunteers. An evaluator provides immediate feedback to the participant in a positive manner (satisfactory; needs improvement). If the child has difficulty with a particular lesson, he or she has the chance to keep practicing. The goal of any bicycle rodeo is to provide an opportunity for the participants to learn, practice, and demonstrate their bicycle handling skills in a fun, noncompetitive atmosphere.

Many requests come to me for information about how to run a bike rodeo. On one hand, I'm thrilled that there's a trend away from simply showing a video, handing out a page from a workbook, or teaching hand signals to an assembly hall filled with an entire elementary school. On the other hand, participation in a poorly run rodeo will not do much more to advance the cycling skills of its participants than a matching question on paper will. While it's easy to organize a bad rodeo, it's not as easy as many think to do it right, and effectively.

This guide outlines a step-by-step approach to designing a successful bicycle rodeo in your community. Parents, members of community service organizations and teachers were in my mind as I wrote this: it's designed to help you show kids in local neighborhoods how to be safer on bikes.

We're going to start with a review of the basic principles that an effective program should encompass. The section on how to run a skills event offers guidelines for success. It involves a graduated approach to skills events; starting small and manageable, building upon success. Good luck!

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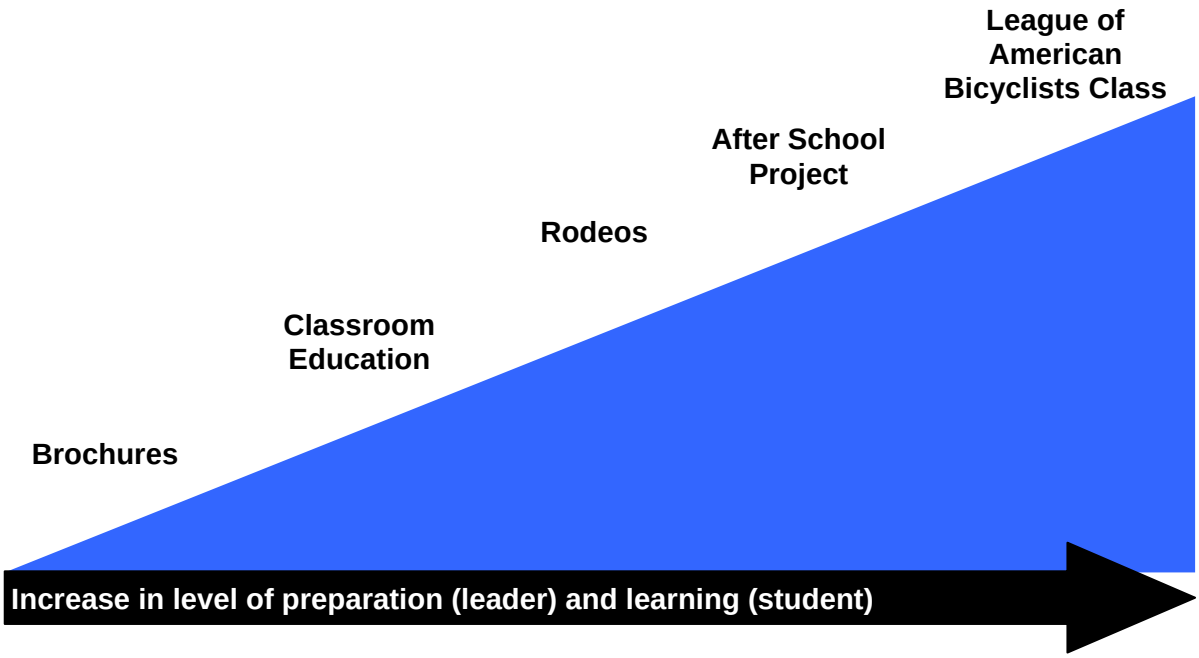
"Bicycling is more than balancing."

Fundamentals of an Effective Bicycle Education Program

ACTIVE LEARNING

Studies have shown that the more involved the learner is, the greater the chance that learning will actually take place. Too many of us have sat passively through a lecture one day, and then been unable to recall much more than the basics the next day. When we are engaged as a learner, we have a much greater chance of succeeding. Bicycling lends itself very well to active, hands-on, experiential learning.



For the sake of comparison, various delivery strategies have been included on this graph. As you progress from left to right, each delivery strategy is more engaging on behalf of both the teacher and the learner.

The least amount of active learning occurs when only brochures are handed out (or a video is watched). Classroom activities that address the appropriate traffic concepts are good, but entail a similarly low level of active learning. Bicycle rodeos are on-bike activities in controlled environments and involve active learning. After-school programs have an opportunity to include even more active learning, such as on-street bicycling. Courses offered by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) also offer:

1. training in bike handling skills;
2. on-street experiences to develop confidence in traffic;
3. nationally certified instructors.

SKILLED INSTRUCTORS

Adults are role models; the best teacher is one who teaches by example. Have you been on your bicycle lately? Are you confident with the basic bicycling skills? Many events are initiated by non-cycling adults; that's fine, but it's **imperative that skilled cyclists are a part of the program**. Your local bike club may be interested in participating. The New York Bicycling Coalition www.nybc.net and the League of American Bicyclists www.bikeleague.org can provide a list of skilled cyclists and certified cycling instructors. Many of the skills are easier to teach with someone who can demonstrate. Besides, if you really don't know what you're talking about, the kids will see right through you.

Consider developing a program that involves parents and other community adults as participants. By promoting bicycling with youth and adults, you're promoting a great way to get exercise and quality family time.

BASED ON CRASH DATA[1]

An effective program addresses the behaviors that most often result in crashes. By developing the correct behavior, cyclists reduce their chance of being injured or killed. Teach participants the primary bicycle handling skills and traffic concepts that will help them to avoid the most common types of crashes.

The three big causes of car/bike crashes for kids are:

- Riding out of a driveway without stopping
- Failing to stop for stop signs
- Suddenly swerving without looking back

Other common causes include riding on the wrong side of the street, and riding at night without proper lighting and reflective clothing. We also know that a vast majority of crashes and serious injuries don't involve cars; the cyclist simply loses control of the bike and crashes to the ground.

"Bicycle education is more than a shove down the driveway."

KIDS ARE NOT SMALL ADULTS[2]

All too often, kids are blamed for the traffic crashes in which they are involved. They are labeled careless or lacking in caution. To the contrary, young children act in a manner determined by their age and degree of development. It is essential to understand the developmental characteristics that influence a child's behavior as a bicyclist.

Specifically, children:

- Have a narrower field of vision than adults, about 1/3 less.
- Cannot easily judge a car's speed and distance.
- Assume that if they can see a car, its driver must be able to see them. However, children are easily hidden from view by parked cars and other objects.
- Cannot readily tell the direction a sound is coming from.
- May be impatient and impulsive.
- Concentrate on only one thing at a time. This is likely not to be traffic.
- Have a limited sense of danger.
- Often mix fantasy with reality.
- Imitate the (often bad) behavior of others, especially older children and adults.
- Are concrete (versus abstract) thinkers and do not extrapolate well from one situation to another.

Organizing a Rodeo

ORGANIZE A PLANNING COMMITTEE

Contact local service organizations, parent-teacher associations, traffic safety board, the health department, Cooperative Extension, bike shop owners, cycling clubs, your local law enforcement agency and the media. Make a list of all the tasks that need to be accomplished and turn it into a planning timeline document.

For the day of the event, you will need several volunteers. You must have at least one person for each station who is familiar with the purpose of the rodeo and that specific station. Most stations will be difficult to manage without extra help. Some tasks can be handled by last-minute recruits (such as parents), who can assist the instructors or serve as evaluators at each station. This allows each instructor to actively direct the cyclists. These recruits may also help move kids from station to station to avoid long lines.

Don't forget to seek the involvement of your local law enforcement agency. In the past, police have been invited to inspect or register bicycles at rodeos. With more and more agencies forming units with police on bicycles, you may find them an increasingly valuable resource. A police cyclist who has participated in a police cyclist training course is a highly skilled cyclist, and someone you can look to for first hand information on cycling skills.

A bike mechanic is an asset to have at the inspection station. Sometimes local bike shops or your local bike club will provide a person with some tools and cycling expertise.

CHOOSE A LOCATION AND DATE

Hold the event at a convenient playground, gymnasium or parking lot. Hard-surfaced, level, and traffic-free areas are best. Choose the site (make sure you get permission to use it) and date. Ideally, your location should provide the opportunity to run at least a portion of the course on a street. Check with local officials; they may be able to temporarily close a street to traffic.

PUBLICITY

Ideally, this event is held in conjunction with other community or school activities. This helps support the educational goals of the program and enhances your publicity efforts. Don't forget to promote it in the local newspapers, radio and television. Note: It may be necessary to require an RSVP for children wishing to attend, preventing parents from just dropping their kids off and leaving. *See the appendix for sample publicity pieces.*

FUNDING

Enhance your program and save some money. Find sponsors willing to cover the cost of promotional materials and supplies, ribbons, prizes or certificates, and refreshments. Be sure to check with your local bicycle club about providing insurance coverage offered by the League of American Bicyclists.

HELMETS

In New York State, all persons between the ages of 1 and 14 are required to wear an approved safety helmet while on a bicycle. (Children less than one year of age are prohibited from riding on a bicycle.) It is highly recommended that bicyclists of all ages wear Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) approved helmet while bicycling. Local bike shops and health departments are generally aware of special programs that could be set up to offer helmets for very reasonable prices.

AWARDS, PRIZES, REFRESHMENTS

You may decide to give certificates of participation to all who complete the course. *See the appendix for sample certificate and budget.*

Often, organizers choose to award several prizes (reflective clothing, helmets) instead of one large prize (a bike). Choose not to identify just one "winner" for the day, but instead hold a random drawing to include everyone who completes the course.

It's not always practical to expect everyone to stay for the entire event, making it difficult to address the participants as a group. One option is to present certificates and prizes later, in conjunction with a school assembly.

DO: Portray everybody as a success

DON'T: Designate one winner or one large prize

A well-fed volunteer is a happy one. Consider having coffee, juice, donuts, etc., available. Other ideas include providing beverage and popcorn for the participants. Local commercial establishments may be willing to contribute.

PLANNING AND DESIGNING THE COURSE

How you design your course depends upon the age range of the participants, how many volunteers you think you will have, and the resources you can come up with to make it as realistic as possible. **Different programs for different ages!**

Basic event **ages 5 + up**	**Intermediate event** **ages 9 + up**	**Advanced event** **ages 10 + up**
• Registration and inspection (1) • Bike and helmet fit, start and stop (2 & 3) • Scanning (4) • Balance – snail race	Components to the basic plus: • Rock dodge (5) • Demon driveway (6) • Crazy crossroad (7)	All of the previous plus: • Put it all together (8) • A section of street closed to traffic for a realistic component

If this is your first event, it may be wise to start with the elements outlined in the basic event. The basic event is particularly appropriate for the younger bicyclists (usually ages 5-8) just learning how to ride a bike and is relatively easy to set up. You'll be able to inspect their bikes, make necessary adjustments for a good fit, and teach them how to start, stop and how to scan.

The elements in the intermediate event are appropriate for an older participant (age 9 or so); they should be able to quickly demonstrate proficiency with the elements of the basic design and be challenged by the intermediate elements. The advanced event provides an opportunity for the kids to practice in more realistic settings.

Be prepared for a mix in the age range and skill levels of the participants. The success of the program is based upon the adult's ability to work individually with each participant, develop a sense of their skill level and take them one step further along the learning curve.

A warm-up pit can provide some diversion in your course. The person in the pit can work with those needing special attention. Those less adept at balance and control could work on the serpentine and slow race. The pit gives them a chance to fool around and release some energy.

Make roadways with a minimum of 10-foot lanes. It should look as much like a real road as possible. (Park cars along the roadway as visual hazards.) Children will learn more quickly with a roadway that is full-size and realistic than with one where they have to pretend. Imagination is wonderful, but it's no substitute for reality.

Keep traffic flow in mind. As you set up the course, note carefully where each station starts and finishes. You may find it necessary to limit access to the course by using natural boundaries or putting a ribbon around the perimeter.

TIP

If you have limited space, time and support, you might find consider expanding upon the Crazy Crossroads station 7. By setting up an intersection you can have a lot of meaningful fun with a group of cyclists. They can practice starts, stops, yielding to others, making turns, going straight. Add a crosswalk and have pedestrians, too.

Conclude with some sort of wrap up for the participants, i.e. a group picture, certificates, or prizes.

ORIENTATION

Each person should be very clear on the purpose of the station that they will manage, as well as being familiar with the activities taking place elsewhere. Volunteers should be oriented to the objectives and procedures of the stations prior to the day of the event. Use the following station descriptions to orient the

volunteers, and give each one a photocopy of the description of the station they will be operating. After the course is laid out, review each station with the entire cast of volunteers.

WRAP-UP

Be sure you have follow-up publicity and write thank-you letters. See page 27 for an evaluation form. Make notes on what worked well and what you would like to improve upon for the next time.

SUPPLIES

For course setup:

- tape measure or roller tape (a wheel)
- masking tape, chalk, traffic cones, ½ tennis balls, surveyor's ribbon, or some other means of marking the course

For the stations”

- pencils and clipboards
- basic tools, tire pump for the inspection station
- cardboard cars for stations [2, 3, 4, 6]
- cardboard bush or fence for station [2]
- stop sign (cardboard or real) for station [3]
- drain grate (cardboard, carpet swatch, door mat) for station 6

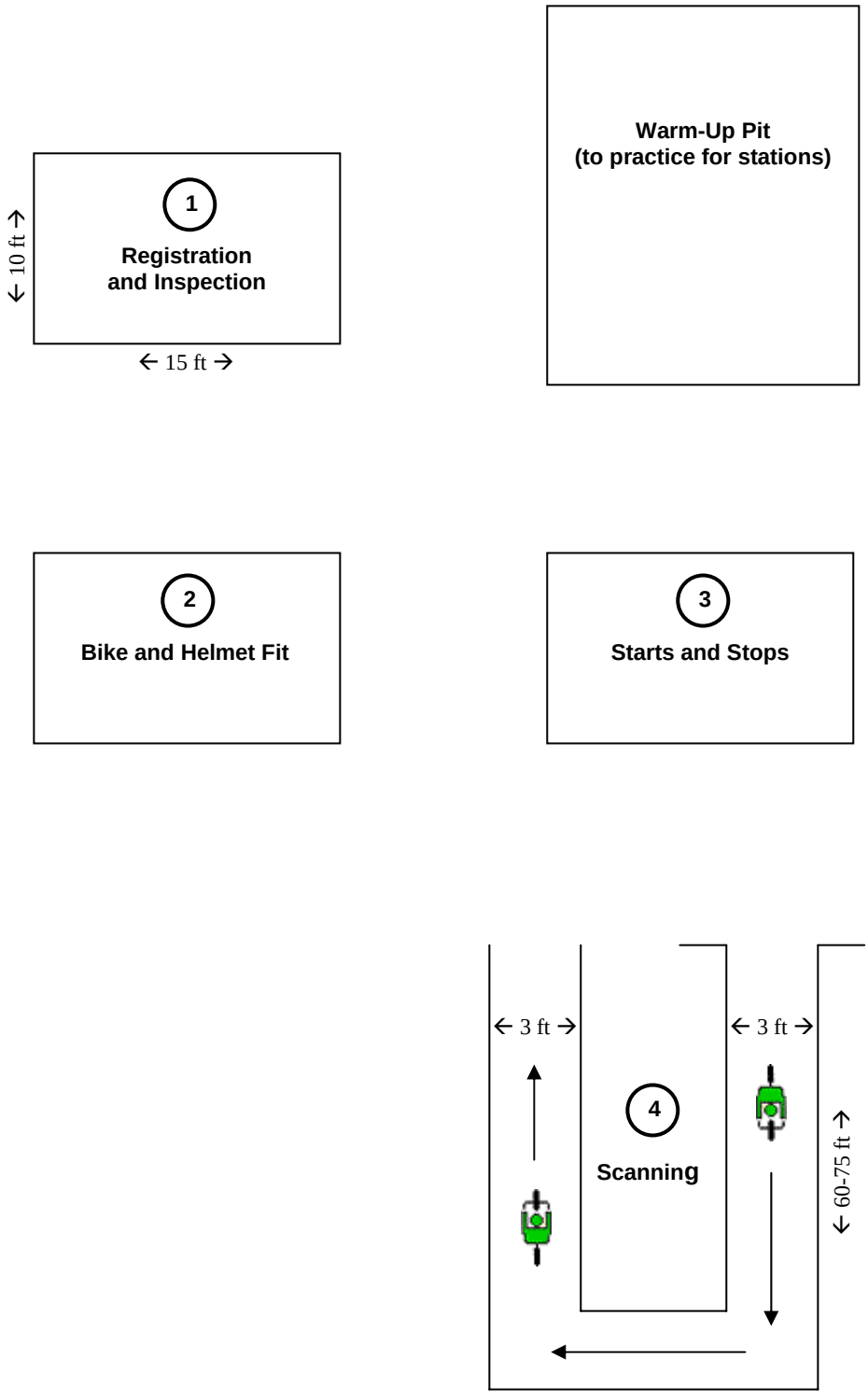
For general use:

- tables for registration
- chairs
- name tags
- marking pens
- signs to identify the stations
- certificates, hang tags
- refreshments
- educational information (brochures)

TIP

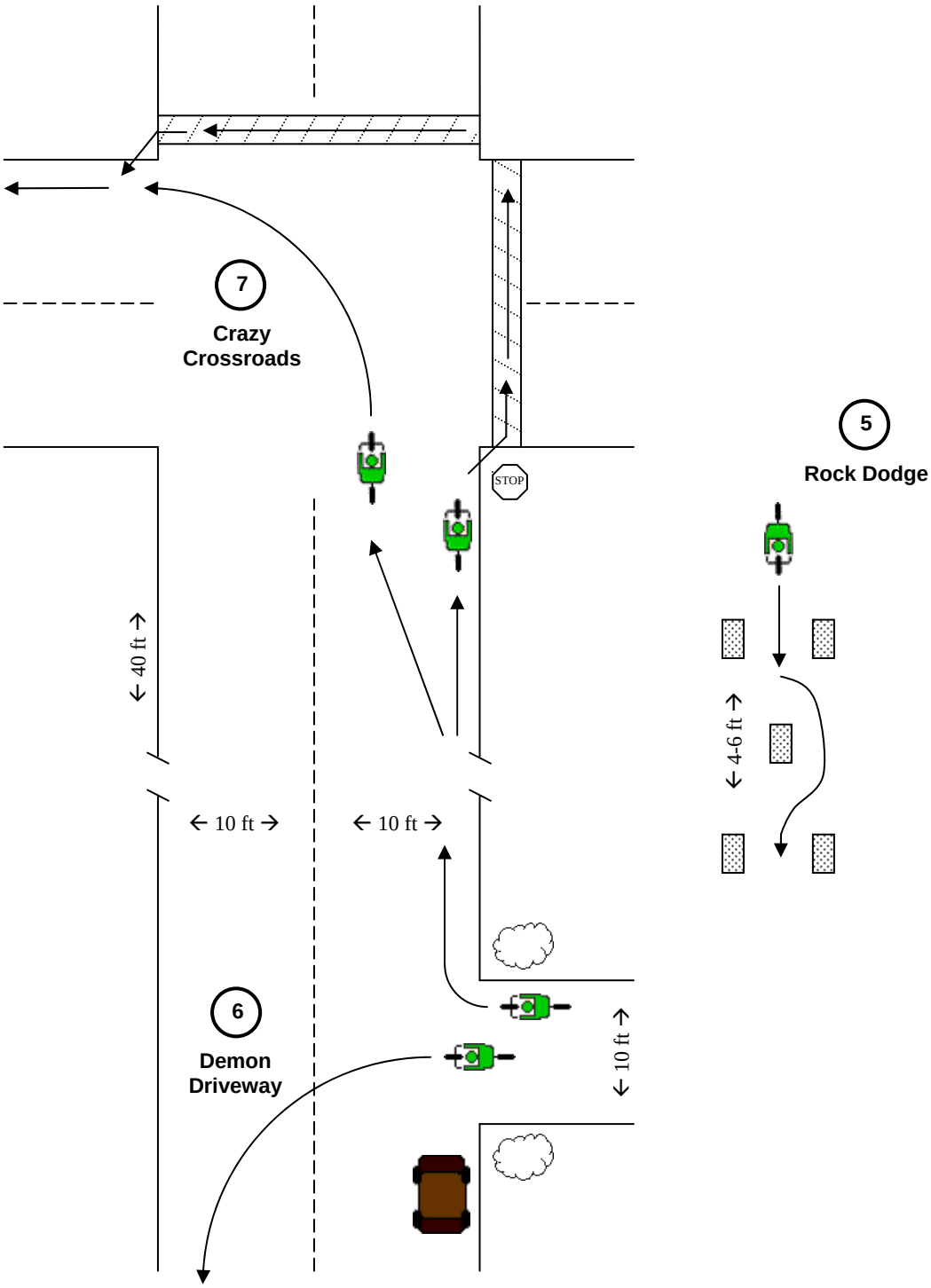
If you're interested in streamlining the process of securing materials needed to run a rodeo, you may want to assemble a "kit" of the specialty items (especially if this will become an annual event).

Sample Basic Course Diagram



Sample Intermediate Course Diagram

(in addition to elements of the Basic Course Diagram)



Station One: Registration and Inspection

OBJECTIVE

Check the mechanical safety and fit of the bicycle before riding.

BACKGROUND

Unfortunately there is no documentation on the frequency or severity of crashes that occur as a result of riding a bicycle in poor operating condition. Nevertheless, crashes due to mechanical failure are clearly avoidable.

MATERIALS

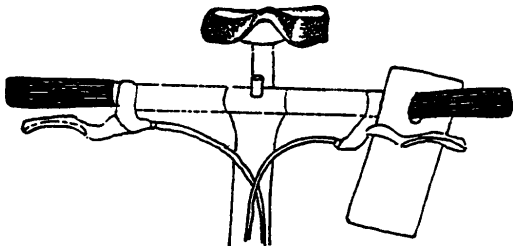
- station sign
- bike inspection forms
- tire pump
- rags, lubricants
- wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers

QUESTIONS

Ideally, you should try to engage the bicycle owner in a conversation about how important it is to keep his or her bike maintained.

What happens if screws and bolts are loose? How do they get loose? What kind of brakes does your bike have? What could happen to your brakes that would cause them not to work? What happens if your brakes don't work? Why do your handlebars need to be tight? Where do you adjust your seat?

PROCEDURE



Look over the bike, checking: security of seat and handlebars, adequate brakes, loose or rusty chain, and tire inflation. Use a hanging tag inspection form as a guide, making notes as you go along. This is an opportunity for the child and volunteer to work together in a hands on experience. Encourage the child (if time allows) to go through the inspection form with the volunteer so he or she can be able to identify an unsafe bicycle.

If you have a bike registration program with a local law enforcement agency, be sure all bikes are/get registered.

TIP

This station can turn into a bottleneck, unless you have enough volunteers.

Station Two: Bike and Helmet Fit

OBJECTIVE

Check to insure that both the bicycle and helmet properly fit the rider.

BACKGROUND

Nobody should attempt to ride a bicycle that is too big or too small for them. Misfit bikes are hard to handle. This is particularly challenging when dealing with a growing child whose needs change faster than the seasons. Hand-me down bikes from older siblings or garage sales may fit the pocketbook, but not always the rider.

One of the most common adjustments is the height of the seat. For beginners, it's best for the child to have feet flat on the ground when seated on the bike. As their confidence and skills develop, their seat should be raised so the knee is just slightly bent when their foot is on the pedal.

Helmets help prevent head injuries; bicyclists of all ages benefit from the protection of a properly fitted helmet.

MATERIALS

- Tools for seat adjustments

PROCEDURE

Fit:

Have the child straddle the bike. He or she should be able to stand flatfooted over the bike with at least an inch of clearance above the top tube. The rider must be able to adequately reach the pedals while seated (slight bend in knees).

If the seat is too low, it is best not to raise the seat to the desired height all at once. If it's way too low, try raising it an inch or so, explaining to the rider that once they're used to the new height, they should get the seat raised a bit more. Knees should not touch the handlebars.

If the bike is outfitted with hand brakes, check to see that the cyclist can properly grasp the brake. Do they know which is the front brake? Rear brake?

Most helmets come with sizing pads to help insure a proper fit. Adjust the straps so the helmet sits level and snug.

Station Three: Starts and Stops

OBJECTIVE

To teach cyclists how to start and stop their bicycles safely and efficiently

BACKGROUND

Starting and stopping are skills that are often overlooked; we seem to think that kids will just figure it out. The result can be poorly controlled cowboy starts, skidding stops or even crashes. Now is the time to introduce safer, more efficient maneuvers.

PROCEDURE

Starts:

Demonstrate how to get started; allow space for everyone to try it. Straddle the bicycle with both feet on the ground; do not sit on the seat. Raise the right pedal to the ten o'clock position (see photo); this provides power to start. Put your right foot on the pedal (left foot still on the ground). Push off with the left foot and at the same time stand on the raised pedal; do not pedal after pushing off. Coast to a stop while standing on the pedal that has been pushed down. When the cyclists are comfortable with this procedure, have them place their second foot on the other pedal, their backside on the seat and keep pedaling.

The right pedal is at the 2 o'clock position. The left pedal can also be used to push off, depending on the rider's preference.

Stops:

Discourage stops that are executed by dragging feet. For coaster brake bikes, make sure the rider knows how to pedal backward to apply pressure that stops the bike. For hand brakes, make sure the rider squeezes the brake levers evenly with both hands. They need to know that using only one brake is not the best way to stop and can be dangerous (pitching over or skidding out of control). Hand brakes are not the best choice for small children.

How to stop and dismount a bicycle:

Slow down by using the brakes. As the bike nears a stop, slide off the seat and put your weight on a pedal in the "down" position. Take your other foot off of the pedal and prepare to place it on the ground when you're going slowly enough. If you're using hand brakes, be sure and keep pressure on the brake levers.

Station Four: Scanning

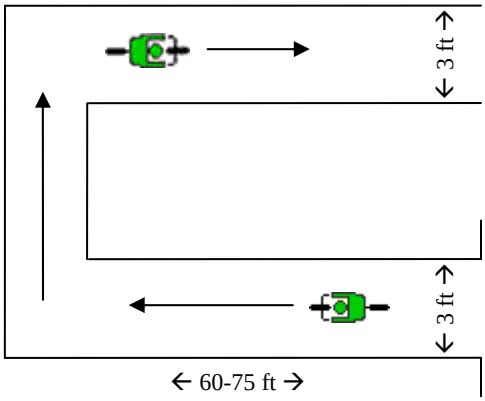
OBJECTIVE

Teach cyclist to look behind for traffic without swerving or falling.

BACKGROUND

Sudden swerves and left hand turns without looking are major causes of crashes. Children must learn to scan while not deviating from their path of intended travel.

DIAGRAM



MATERIALS

- station sign
- cardboard "car"

QUESTIONS

Why do you need to look behind you when you're bicycling? (to see cars) Other points to discuss include the fact that scanning is more important than giving hand signals, and that the natural tendency is to swerve left when scanning behind.

PROCEDURE

Send participant through the course first. Ask them to concentrate on staying in a straight line. For the less experienced, this may be a big challenge. On the second run through the course, tell them you are going to call their name (or say “look”) and they are to look behind and tell you whether or not there is a car coming by saying "no car" or "car." Hold the cardboard car sign in front of you when there is a car coming and to your side when there is no car, as shown in the glossary. (If you’re short on signs, you can hold your hands high over your head or down to your sides.) Stay about ten feet behind the cyclist. On the third run (if they've demonstrated proficiency), ask them to scan, and then signal.

Station Five: Rock Dodge

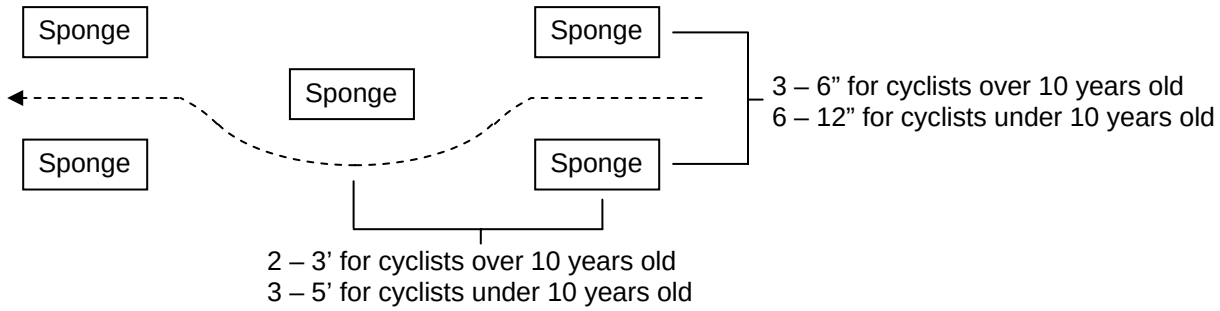
OBJECTIVE

Teach cyclists control and balance, and how to avoid hazards while riding.

BACKGROUND

Cyclists often fail to notice roadway hazards before it is too late. For every reported bicycle/vehicle crash, there are between seven and ten crashes with the pavement that require medical attention. Children either fail to notice a hazard, notice a hazard too late, or, in an attempt to avoid a hazard, they swerve too far, lose control and crash, or end up in traffic.

DIAGRAM



Moist sponges (not to scale in this drawing) work very well as markers. They don't blow away readily and don't pose a hazard if a cyclist runs over one of them.

MATERIALS

- station sign
- ½ tennis balls, bean bags or sponges for obstacles
- drain grate (optional)

QUESTIONS

What kinds of hazards do you find while bicycle riding? (glass, rocks, drain grates, pot holes, etc.)

Why do you need to be careful? (to avoid falls, flat tires, or ending up in the path of a car)

Discuss that it is important to avoid hazards without swerving.

PROCEDURE

Children are to ride straight toward the object and steer around it at the last moment. They should steer by turning the handlebars first one way (to avoid the

object), then turning back the other way to put the bike back in the intended line of travel. The biggest mistake people make with this exercise is not going fast enough toward the obstacle, or making the maneuver too slowly. It is designed to simulate a situation where a cyclist is traveling at a good speed down the roadway and suddenly encounters an obstacle. It happens fast, and can't be practiced at a snail's pace. The placement of pairs of sponges close together is designed to make sure the cyclist doesn't simply make a big swerve around the "rock."

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Does the front wheel avoid the hazard?
- Was there quick turning action?

TIP

Set up two courses side-by-side with different spacing between the sponges to handle two proficiency groups.

Station Six: Demon Driveway

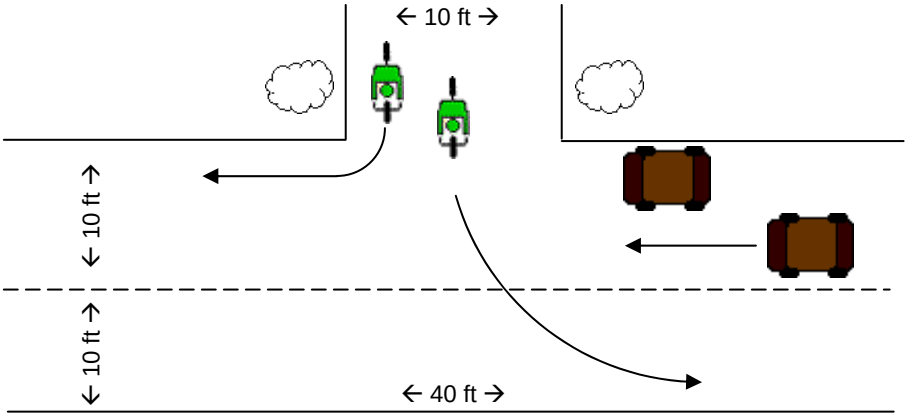
OBJECTIVE

Teach children to stop at the end of their driveway and look both ways to determine if it is safe before turning onto the street.

BACKGROUND

Most young bicyclists that are seriously injured or killed ride out into the path of an oncoming car. Children become accustomed to not having much traffic on residential streets. They ride out from their driveway without looking because they don't expect traffic. Visual obstructions are often a contributing factor. Children should be taught to always stop and look for traffic before entering a street.

DIAGRAM



MATERIALS

- station sign
- cardboard "car"
- chairs or other means to hold stop sign (optional)
- two real cars or bushes for sight obstructions (optional)

QUESTIONS

How many of you ride your bicycle into the street from your driveway? Do you ever stop at the end of the driveway?

Why is it important to stop at the end of the driveway? (to look for traffic) Why might a motorist be unable to see you? (obstacles, not looking your way)

Have participants think about their own driveways and some of the things in the street that will block their vision.

PROCEDURE

Many times young people ride out and forget to look for traffic and pedestrians. Explain that they should pretend this is their driveway. They are to come to the end of the driveway, stop, and look left, right and left again for traffic, wait for no traffic and then turn onto the street. Generally, this is a right turn for the less experienced and a left turn for the more experienced.

A power takeoff occurs when the cyclist prepares for takeoff by positioning a pedal in the ten o'clock position. This allows for quick momentum and minimal hesitation when the coast is clear. Traffic conditions can quickly change, so a fumble at the takeoff can result in a hazardous situation.

