



Getting Back on a Bike

Many people have turned to biking as a way to get outside and moving during the pandemic and have found their neighborhood streets are great places to ride. But, to people who haven't been on a bike in many years, the thought of doing this can be daunting. Here are some tips to help you get rolling again. The following are general guidelines about getting started and will be covered during the Virtual Bike Ride series of events.

What Bike?

If you have an old bike that has been collecting dust indoors or in a garage, you can probably brush off the dust and get it rolling. Be sure to put air in the tires. Best to pump them up 30-60 minutes before you plan to ride to make sure there are no leaks. Also, make sure the brakes are working and can stop you. An easy way to check this is to stand over the bike, squeeze the brakes and then push the bike to see if the wheels roll. If the brakes hold the wheels, then you should be good. If the brakes won't hold the wheels or your tires won't hold air, or if you want a little more thorough check of your bike, take it to a local bike shop for a tune up. In most locations bike shops have been designated essential businesses.

If you don't have a bike here in the Washington, DC region Capital Bikeshare is an option. Visit their website here, <https://www.capitalbikeshare.com>, to learn more about the service and if there is a station near you. Just be conscious that there are time limits on how long the bikes can be used without extra fees, 30 minutes in most cases, so be sure to read and understand these before checking a bike out.

How to get started

If you haven't ridden a bike in some time you may feel unstable when you take your first ride. One way to overcome this is to lower the seat of the bike so that you can sit on the bike with your feet flat on the ground. Then start pushing your bike using your feet. After you feel comfortable with this, start to pick up your feet and coast as you gain your balance. Once you are feeling comfortable, start pedaling. As you gain confidence start to raise the seat to a more usual height. Be sure to do this in a flat area or even on an open field.

For your first few rides don't overdo it. Try riding two or three times around your block the first time out and build from there. As you gain confidence try going a little further from home. Local, neighborhood streets are great places to ride, and these days have even less vehicular traffic than usual. Many people with kids are thinking of riding again to join their kids on rides. This is wonderful and fun, but if you haven't ridden in a while, consider taking your first few rides without your kids, so that you can get the feel of the bike again, without feeling self-conscious in front of them.

Riding Beyond the Neighborhood

Once you are feeling confident, consider exploring beyond your neighborhood. Now can be a good time to do this, because, as was mentioned before, there is generally less vehicular traffic on roads. Your community may also have multi-use paths that can provide car free options for cyclists. One important thing to remember is that when riding on the street, a bicycle is considered a vehicle and the rider needs to follow the same rules as a motorist. Stay to the right, obey all traffic signs and signals, and signal when you are planning to turn. When riding on trails, stay to the right, except to pass, yield to slower moving trail users, give an audible warning when passing other trail users, and, during this time of the pandemic, maintain a six-foot distance from other trail users as much as possible. Planning routes and what resources are available will be covered during the second event of this series.

Have Fun!

So, go ahead and give it a try. Whether you are wanting to go riding with your family or are just looking for a new way to get active, think about how good you will feel after a couple of rides, and the smile that will come to your face when you travel farther than you thought you could.