

TIPS FOR TEACHING CYCLING

WHY IS IT CHALLENGING FOR CHILDREN WITH DCD TO *LEARN* CYCLING?

Cycling requires balance and coordination, both of which are challenging for children with DCD. Learning how to cycle is challenging, but once children with DCD master how to coordinate their body parts, they can be very successful, since the movement patterns in cycling repeat over and over. Cycling is a great way to encourage fitness and participation for children with DCD.

WHAT CAN I DO TO TEACH CYCLING?

Two key strategies to use when teaching cycling include:

- *Breaking down the task.* It is easier to learn cycling when the different steps are practiced separately.
- *Providing instructions, feedback, and opportunities for reflection.* Children with DCD need clear, easy to understand instructions. They also benefit from thinking through all of the movements required for cycling.

EXAMPLES: BREAKING DOWN THE TASK OF CYCLING

- Mounting/dismounting the bicycle, with or without assistance to hold the bicycle
- Pushing the bicycle while walking alongside and controlling direction (straight and turning)
- Removing the pedals, sitting on the bicycle, and pushing the bike with feet on the ground
- Practicing placing one foot on the pedal to initiate propulsion and pushing once
- Practicing placing one foot on the pedal and placing the other foot on the opposite pedal and returning it back to the ground
- Practicing hand braking while standing, while walking the bicycle, or while riding
- Sitting on the bike and controlling direction with assistance to push the bike
- Riding down a small incline (steering and balancing (no pedalling) and with assist to hold the bike) to feel the speed and practice balance
- Practicing the pedal stroke with assistance holding the bicycle behind the seat

EXAMPLES: INSTRUCTIONS, FEEDBACK AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION

- Explain to the child the **ONE** step you want him to focus on while practicing
- Ask the child how others are doing the activity (e.g., What are their legs doing?)
- Provide verbal or visual cues (e.g. ‘Sit tall’ , encourage the child to focus on an object ahead of him) and auditory cues (e.g., pushing with the left leg when you say left)

OTHER IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Always use helmets and ensure they fit properly
- Use the appropriate bicycle size and seat height (the child should be comfortable with their knee slightly bent when seated; starting with the seat lower allows both feet to touch the ground)
- Start practicing on flat areas with few distractions (e.g., people cycling, passing traffic) and gradually move into more challenging environments (e.g., inclines, curves, people cycling)

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