Cyclists should stop at the mouth of the driveway and check for traffic. The "car" holders will be changing the traffic often and randomly (holding the car up means traffic; to their side means no traffic). If there was traffic the first time they looked, make sure they look again to make sure there is no traffic. The cyclist should proceed onto the street when it is safe.

Children should be taught to walk their bicycles from their garages to the end of the driveway. This removes the temptation to continue riding out into the road without first stopping and checking for traffic.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Do they stop at the end of the driveway where they can see, and be seen by traffic?
- Do they look left, right, and left?
- Prepare for a power takeoff?
- If there was traffic the first time, do they look left, right, left again?
- Did they end up on the right-hand side of the roadway?

Station Seven: Crazy Crossroads

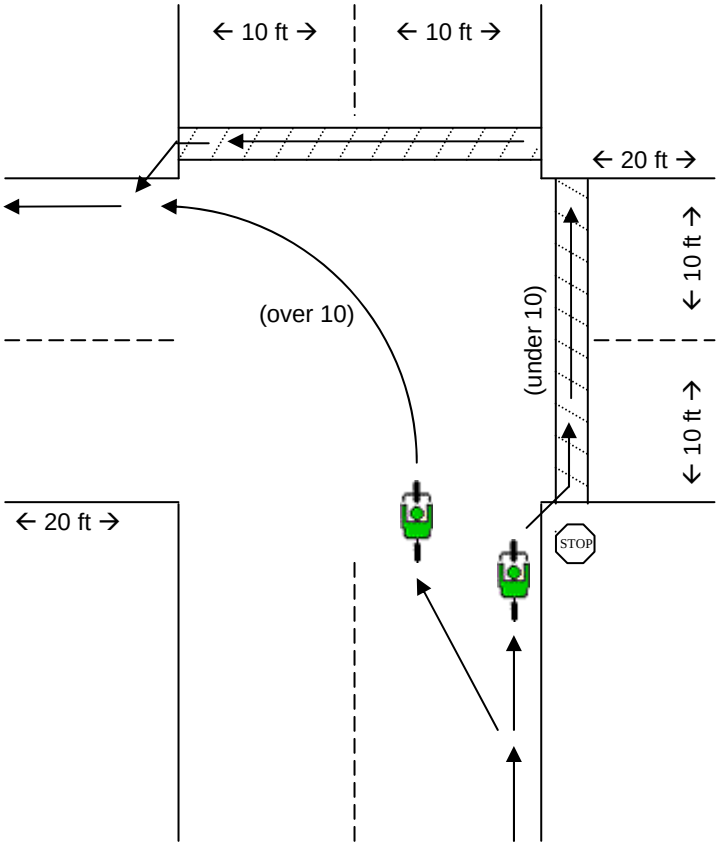
OBJECTIVE

Teach cyclists to stop at stop signs; wait for traffic; look in both directions; position pedal for a power takeoff; and go when there is no conflicting traffic.

BACKGROUND

Nationwide, running stop signs is the number one cause of injury-producing bicycle /car crashes for children. Children too often don't think through the risk involved in not stopping at an intersection, or the importance of scanning in all directions for oncoming traffic. They should learn to negotiate intersections safely by stopping, scanning for traffic, being seen, and signaling, if necessary, before going through an intersection.

DIAGRAM



TIP

If you have limited space, time and support, you might find consider expanding upon the Crazy Crossroads station. By setting up an intersection you can have a lot of meaningful fun with a group of cyclists. They can practice starts, stops, yielding to others, making turns, going straight. Add a crosswalk and have pedestrians, too.

MATERIALS

- station sign
- cardboard "car"
- stop sign
- chair or other means to hold stop sign
- two real cars for sight obstruction (optional)
- a pedestrian crossing the street (optional)

QUESTIONS

- What is an intersection?
- What might be in the way to block your view? (bushes, cars, signs)
- What might block you from the view of an oncoming motorist? (same)
- Why should you stop at all stop signs and red lights?

PROCEDURE

As cyclists approach the stop sign, they should check sidewalks and crosswalks for pedestrians. Cyclists should stop and wait behind the "stop line" if anyone is about to cross. The cyclist should then pull far enough forward to get a good view of traffic, put one pedal in the proper position for a power takeoff, wait until it is clear, signal and cross. Remind each rider that's it's not safe to just follow a friend, but to look for traffic to decide if it's safe to go.

Less experienced cyclists may be challenged by a straight-through maneuver or instructed how to walk the left turn using the crosswalks. The more experienced cyclists should be challenged to perform a left hand turn as they go through the intersection.

Proper roadway position is very important for cyclists. Too often, cyclists find themselves too far to the right on the roadway to be seen or to make a safe maneuver.

Send the cyclist through the intersection with instructions to go straight or make a turn.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Do they stop in the right place?
- Do they move to where they can see and be seen?
- Do they look left, right, and left?
- Do they signal?
- Do they position themselves for a power takeoff?

Station Eight: Putting It All Together

OBJECTIVE

To provide an opportunity for participants to demonstrate the skills presented in stations 2 through 7.

BACKGROUND

Participants benefit from practicing skills necessary to effectively deal with assorted roadway situations.

MATERIALS

Assorted cardboard cars, stop signs, etc., depending on what you can set up.

PROCEDURE

Take advantage of the most natural road environment possible. Consider a portion of a long driveway or a section of a street (temporarily blocked from traffic). Use natural objects whenever possible (real cars, stop signs etc.). Be sure you include as many of the following as possible:

- stop sign
- intersection, driveway
- left and right hand turn
- scanning
- hazards (sponges, pylons, "drain grates")
- sight obstructions (cars, bushes, fences, dumpsters)
- parked cars

Explain to participants that they will have a chance to "put together" all of their bicycling skills. Look over each hang tag to note any special comments. This will be confusing and not meaningful for the younger, less-experienced participants.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- looking left, right, and left
- riding through a hazard that should have been avoided
- riding too close to parked cars
- improperly executed turns
- power takeoffs
- scanning techniques
- spotting and avoiding hazards
- signaling

Glossary

CARDBOARD CAR

A hand-held prop, usually made of cardboard or foam core, with a drawing of a vehicle. (Used to simulate traffic.) When the car holder has the cardboard car at her side, it means there is no traffic. When it is held in front of her, it means there is traffic approaching. (Patterns are in the appendix.)

EMERGENCY STOP[3]

In an attempt to stop quickly, the cyclist applies both brakes while moving back on the bike and getting low. This position lowers the rider's center of gravity and puts more weight on the rear wheel, both of which help keep the rider from flying over the handlebars.

HAND SIGNALS

Cyclists are required by law to indicate their intent to turn by using hand signals. A left turn signal is made by extending the left arm. A right turn can be made by either bending the left arm up at the elbow or extending the right arm. (Point in the direction you want to go!) When working with children, first make sure they can handle a bicycle and feel comfortable taking one hand away from the handlebars before they attempt to make a turn signal. They should also first learn to scan.

HANG TAG

A tag that will hang from the handlebars of each participant's bicycle. Includes space for notes about the bike's inspection and comments about the cyclist's performance at each station (sample in appendix).

LANE POSITION AT AN INTERSECTION[4]

A cyclist's position on the roadway when making a maneuver through an intersection. A common error among cyclists is to be too far to the right and, thus, not be seen by a motorist. If a cyclist makes a left hand turn from the right curb, she is at great risk of being hit by a motorist (oncoming or from behind). Finally, it's very important for all bicyclists to remember that walking a bike through the crosswalks at an intersection that they're uncomfortable cycling across is always an option.

POLICE CYCLIST

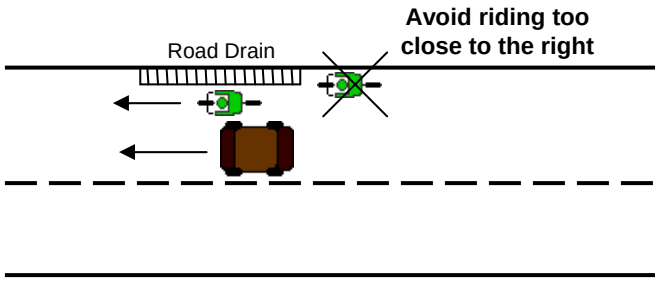
Officer trained to use a bicycle while on duty. These officers have developed proficiency in both bicycle handling skills and working with the community.

POWER TAKEOFF

A fast, efficient start-up maneuver. Straddle the bike with one foot on a pedal placed in about the ten o'clock position. Start by pushing down with that foot and have second foot ready for the second pedal. Sit on the seat and continue pedaling.

