

TIPS FOR BIKING BEGINNERS

By Celene Lovato

Using a bike as a main source of transportation can seem a bit daunting to new cyclists, especially when they take it on alone. Cycling doesn't have to be a solo sport though, and there are resources readily available to those in need of help, including educational clinics hosted at UCCS's very own SOLE center. The SOLE Center also has a bike workshop that offers free services such as brake adjustment, derailleur adjustment, tire changes, and hub adjustment. New cyclists could definitely learn a lot about bike confidence and maintenance at the SOLE Center, even experienced riders could learn a thing or two.

Here are a few things you should know to be an expert cyclist:

1. *How to fix a tire:* You might not think you'll have to use this skill any time soon, but learning now could save you from having to learn on the side of the road while you're running late for work!
2. *What kind of bike you'll need:* Before investing in a bike, it's important to know which type will best suit your needs. Depending on where you plan on riding, city streets or rugged trails, different types of bikes will fare better or worse. A road bike might not do as well off-road as a mountain bike, and a mountain bike might not be as efficient on city streets.
3. *How your gears work:* Bicycle gears are designed to make cycling easier and safer for riders. Knowing to downshift while going uphill can make the difference between a casual ride to work and a day of "Jello" legs. It's also important to know how to use gears in a way that won't bend or warp your chains.
4. *Local biking codes and laws:* While it's important for any rider to know the rules of the road, knowing exactly what is and isn't okay while riding among motorists can make nervous riders feel more confident in themselves and their surroundings. Visit Bicycle Colorado at bicyclecolorado.org for more information on safe cycling.
5. *Get the hang of different riding positions:* It may seem pretty simple to just sit back and ride, but it's important to know *how* to sit. Certain positions can be beneficial for certain types of riding, exclusive to certain types of bikes, and crucial to maintaining joint and spine health.
6. *How to fuel yourself properly:* Cycling takes much more energy than driving does. Knowing what to eat and when can make riding more fun and can help you go a couple extra miles as well. It's also important to stay hydrated before, during and after riding.
7. *A pre-ride checklist:* Making sure your bike is safe and ready to ride is just as important as making sure you're safe and ready to ride. Check your tires, brakes, chains, seat, and handlebars often to make sure your bike is in tip-top shape. Don't let wear and tear creep up on you.

And, most of all, be sure to have fun!

Visit the SOLE center at www.uccs.edu/campusrec/outdoors.html for hours of operation and the schedule of bicycle education clinics. If you have any questions about cycling, whether it is commuting to school or work or exploring our numerous city and mountain trails, don't hesitate to contact the SOLE center at 719.255.7517 or sole@uccs.edu.