

4: ALL ABOUT BIKE HELMETS

WHY SHOULD YOU WEAR A HELMET?

It's a fact: About 1,000 American bicyclists die in crashes each year—and around three-fourths die from head injuries. Hundreds more suffer permanent brain damage. Many of these are experienced, careful riders—maybe just like you. And most of these head injuries can be prevented with bike helmets.

You say a helmet's too much of a hassle? It'd make your head sweat? Give you "hat head?" It's too expensive? You'd look like a geek? **3** Think how good these sayings would look on your gravestone.

HELMET BASICS

Helmets consist of a foam core, usually white or black in color, and most have a thin plastic shell (sometimes called a "micro-shell") that covers the core. A plastic shell keeps the helmet's base from getting scratched and nicked. **4**

If you have a crash and your helmet takes an impact, replace it right away. An impact usually damages a helmet's foam core, meaning it won't protect you again. You should also replace your helmet at least every five years, because its foam core becomes brittle.

WHY KIDS NEED HELMETS

Kids need helmets as much as adults do. Kids generally aren't as careful, they don't know how to protect themselves, and when riding in a child seat they're especially vulnerable. Make sure kids wear their helmets snugly—and set an example by wearing yours!

HOW TO CHOOSE A HELMET

Rating: Look at the inside of the helmet. It should have a compliance label from the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC).

5 Older helmets might instead have a green or blue Snell sticker, **6** meaning the helmet passed the Snell Foundation's tests for safety; or an F1447 certification label **7** by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).



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THIS HELMET COMPLIES WITH U.S. CPSC SAFETY STANDARD FOR BICYCLE HELMETS FOR PERSONS AGE 5 AND OLDER.

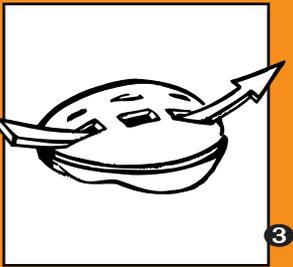
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Size: Helmets come in different sizes. Find yours:

- ▶ Put the helmet on your head.
- ▶ If the helmet seems to sit too high off of your head, or it won't cover half your forehead when it sits level, try a larger size.
- ▶ If you see a gap between the helmet's rim and your head, try a smaller size.
- ▶ If a smaller size seems too small, take the larger size and insert the thick foam pads that come with the helmet.

How To Check For A Good Fit

Eyes: When you look up you should see the helmet's front rim (not just the visor, if it has one). If you can't see the rim, tilt the helmet forward until you can. **1 Right 2 Wrong**

Ears: Snap the chin buckle closed. On each side of your head, the helmet's two straps should meet under your ear to form a V. If they don't, move the straps up or down through the junctions.

Mouth: With the chin buckle closed, open your mouth wide. You should feel the helmet push down on your head. If it doesn't, take the helmet off and make the chin buckle's strap shorter by sliding the strap through the buckle.

COMFORT AND COST

Cost: You can get a good CPSC-rated bike helmet for about \$25—cheaper than a visit to the emergency room. Hard shells cost a little more than soft. More costly helmets usually aren't much safer, but they have better ventilation, weigh less, and look cool. If you order a helmet from a discount catalog, first find a friend who has it and try it on—because a **good fit is important to protect your head.**

Ventilation: A helmet's ventilation depends on front-to-back air flow. **3** Good air flow comes from long, wide air vents, and air passages (or troughs) between the vents. (Bald, light-skinned cyclists beware: big vents can cause weird tan lines!)

Look: You can pay lots for style. But even a low-cost helmet can look cool with an elastic helmet cover. And don't be fooled: No matter how aerodynamic a helmet looks, it won't help you go faster unless you're moving at warp speed. **4**