ROADWAY POSITION[4]

Refers to the cyclist's position on the roadway. The law states that a cyclist should bicycle as far to the right as is safe, or practicable. A common error among cyclists is to ride too far to the right where they may hit a curb or don't have enough room to maneuver around a hazard (pothole, debris, drain grate). A cyclist positioned too far to the right is less visible to motorists.



ROCK DODGE

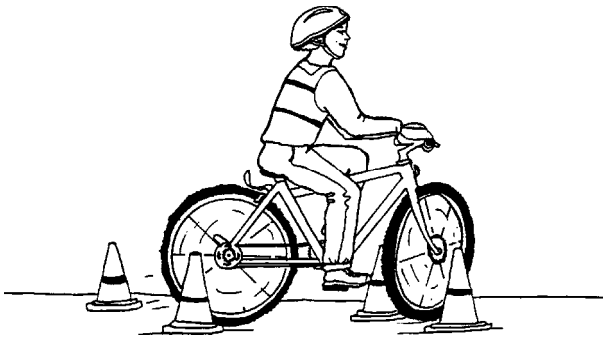
Name given to a technique designed to teach cyclists how to avoid roadway hazards (e.g., rocks, pot holes, drain grates, etc.) without swerving wildly, perhaps into traffic.

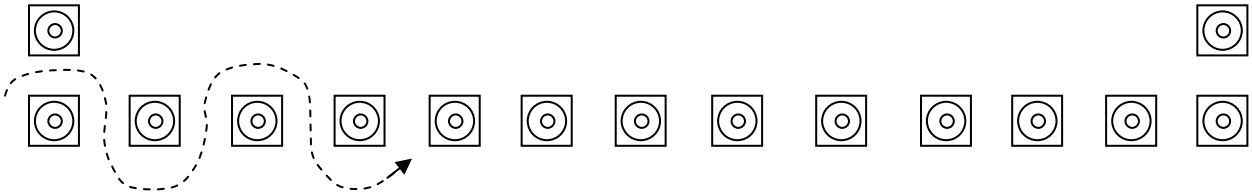
SCAN

The technique of looking around for traffic, especially behind you. Cyclists must learn to think to look for traffic, and must be able to look behind without swerving from their line of travel – into traffic.

SERPENTINE OR SLOLOM

A skill building exercise which develops a cyclist's coordination and balance. The course is usually set up with traffic cones placed four to six feet apart; the cyclist maneuvers through and around them.





This figure shows an aerial view of cone placement for a sample serpentine course. The dotted line represents the path of the cyclist.

SIDEWALK

A place for people to walk, and for only the very youngest of cyclists to be riding. Once cyclists are about 10 years old and have developed some basic handling skills, they are generally safer on the street. Sidewalks have a number of hazards for fast moving cyclists, such as pedestrians, driveways, and side streets.

SLOW RACE

The race course is approximately 75 feet long, with one-foot wide lanes. Contestants start the race together, and the last one across the finish line wins—no weaving or placing a foot on the ground. This helps cyclists hone their low speed balance skills.

WRONG-WAY RIDING

A cyclist traveling against the flow of traffic, usually on the left side of the road. Besides being illegal, this action is especially hazardous at intersections.

Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to set up a valuable learning experience for the youth of your community. We never know when we've passed on a skill or modified a behavior that changes someone’s life. We don’t always hear about the difference we make. Sometimes it takes years for our lesson to really sink in; that’s the magic of working with young people. You have given the gift of safe bicycling to all who participated. It’s a gift of health, a gift for life.

With any luck, your event had only a few glitches, everyone learned something about bicycling skills, had fun, and the organizers are making notes for improvements to next year's event. This guide has only been able to serve as a starter for you, and I hope it has given you some good ideas. The possibilities for making a bicycle safety event fun and exciting are limited only by the creativity of those involved. What changes would you like to incorporate next time? Be sure to make notes on the evaluation form.

Once again, you’re taking the time and interest to get involved in this very important safety program is much appreciated.

Rodeo Evaluation

Overall Assessment.
Did you achieve the goals you established?
How many participants?
What went well?
Not so well?

Planning Committee.
Enough people?
The right ones?
Who/what to add for next year?

Location and date.
Enough space?
Could you provide a realistic environment?
Any conflicts with other events?

Publicity.
Timing?
Did you get the coverage you wanted/needed?
What could you do different next year?

Funding.
Enough money to cover expenses?
Any sources you could tap for next year?

Helmets.
Loaners?
Did you have a giveaway or reduced sale?
Did everyone have one?

Awards, prizes, refreshments.
Did you have enough?
Was everyone recognized in some way?
Did you have enough food?

Course design (big picture, each station).
Evaluate each station to decide how to improve upon it.

Orientation.
How much did the volunteers know?
What can you do better next time?

Endnotes

1. For more information, see Bulletin #3 *Bicycle-motor vehicle crashes* on the education page of www.bike.cornell.edu.
2. For more information, see Bulletin #7 *Developmental characteristics that influence a child's behavior as a cyclist* on the education page of www.bike.cornell.edu or *How Children See Traffic* at http://www.bhsi.org/children.pdf.
3. Should only be taught by an experienced cyclist.
4. This concept is introduced as background information for persons working with youth in basic cycling skills. For more information about this concept as it relates to more advanced cycling techniques, contact the League of American Bicyclists to learn more about the BikeEd program.

Additional Resources

Children in Traffic. This 13-minute video shows how children's perceptions of traffic differ from those of adults. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 1-800-305-SAFE or www.aaa.org.

New York Bicycling Coalition www.nybc.net is a statewide advocacy organization. Check their web site for a list of links to local bicycle clubs, crash data and related statistics.

League of American Bicyclists. A nationally recognized cycling advocacy and education organization. www.bikeleague.org.

Bicycle Adventures. A hands-on curriculum for youth aged 8–15 in informal settings. National 4-H Cooperative Curriculum Services. www.n4hccs.org or your local Cooperative Extension office.

The Guide to Bicycle Rodeos was used as a general reference in the writing of this guide. The drawings on page % in the appendix come directly from this source. Copies of the guide are available from:

Adventure Cycling
Box 8308
Missoula, MT 59807-8305

Appendix

The key to successfully using the documents in this appendix is to make them your own. Your options for publicity and parent involvement should in no way be limited by these samples. Go nuts.

BIKE RODEO

4-H Bike Safety Inspection and Skills Course

Non-competitive fun for bicyclists ages 8 to 12

Location

Date and Time (beginning and end)

Sponsoring Organization
Contact Information

Sample News Releases

BICYCLE RODEO TO BE HELD

Remember the feeling of first learning to ride a bicycle on your own—without training wheels and without a parent's balancing hand? Remember that sudden rush of freedom?

If you have to strain to think back that far, well, maybe it's time to strap on a helmet and saddle up. Because not only is bicycling fun and freeing, it's an excellent way to get healthy exercise.

That's one of the reasons that sixty million Americans bicycle. Whether you're an avid mountain biker or simply trying to incorporate cycling into your daily routine, you too can reap the many health benefits of bicycling. Bicycling, however, is not without its risks.

(YOUR ORGANIZATION) is sponsoring a bicycle skills event designed to teach bicyclists the skills they need in order to be better cyclists. By learning bike handling and traffic skills, one can enjoy bicycling more and reduce the chance of injury.

The rodeo will be held (day, time, location). Bicyclists aged eight to twelve are invited to attend. This event is made up of a series of stations, each dealing with an important aspect of safe cycling. Participants will have their bicycles inspected and will then learn about and practice bicycle-handling skills that will increase their enjoyment of bicycling and could some day save their lives. Parents are invited to participate, too.

For more information, contact (YOUR CONTACT INFO).

POLICE CYCLISTS TO VISIT BICYCLE RODEO

A bicycle rodeo will be held (day, date, time, location). Bicyclists ages eight to twelve and their parents are invited to attend. This event is made up of a series of stations, each dealing with an important aspect of cycling. Participants will practice the safe way to exit a driveway, how to look for traffic, negotiate an intersection, and avoid common road hazards.

Police cyclists from (name of department) will be at the rodeo. They will demonstrate some basic handling skills and address the importance of all cyclists following the rules of the road.

For more information, contact the (your organization).

Sample Parent Letter – Before Event

Dear Parent,

Your child has the opportunity to participate in an event that will give him or her a chance to learn about, and practice, safe bicycling skills. The Bicycle Rodeo includes a safety inspection and a series of skills stations directly related to everyday bicycling situations. Participants will practice starting and stopping, the safe way to exit a driveway, how to look for traffic, negotiate an intersection, and avoid common road hazards.

