

## **Bike/Walk Midland: Child Bicycle Safety**

Somewhere around the age of 5, children can learn to ride a bicycle. Somewhere around the age of 10, children can acquire the skills needed for safe on-street bicycling. Because children develop at such different rates, the typical age range to learn to ride in the street is 8-12. Parents need to be aware of their children's specific capabilities and limitations in deciding when their child is ready to learn these skills.

Parents can teach and reinforce judgment skills by riding with their children and modeling safe behavior, whether on the sidewalk for younger children or on the street for older kids. Young children especially need to ride with an adult to practice safe street crossing behavior. Attention-switching and concentration cognitive skills need extra focus in a crossing situation. Children need help to repeat the process of "stop, wait, listen and look while crossing at a curb" successfully many times before they can complete it safely by themselves.

"Street-ready" children need to understand the concept of "vehicular cycling" because the safest behavior for bicyclists is to predictably behave like the other vehicles on the street: signaling, turning, and moving in a predictable fashion, riding on the right, and obeying the rules of the road.

The ultimate goal of a parent's time spent discussing, modeling, and practicing safe bicycling with children is to help children become safe, confident and independent cyclists. They will be able to recognize and pick the best places to ride, cross, and behave as safely as possible near and in traffic. These children will also grow up to become better drivers because they understand how to share the road with people on foot and bicycle.

For more information: [www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm](http://www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm)