Cycling with Children

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When our children were young, my husband introduced them to cycling. First we rode them on rear mount carriers attached to the back of our bikes until they were old enough to ride their own bicycle. As they matured, we quickly learned there were other ways to cycle with our children. The “Trail-a-bike”, a device that attaches to the seat post of the adult bike, is a great way for the younger child to cycle with their parent. It allows them to participate in riding while not required to pedal the whole time. The child must be physically able to sit and pedal on the bike seat by themselves. For the smaller child, the trailer such as the “Burley” attached to the rear of the parent’s bike works great. There are also front mount carriers for the adult bikes available as well. These devices may increase the weight of the bike on the front or rear depending on the mount so beware.

Getting started depends on the physical development of the child. First choose a proper fitting helmet and bike. A bike shop is a great place to start. Morgantown has two well versed shops, Pathfinder WV, Ltd and Wamsley Cycles. Keep the sessions fun and short at first while your child builds skills and fitness. Take them to a safe closed off area such as a park to learn how to start, stop, maneuver around objects mount and dismount their bicycles. Children as young as nine can learn to ride a bicycle in a straight line, stop at intersections and signal turns. If the child and parent decide to ride on the road with motor-vehicles, it is best for the parent to ride behind the child through traffic. A child on a bicycle can be often difficult to see by the motorist due to the height of their bike. It is beneficial for the child to take a cycling course. For information on “Smart Cycling” and “Cycling Skills for Children” courses contact Bike Morgantown at [BikeMorgantown@gmail.com](mailto:BikeMorgantown@gmail.com) or call 304-376-0446. These classes teach both rules of the road and confident cycling on our roadways. Cycling on the road with your child helps promote cycling and fitness, provides transportation and freedom for the child, and helps children learn to read maps, and interact with pedestrians and motorists. If riding on the roadways with your child is not something you want to try, there are other wonderful places to bicycle with your children such as rail trails, bike paths, and mountain bike trails. Children love to explore and will really enjoy being in the woods. West Virginia offers both extensive rail trail systems and mountain bike trails.

Whatever type of riding you choose to do with your child, cycling can be a great way to spend time together, build fitness for both the parent and child, and teach cycling skills that will last into adulthood. Over the years it has been wonderful to continue to ride with our now adult children.