Date: Time: Location:

Please encourage your child to attend this worthwhile event. He or she will need to bring a bicycle, a helmet, and a signed permission slip. There is no charge for participating. Why don't you bring your bicycle and join the fun?

This program is being sponsored by...

Sincerely,

You

Enclosures: Permission slip, "What You Want to Know about Bicycle Helmets," "What Every Parent Should Know"

Another option: Send home the inspection form along with the permission slip and ask the parents to fill it out with their child and bring it to the event.

Sample Parent Letter – After Event

Dear Parent,

Today your child learned some basic bicycling skills and safety tips. The instruction we presented is based on bicycle crash research, and to be truly effective, it needs reinforcement from you. Here are some points to stress with your child:

RIDE WITH TRAFFIC

The law requires all bicyclists to ride on the right-hand side of the road with traffic. Riding against traffic has been shown to be a contributing factor in one out of every five bike/car crashes. This is because riding against traffic puts bicyclists where motorists least expect them. Motorists turning right normally only look for traffic coming from the left, not from the right.

STOP AND LOOK BEFORE ENTERING A STREET

Riding into the street from a driveway without stopping is the cause of half the bike fatalities of kids eight and under. It accounts for about one-third of serious crashes involving children eight to twelve. Explain to your children that they must get in the habit of always stopping and looking for traffic at the end of a driveway, parking lot, or alley. Have them practice by looking left, then right, then left again.

STOP AT ALL STOP SIGNS AND RED LIGHTS

Often, kids break this rule when riding with friends or when they are distracted. This is another major cause of bike/car collisions involving children. Stopping for traffic control devices should be stressed so it becomes a reflex; it will also stop them from being ticketed!

LEARN TO SCAN – LOOK BEHIND FOR TRAFFIC

Many kids have been taught to signal before turning, but not enough attention has been placed on looking behind them first. Explain to your child that there is nothing magical about signaling; it won't make a car stop for you. You have to make sure nobody is coming from behind. If there are lots of cars behind, the rider should get off the bike and walk across the intersection using the crosswalks, if available.

WEAR A HELMET

We also talked to your child about bicycle helmets. Helmets save lives. Seventy-five percent of all serious bicycle injuries involve a head injury that might have been prevented, if the bicyclist was wearing a helmet. In New York State, children between the ages of one and fourteen are required to wear a safety approved bicycle helmet when they are bicycling. It is highly recommended that bicyclists of all ages wear a CPSC approved helmet while bicycling, especially parents and other adults who set an example for others.

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS

Stress to your child that he or she needs to stop, look, and decide for him or herself if the road is clear before crossing a street or making a turn. It is not safe to just follow a friend.

A FINAL NOTE

Having his or her own transportation gives your child mobility and helps him or her grow personally. Thank you for allowing your child to take on this exhilarating sport and helping them learn how to do it safely. If bicycling is not already a family activity, give it a try!

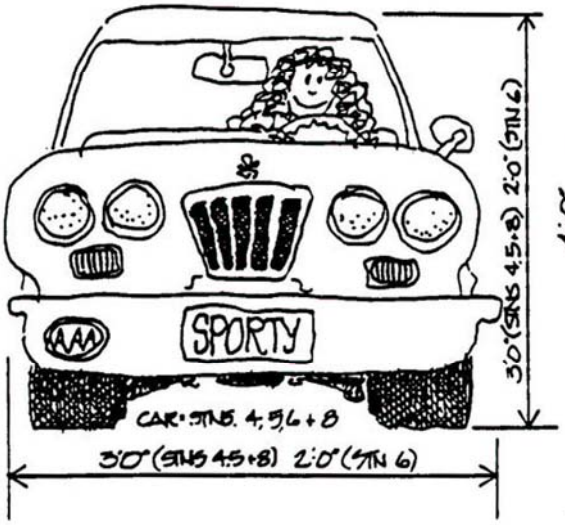
For further information contact...

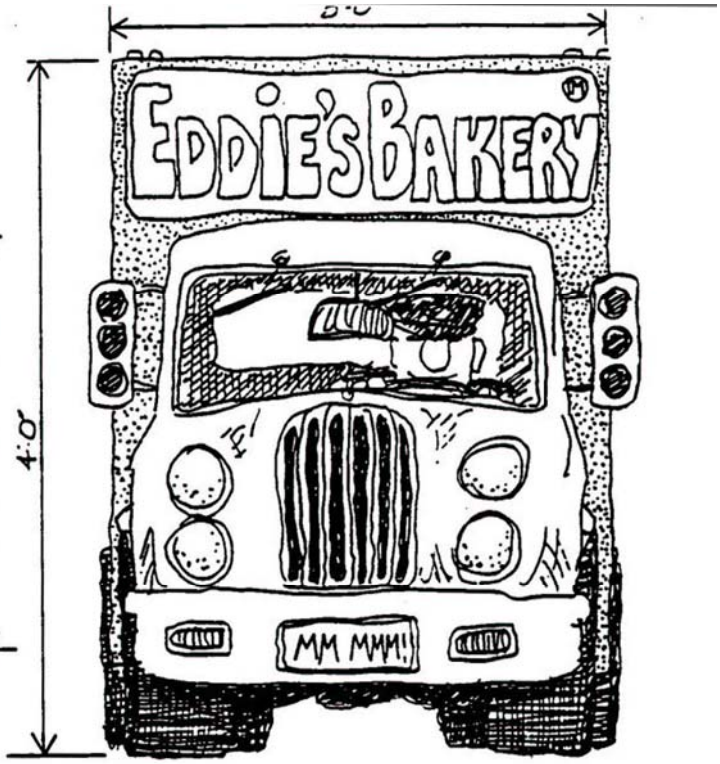
Sincerely,

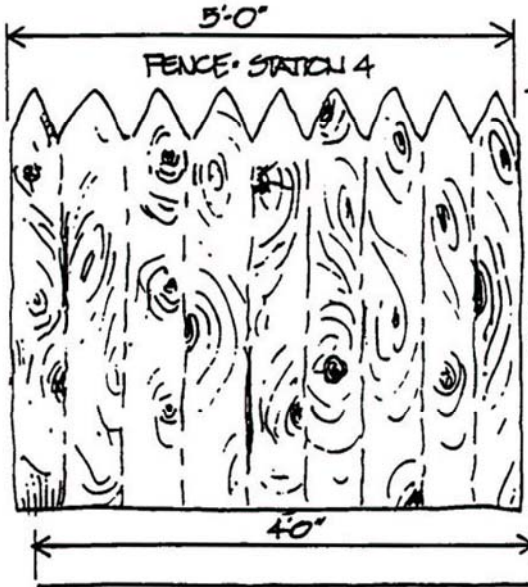
You

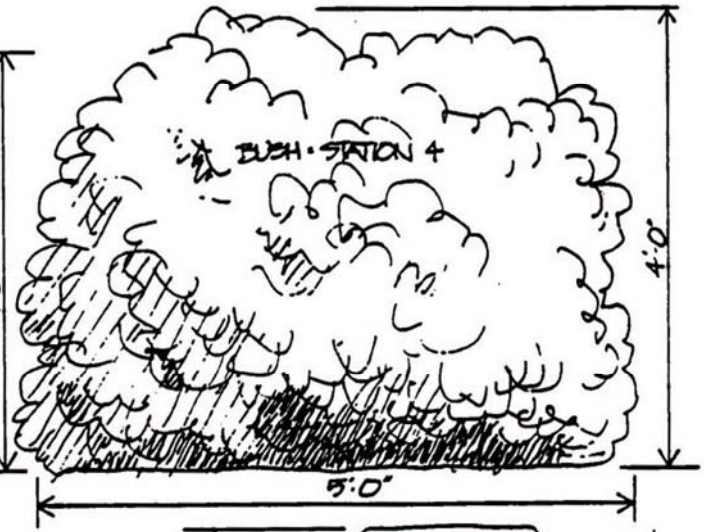
Sample props

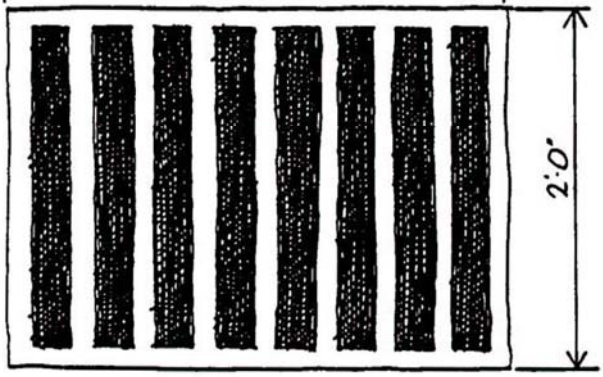
Use these as patterns or create your own cardboard cut-outs.



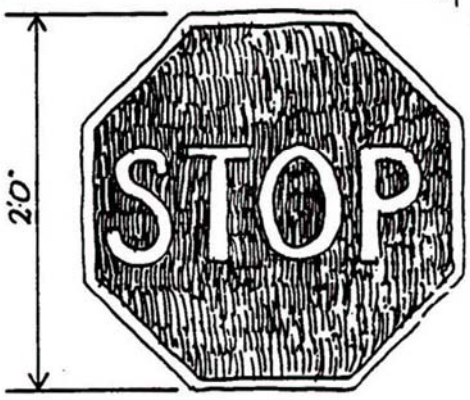






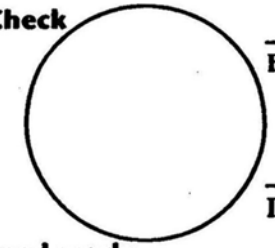


DRAIN GRATE • STATION 8



STOP SIGN • STATION 5

4-H Bicycle Quick Check



Bicycle Owner

Inspector

Check items that need work:

Frame

___ Is it straight?
___ Is it clean?
___ Is frame strong enough?
___ Is the fork bent or twisted?

Wheels and Tires

___ Do they spin properly?
___ Are they centered and secure in the frame?
___ Is the rim round?
___ Are all the spokes in place and secure?
___ Are the tires free of bulges, cuts, worn spots?
___ Is the tread good?
___ Are tires properly inflated?

Drive Train

___ Is the chain complete and in good condition?
___ Is the chain guard attached safely?
___ Is the gear cable(s) frayed, broken, or missing?
___ Does it have the proper tension?
___ Is it clean?
___ Has it been lubricated?
___ Are pedals in good condition?

Brakes

___ Are they working and secure?
___ Do they stop the bike smoothly?
___ If hand brakes, are cables and shoes in good condition?

Other

___ Are reflectors on the front, rear, and wheels of the bike?
___ Is the seat in good condition and at the proper height?
___ Are there front and rear lights visible from 500 feet?
___ Are the hand grips and the handlebar tight?
___ Are fenders secure and not loose?
___ Is there a horn or a bell?

4-H Bicycle Quick Check

Bicycle Owner

Inspector

Check items that need work:

Frame

___ Is it straight?
___ Is it clean?
___ Is frame strong enough?
___ Is the fork bent or twisted?

Wheels and Tires

___ Do they spin properly?
___ Are they centered and secure in the frame?
___ Is the rim round?
___ Are all the spokes in place and secure?
___ Are the tires free of bulges, cuts, worn spots?
___ Is the tread good?
___ Are tires properly inflated?

Drive Train

___ Is the chain complete and in good condition?
___ Is the chain guard attached safely?
___ Is the gear cable(s) frayed, broken, or missing?
___ Does it have the proper tension?
___ Is it clean?
___ Has it been lubricated?
___ Are pedals in good condition?

Brakes

___ Are they working and secure?
___ Do they stop the bike smoothly?
___ If hand brakes, are cables and shoes in good condition?

Other

___ Are reflectors on the front, rear, and wheels of the bike?
___ Is the seat in good condition and at the proper height?
___ Are there front and rear lights visible from 500 feet?
___ Are the hand grips and the handlebar tight?
___ Are fenders secure and not loose?
___ Is there a horn or a bell?

Have this card checked at each station.

Station	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Comments

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

Have this card checked at each station.

Station	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Comments

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

4-H Bicycle Safety Education Program

Certificate of Participation

is awarded to

_____

For participation in a Bicycle Safety Education Program

Cornell
Cooperative
Extension

_____

_____

Date

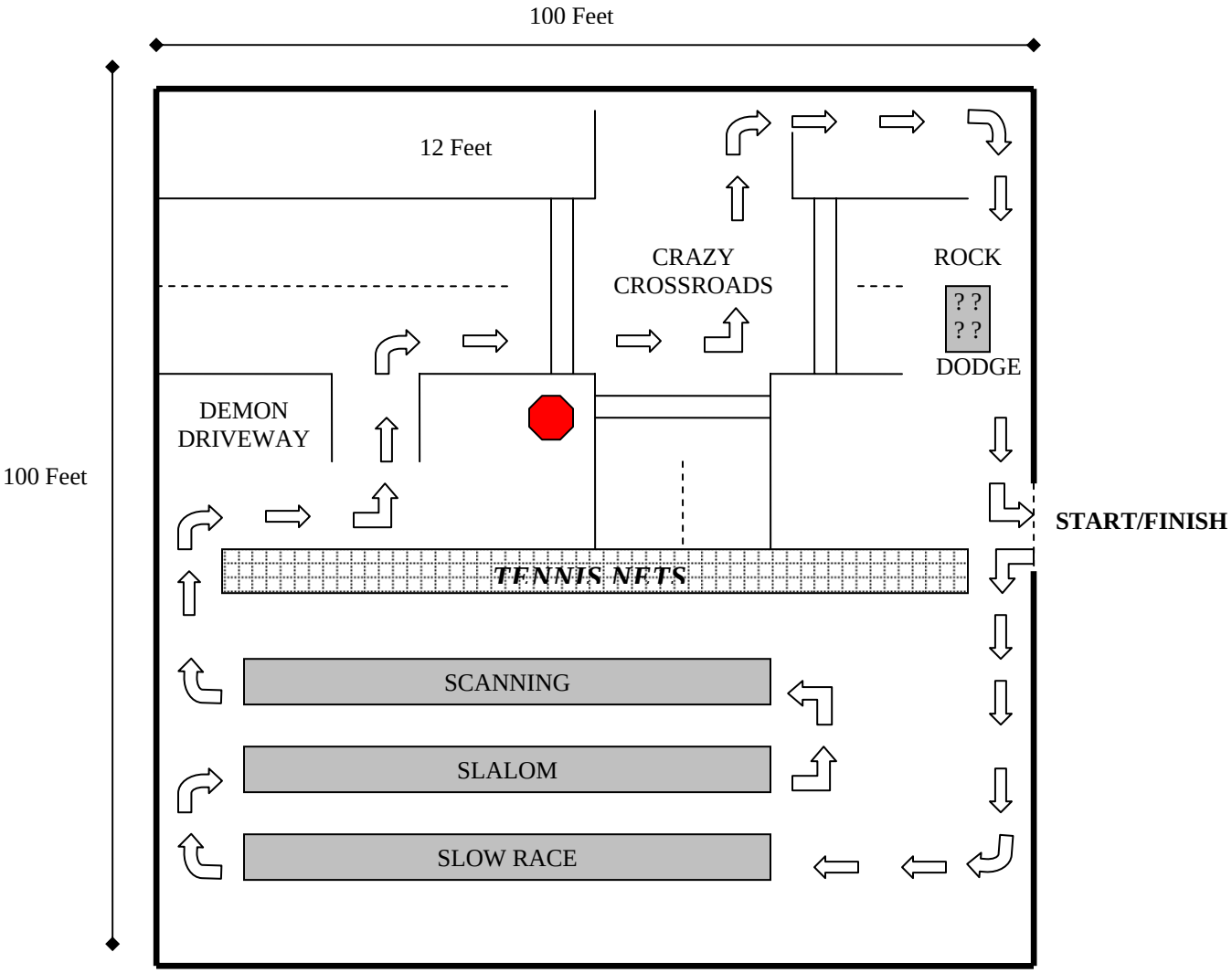
Sample Rodeo Layouts

Setting up for a rodeo/skills event can be confusing for the first time organizer. Finding a good space is your first challenge. Once you secure a space, you'll want to look at it with a critical eye and figure out what rodeo stations will work.

To follow are two layouts that were used for local events. Look through them to get ideas on how you can set up stations for your event. Take advantage of any existing facilities, such as driveway entrances or sections of roadway (closed to traffic, of course). Don't make the mistake of trying to include every station, as it may not be possible due to space (and staffing) constraints. You're better off planning for fewer than trying to include too many.

Bike Rodeo Layout 1

SCALE: 1 Inch = 20 Feet



Bike Rodeo Layout 2
[Not to Scale]