

# How to Buy a Bicycle

When you go to a bike shop to buy a bicycle, you might feel overwhelmed by the selection. Luckily, by doing some background research and appraising your needs, you can easily find the best bike for you. In almost no time, you'll be ready...

Method 1 of 3:

## Picking Out Your Bike

1.



**Choose a road bike if you'll be traveling primarily on paved roads.** Road bikes are mainly for riding on roads and highways because they have lighter frames, slimmer tires, and no suspension systems that absorb shock.<sup>[1]</sup>

1. Road bikes are a good fit for riders with a strong back and flexibility for riding in a bent position.
2. There are many subcategories of road bike, including cyclocross, touring, adventure road, triathlon, and fitness. If you're going to be using the bike for a specific sport or activity, consider getting one of these specialized bikes.

2.



**Pick a mountain bike for hitting the trails.** Mountain bikes are best for riding on rocky trails and adventuring off of paved roads. The tires are large with significant tread, which helps to grab the surface and propel you forward when you're going uphill.<sup>[2]</sup>

1. The frames are heavier, with a suspension system to absorb shock, and straight handlebars that allow the rider to sit upright.

3.

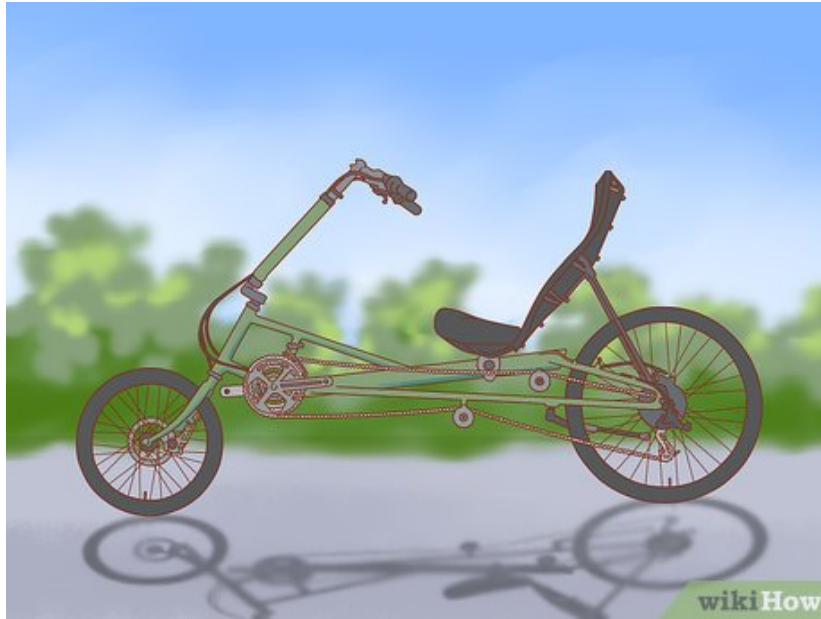


**Opt for a hybrid bicycle if you switch between road and mountain biking.** Hybrid bicycles can be used for a combination of street and off-road biking. The frame is adjusted to be comfortable for both mountain and road biking, while the rider sits in an upright position.

1. If you're using your bike to commute or for casual riding on roads and on trails, a hybrid might be the best option for you. It offers some of the ruggedness of a mountain bike with some of the speed of a road bike.

