



Freedom on Wheels

by Julian Celms

Fun! Freedom! That is what a bike means to most of the kids we work with. It's a way to get wherever they wish to go quickly, and safely. As the weather is warming up, and (in some places in Canada) the snow clearing up, many youth are looking to get their bikes out and start another season of riding.

So plan a few opportunities to review some of the dos and don'ts for safe cycling. Here are some ideas you can use in your sections – perhaps have a Scout troop work with Cubs or Venturers with your Scouts on some of these activities.

Road safety

Review the road signs that everyone has to observe – including bicyclists. Don't forget common obstacles and dangers cyclists face. Avoid making this a boring 'safety' lecture (you can see your Cubs/Scouts rolling their eyes now). Have some fun – use a "port-starboard" style of game that uses bicycling terms instead of nautical terms, and make up some funky actions when you call out:

- Yield signs!
- Hand signals for turning!
- Speed bump!
- Hill/steep downhill grade!
- Railway crossing!
- One-way street!
- Potholes/sewer covers!
- Loose gravel!
- Flat tire!

Have a light-hearted discussion about appropriate behaviour on the road. Ask your Scouts/Venturers to put on a funny skit to emphasize good road manners and safety etiquette. Some examples:

- a door of a parked car opens
- sharing the road
- sharing the trail.

Head first into safety

The noggin' is worth protecting! As much as helmets have become accepted today as part of the cycling experience, a reminder of the importance of helmets is critical (so is being a role model for our youth when we wear helmets!). Discuss proper fit, and if the helmet has received a serious fall or impact, it may need to be replaced.

Bike maintenance

Some key elements to review are: *Proper fit* – youth may have grown

since they were last riding their bikes. Make sure seats and handlebars are adjusted properly.

Brakes – ensure the brake cable moves freely as it travels, braking mechanisms are not dislodged or loose, and the cable is properly adjusted. Brake pads should not have excessive wear, and must be aligned properly to the wheel.

Frame – be sure the frame is not bent or misshapen, and the front forks are aligned properly.

Chain/crank/gears – see that the chain is oiled, and you can pedal smoothly through the gears.

Tires must be properly inflated, and not overly worn.

Reflectors – are there enough reflectors on the bikes? Mention how wearing some reflective clothing or adding reflectors to your helmet is a good idea.

Lights – are you riding your bike at night? Make sure you have proper lights.

Know - how to fix a flat tire.

Be aware that you may not be able to properly adjust some components on the bike without the appropriate tools or knowledge. If this is the case, alert the bike's owner that they should get the bike adjusted.

Help!

Where can I get some help?

This may be a great time to ask your local bike store to come in and help with a bicycle maintenance evening. For safety ideas, call the police department or Ministry of Transportation to see if they have any kits that may be of use, or if someone can come to your meeting. The *Fieldbook for Canadian Scouting* also has information on cycling (p. 395 – 405). It's available at your local Scout Shop.

Photo: Courtesy of 2nd Wellington Scouts, NS

Program Ideas:

Patrol Challenge!

Who can repair the flat tire first? Give each patrol an inner tube with a hole in it, and all the materials to fix it. Take this idea a step further and introduce it as a relay game and withhold key tools that can be provided with a skill-testing question. Use the inner tubes as parts of catapults in future meetings.

Ouch!

Even the best-prepared cyclist will sometimes fall and get hurt. Common injuries include scraped knees, elbows and hands. Consider discussing proper first aid techniques on how to properly clean and care for these injuries to prevent infection.

Quick facts:



F Less than 20 per cent of reported bicycle injuries involve collisions with cars.

F Two-thirds of all cyclist deaths involve head injuries. Transport Canada statistics for 2001 reveal that all cyclist fatalities under age 15 were unhelmeted.

F Most cyclists who get hit riding through stop signs know that they are supposed to stop.

F In 70 per cent of motor vehicle and cyclist collisions, the cyclist is at fault, either by violating a law or by poor road sense.

Source: Canada Safety Council

Bike Rodeo

Now that you have checked the bikes for safety, let's focus on some riding practice. Consider setting up the following stations on a weekend morning or afternoon:

Stopping for a stop sign: Re-enforce that you need to obey traffic laws and stop for stop signs. Look both ways before you start again.

Balance and Steering: Mark off two circles – one larger than the other to form a figure eight. You are looking for riders to make smooth and easy turns, keeping both hands on the handlebars. No one must touch the

ground with their feet. (See diagram.)

Single Obstacle Course: Set up eight cones or markers, each separated by 1.5 metres. From a moving start, the youth must weave in and out of the obstacles without touching his/her foot to the ground or brushing against an obstacle. (See diagram.)

Double Obstacle Zig Zag: Set up twenty cones or markers in a staggered pattern of ten stations (see diagram below). Leave a 15 cm space between each pair of markers and a three metre lengthwise space between pairs. From a moving start, each child must drive the course in a steady, confident pace without knocking over markers.

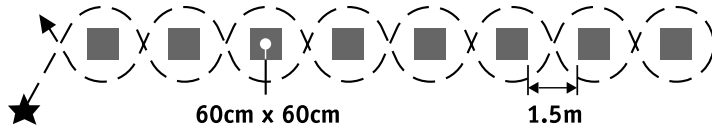
Snail Pace Relay: One key to safe bicycling is balance. This event requires considerable skill and practice. Mark off a straight track 50 metres long. Line up the bikes and time riders to see who takes the longest to reach the finish line. Deduct points if Cubs or Scouts touch their feet to the ground. Now set out markers that riders must weave through at slow speed. Hint: Sidewalk chalk is great to use for making the circles and lines in a parking lot (get permission first!).

Wishing everyone a great riding year! See you outside! ^

– Julian Celms is on a roll as Director of Beavers, Cubs and Outdoors.

Riding Courses Illustrated

SINGLE OBSTACLE COURSE



DOUBLE OBSTACLE ZIGZAG COURSE

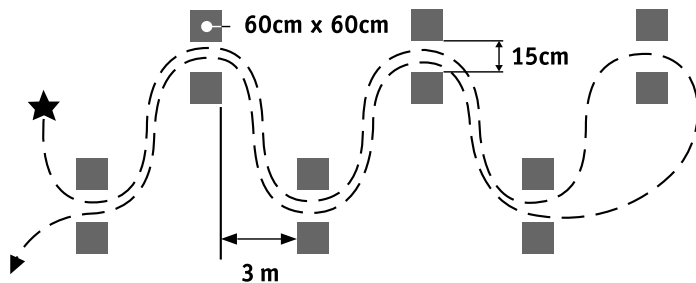
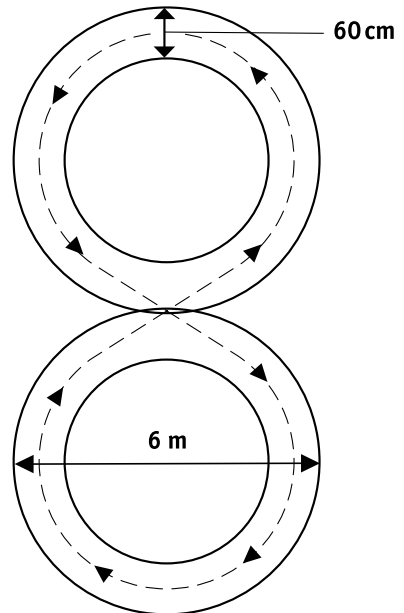


FIGURE 8
Balance and Steering



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