How to Fit a Bicycle Helmet and Perform a Pre-Ride Safety Che

Cars & Other Vehicles · about 30 minutes · 2026-11-08

Prepare yourself and your bicycle before a ride with a complete, repeatable safety routine. These 28 steps cover helmet standards, sizing, shell and strap inspection, level positioning, stability tests, tires, wheels, steering, brakes, drivetrain, lights, the ABC Quick Check, and a low-speed test ride.

Things you will need

- A correctly certified bicycle helmet and its manufacturer instructions
- A flexible tape measure and a mirror or knowledgeable fit helper
- A compatible bicycle pump and a reliable pressure gauge
- Working lights, clean reflectors, and suitable visible clothing
- A clean rag and a helmet and ABC inspection checklist
- Ride-appropriate tools, spare tube, water, identification, and phone

Choosing and Inspecting the Right Helmet

1. **Pick a certified bicycle helmet**
   Choose a bicycle-specific helmet that meets the safety standard applicable where you live.
2. **Measure the head and match the size chart**
   Measure the rider's head and select a size using the manufacturer's chart.
3. **Inspect shell, liner, straps, and buckle**
   Inspect the shell, energy-absorbing liner, straps, buckle, and fit system before use.
4. **Clear hair and accessories from the fit**
   Prepare hair and remove accessories that interfere with helmet contact.
5. **Set the helmet level and low**
   Position the helmet level and low before tightening the straps.
6. **Adjust the retention ring and pads**
   Adjust the fit ring and manufacturer-supplied pads for even, snug contact.

Adjusting the Straps and Confirming Helmet Stability

7. **Shape the side straps into a V**
   Form a balanced V with the side straps around each ear.
8. **Center and fasten the chin buckle**
   Buckle the chin strap and center it beneath the chin.
9. **Tighten the chin strap to two fingers**
   Tighten the chin strap to a snug fit without restricting breathing or swallowing.
10. **Balance the straps until rocking stops**
    Adjust the front and rear straps until the helmet resists rocking.
11. **Secure loose strap ends and recheck**
    Secure loose strap ends and recheck the buckle.

12. Do a final fit check before riding

Perform a final mirror or helper fit check before every ride.

Checking Tires, Wheels, and Contact Points

13. Set the bicycle somewhere clear and lit

Place the bicycle in a clear, well-lit area away from traffic.

14. Check tyre sidewalls and tread

Check tire sidewalls and tread for damage or embedded objects.

15. Inflate tyres to the printed range

Verify tire inflation with a gauge and the applicable manufacturer guidance.

16. Spin the wheels and inspect the rims

Inspect the rims and spin each wheel to check its movement.

17. Secure axles, quick releases, and thru-axles

Confirm that axle nuts, quick releases, or thru-axles are correctly secured.

18. Test saddle, seatpost, and stem alignment

Check the saddle, seatpost, handlebar, and stem for alignment and unwanted movement.

Testing Brakes, Drivetrain, and Visibility Equipment

19. Inspect pads, cables, and brake hoses

Inspect brake pads, cables, hoses, levers, and braking surfaces.

20. Walk the bike, then brake-test slowly

Test both brakes while walking and then at low speed in a safe area.

21. Check the chain, cranks, and gears

Rotate the pedals and check the chain, cranks, and gear operation.

22. Fit pedals and accessories securely

Check pedals and accessories for security and safe clearance.

23. Test lights and reflectors before dark

Test lights, reflectors, and personal visibility equipment before poor-light riding.

Completing the ABC Quick Check and Test Ride

24. Run the ABC quick check routine

Combine the essential checks into a repeatable ABC Quick Check routine.

25. Pack tools, water, and a way to call

Pack ride-appropriate tools, water, identification, and a way to call for help.

26. Choose a low-risk route and check conditions

Choose a low-risk route and check weather, daylight, and local cycling rules.

27. Ride slowly in a car-free area first

Take a brief, slow test ride in a car-free area before entering traffic.

28. Log repairs and recheck before every ride

Record defects and repeat the helmet and bicycle checks before every ride.

Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Fit-a-Bicycle-Helmet-and-Perform-a-Pre-Ride-Safety-Check. Corrections: https