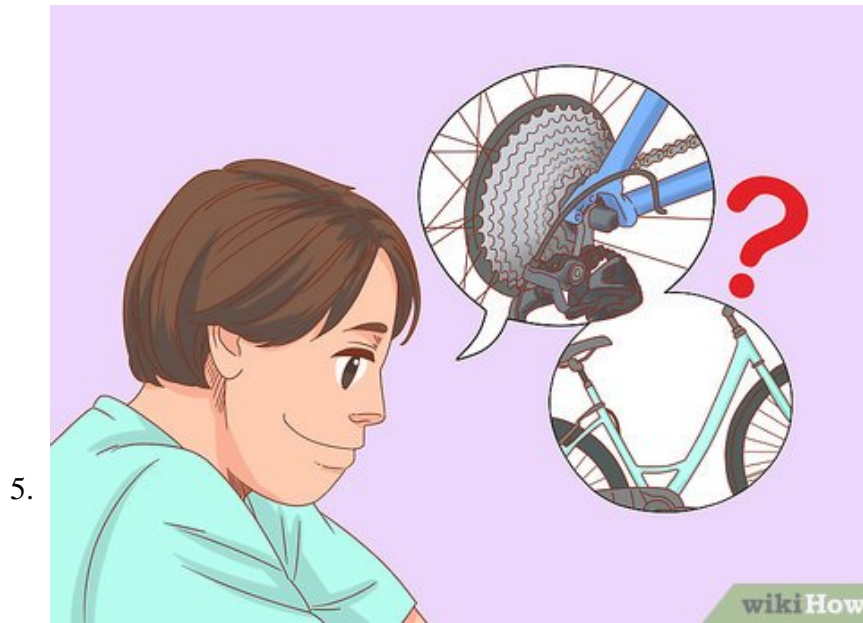
2. Dual-sport bikes are a specific subcategory of hybrid bikes that allow for transition between road and mountain biking.

4.



**Look for specialty bikes if you have special needs for riding.** Specialty bikes are great solutions for people who have physical challenges that can prevent them from riding, or those who just want a different riding experience. Some specialty bikes allow you to sit in a different position, and others are made for easier transportation.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. Recumbent and semi-recumbent bicycles allow the rider to sit in a lower position with their legs out in front of them. They tend to incur less stress on the back muscles and can be easier to mount for riders who use wheelchairs.
2. Foldable bicycles are perfect for riders on the go or people who have limited storage space. Most foldable bicycles are recumbent, but there are some full-sized foldable bikes!
3. Tandem bicycles or buddy bikes allow 2 riders at once, and can be useful for people who are learning how to ride and balance on a bike.



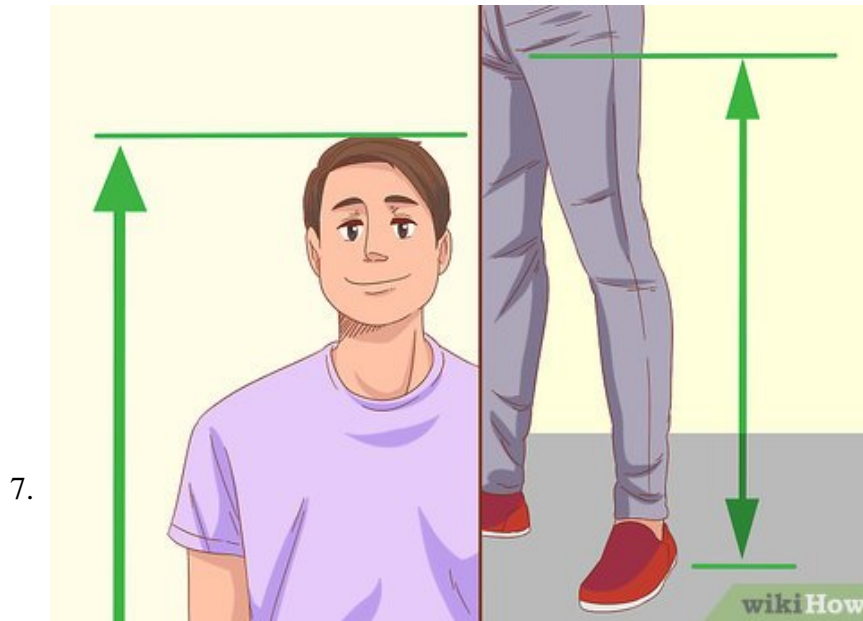
**Decide which features are most important to you.** Depending on your needs, you might want a bike with many speeds or gears, or a bike with no crossbar. Gears allow you to control how easy or difficult it is to pedal depending on the terrain. Bikes with no crossbars are sometimes easier to mount, but the crossbar increases the strength of the frame.<sup>[4]</sup>

1. As a general rule, women's frames tend to have lower or no crossbar, while men's have a high horizontal crossbar. However, frames are often interchangeable, and you don't have to purchase the frame that corresponds with your gender.<sup>[5]</sup>



**Purchase an 'entry-level' bike if you're a beginner.** Look for bikes that are comfortable and have easy controls. Some bikes are marketed as 'entry-level' or beginner bikes because they're easy to just hop on and ride. They tend to be slightly less expensive and have more versatile options for adding racks and accessories.<sup>[6]</sup>

1. An entry-level bike will allow you to grow into the bike while still being comfortable on your first rides.
2. Some beginner road bikes are designed so the rider is in a more comfortable, upright position, rather than the traditional bent position.



