



## Teachers' fact file

### Cycle helmets



### The New RoSPA guide to buying, wearing and caring for Bicycle helmets

In Britain, around 150-200 cyclists are killed and 3,000 seriously injured on the roads each year. Of those killed, roughly 70 percent have head injuries, as do more than half of those injured. Some of these injuries could have been avoided had the cyclist been wearing a bicycle helmet.

#### Some facts

##### On your bike

Cycling is a very popular leisure activity. It offers one of the best forms of exercise, transport and leisure available to most people. Most children want to own and ride a bicycle because it offers fun, freedom, status and independence.

##### Risk

Many popular leisure pursuits, because of their very nature, carry the risk of injury, particularly to the head. Cycling can be especially dangerous. Here are risks to the cyclist both on and off the road. Unfortunately, the most common injuries suffered by cyclists are head injuries, which can range from cuts and minor concussion to permanent brain damage and fatal fractures of the skull.

##### Low speed

A cyclist does not have to have an accident at great speed to receive such injuries. In fact, a serious head injury could occur at quite a low speed. The tragedy is that most of these injuries and deaths could be prevented or lessened by the wearing of an approved helmet.

The best way to protect cyclists is to prevent accidents from happening in the first place. But it is also important to reduce the terrible effects of those that do occur. Wearing a cycle helmet is the best way to protect your head in an accident.



### **Take note**

- Cycle helmets reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent and reduce the risk of brain injury by 88 percent.
- Investment in a cycle helmet is a low cost in comparison with the much higher costs of a head injury!

### **How does a cycle helmet work?**

A cycle helmet cushions the head in a fall, providing a last line of defence between your head and the ground.

The helmet's protective liner reduces the force of an impact before it reaches your head and brain. Most helmets have a hard outer shell that spreads the force of a blow over a wider area than the initial impact site.

### **Standards**

Cycle helmets sold in the European Union must have a CE mark to show they conform to the EC Directive on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). RoSPA recommends that they should also meet at least one recognised safety standard - either the European Standard, BS EN 1078:1997 or an American Standard, Snell B.95. Helmets with a BS Kite mark as well as a standard number are even better.

### **Choosing the right size helmet**

1. Measure your head around its circumference, about one inch (2.5cm) above the eyebrows.
2. Match your head size to the size of the helmet. You will find this printed inside the helmet, on a label or on the box.
3. Place the helmet squarely on your head and fasten the straps. If it is loose, use the pads or straps to get a close fit. It should feel snug all the way around, but not too tight.
4. Once the pads are fitted, place the helmet back on your head. Keep it level, about one inch (2.5cm) above the eyebrows, and adjust the outside straps so there is no slackness.
5. The front strap should be as vertical as possible. The rear strap should join the front strap just under the ears.
6. Fasten the buckle, which should rest under the chin, not on the jaw line.
7. Try to move the helmet about on your head. It should not move very much.

### **Correct wearing position**

- It should fit snugly all around the head.
- It should rest a little above the eyebrows.
- It should be level, not tilted backwards.
- The forehead should not be exposed.
- You should be able to see clearly.
- The straps go around your ears, not over them.



### **Looking after your helmet**

Follow the instructions that come with the helmet. Never put sticky labels on your helmet unless they are special ones provided with it. Paints, solvents, petrol and glues seriously weaken helmets. Only clean your helmet with a soft cloth and water.

If your helmet suffers a heavy blow, in a crash for example, replace it straight away. If you look after your helmet, it should last between three and five years.

### **Useful addresses**

Contact the Road Safety Department of your Local Authority for information and assistance about cycle helmets and other road safety issues.

RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)  
RoSPA House, Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Birmingham B5 7ST

British Standards Institute  
389, Chiswick High Road, London W4 4AL

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions  
Road Safety Division, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street,  
London SW1P 4DR

Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust  
6 Arkwright Road, First Floor, Reading, Berkshire RG2 0LU