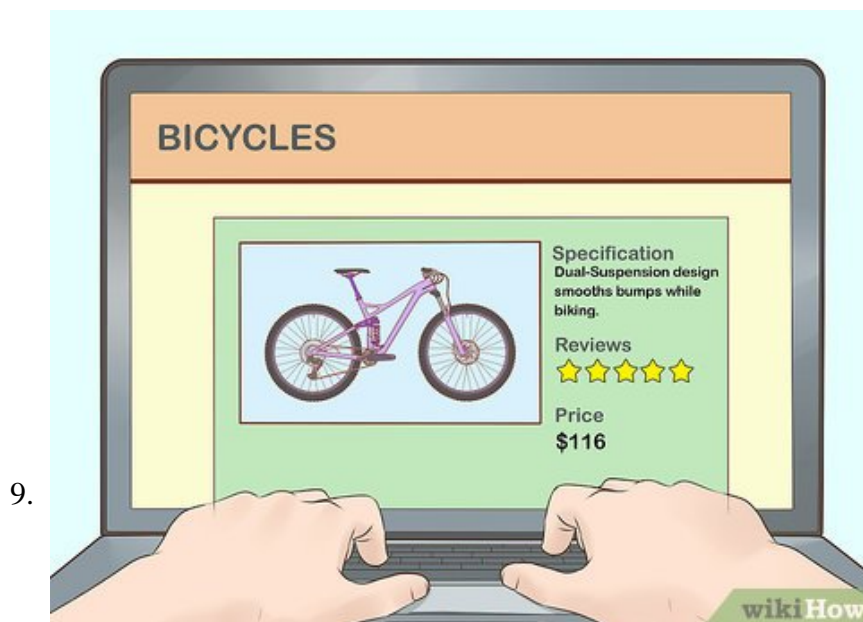
**Take your height and inseam measurements to determine your frame size.** The appropriate frame size for your bike is determined by the size of your body. Use a flexible tape measure to get your height and inseam lengths, which will allow you to make adjustments for seat height, handlebar height, and more. Consult a sizing chart to see which size frame is right for your height.<sup>[7]</sup>

1. Some stores will switch out parts and customize your bike to your body type if you have the measurements taken in the shop.
2. Frame sizes range between XXS-XXL and are standard between all brands. However, frame sizes can differ slightly for different types of bikes, so make sure you're looking at the appropriate chart.<sup>[8]</sup>



**Keep an eye out for first-time buyer sales and deals.** Even if you're on a tight budget, you can likely find a bike that fits your needs. Many stores offer sales and new buyer incentives, and you can look online for used bikes for sale by experienced riders. Shop around to get an idea of the cost of most bikes, and start saving.<sup>[9]</sup>

1. Remember to leave money in your budget for biking gear, like a helmet, reflectors and lights, and a bike lock at the very minimum. Gear helps to keep you and your bike safe while you ride!



**Research bikes online to see reviews, specifications, and prices.** Often, buyers will leave reviews on websites if they bought a specific bike. Their feedback can give you an idea of the pros and cons of a bike, and warn you about any issues that previous buyers have had in the past.<sup>[10]</sup>

1. Look for bikes with high-quality frames that get good reviews for sturdiness and comfort.
2. When you go into a bike store, you can mention that you've done online research, but don't expect the shop to price match. Normally, shops aren't able to offer the same prices as online retailers

because of their specialized stock and the cost of hiring experienced technicians.

10.



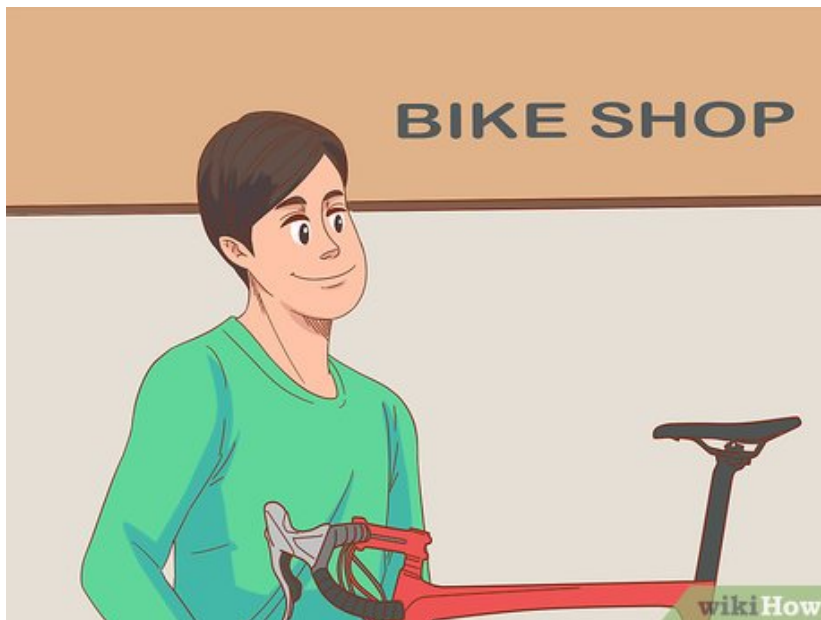
**Ask fellow cyclists what they recommend for your skill level and needs.** If you have friends who are cyclists, ask them for bike recommendations before you buy a bicycle. Chances are, they'll be more open about what you need from a bike, especially if they're more experienced.<sup>[11]</sup>

1. If you don't know any cyclists, send an email your local cycling club or go to a meeting to meet fellow bike enthusiasts. Come prepared with questions and be ready to talk about biking!

Method 2 of 3:

### Shopping for a Bicycle in Person

1.



**Visit reputable bike shops in your area.** Narrow your search by selecting the type of bike that you want, and find a store that specializes in that type. Be prepared to travel a bit to get to the store, and come prepared with your budget constraints. If you need extra time with the salesperson, try to visit on a weekday, when they're not as busy.<sup>[12]</sup>

1. Walk around the sales floor and check out the bikes that you've researched. Tell the salesperson about your abilities and goals, and ask for recommendations.
2. Be wary of a salesperson who steers you toward a significantly different type of bike, particularly if that bike is out of your price range.
3. Remember to take their suggestions into account and ask questions. If a salesperson recommends a different style, feel free to ask them why. Make sure their explanation is reasonable, and not motivated by making a sale.
4. Big box stores, like Walmart and some sporting goods stores, might have some bikes that interest you. If you know what you want and won't need any assistance selecting your bike, check those stores.

#### EXPERT TIP

#### Picture 12 of How to Buy a Bicycle

Jonas Jackel  
Owner, Huckleberry Bicycles

Jonas Jackel is the Owner of Huckleberry Bicycles, a bicycle retail store based in San Francisco, California. Jonas has over 20 years of experience managing bicycle retail stores and has operated Huckleberry Bicycles since 2011. Huckleberry Bicycles specializes in servicing, repairing, and custom building road, cross, gravel, touring, folding, and e-bikes. Jonas was also previously sat on the Board of Directors for Bike East Bay, a bicycle-advocacy non-profit organization based in Oakland, California.

#### Picture 13 of How to Buy a Bicycle

Jonas Jackel  
Owner, Huckleberry Bicycles

**Our Expert Agrees:** When you're looking for a new bike, visit a bike shop and talk to someone who works there. They'll ask you questions about how you want to use the bike, so they'll be able to recommend a bike that will do everything you need it to do. In addition, they'll help you try different sizes to find what feels the most comfortable to you.

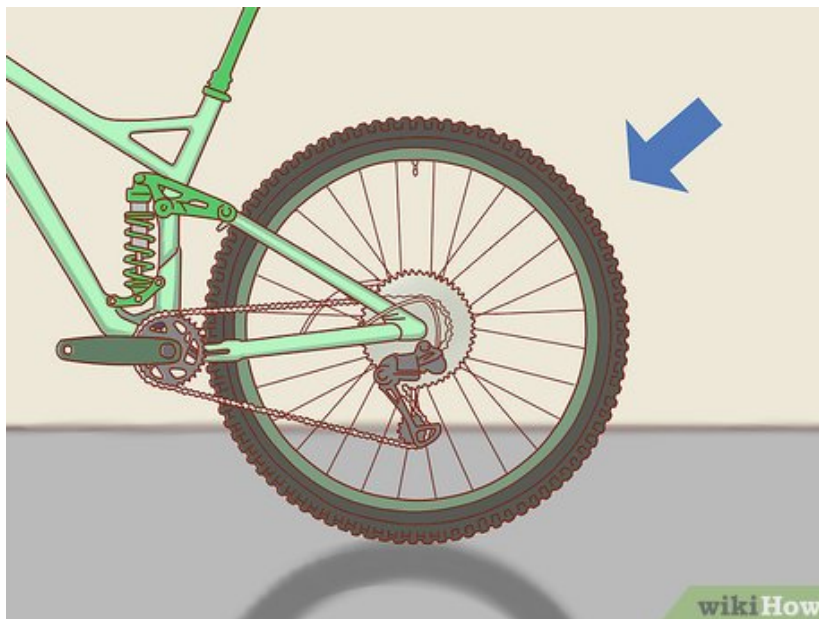
2.



**Sit on the bike to check the fit.** Survey your body position, the accessibility of the controls, and your comfort level. Ask yourself if you could maintain that position for a long period of time while biking without getting stiff or uncomfortable.<sup>[13]</sup>

1. Notice the distance from the seat to the bottom of the pedal stroke and the angle at which you have to lean to hold the handlebars.
2. The size of the frame is one of the few aspects of the bike that can't be altered, so take your time to try several different options and find the best fit. The retailer will be able to recommend a few different frames for you to test out.

3.



**Check the quality, tread, and size of the tires.** If you're buying a used bike, this is especially important for ensuring your safety. Squeeze the tires to make sure they're inflated, and check to make sure the tread and sidewalls look normal for the type of bike that you're buying.

1. If you're buying a new bike, ask the salesperson if the tires have anti-flat technology for your safety.

4.



**Test drive the bike to see if you like it.** Like a car, a bike is usually something you want to try out before you purchase it. Aim for a 15-20 minute test ride on each model that you're considering. Most shops encourage test driving to ensure that the customer is comfortable on the bike.<sup>[14]</sup>

1. Your body should feel comfortable as you ride, with your knees bending slightly at the bottom of the pedal revolution. You should be able to reach the brakes easily, and your upper body shouldn't feel cramped on a flat surface.
2. Make sure that the bicycle handles turn smoothly and that you can sit and stand easily while riding.

5.



**Negotiate a reasonable price for the bike.** Although small shops can't always price match, you can ask about sales and other deals. Many salespeople will be happy to work with you to find a reasonable price for the bike, especially if their original price seems much higher than what you've seen elsewhere.<sup>[15]</sup>

1. One of the best ways to negotiate is by adding free services, such as regular tune-ups, general repairs in case of an accident, or even a discount on gear. Ask if the salesperson will add some extra

perks to your purchase to sweeten the deal!

Method 3 of 3:

## Buying a Bike Online



**Do a quick search of the bicycle that you want to buy.** If you have a bike in mind, a quick search of the brand and type of bike will show you most of the websites where it's listed for sale. Get a good idea of the price for the bike, and see if there are any retailers near you that carry that model.<sup>[16]</sup>

1. Look for retailers in your area who have brick-and-mortar stores as well as online purchase options. That way, you can test drive the bike at the store and then buy the bike you want online.
2. In some cases, you can purchase the bike online but have it shipped to a store to save on shipping costs.



**Browse various websites for sales and deals on bikes.** Check out sites like eBay and Craigslist for used bikes. For new bikes, check out major retailers, like REI for mountain bikes, and brand websites.<sup>[17]</sup>

1. eBay can be a reasonable choice for shoppers on a budget because you can place bids. Remember, you will likely have to pay for shipping if you buy from eBay, and that can be expensive. Be sure to check the seller's feedback to make sure they're reputable.
2. Craigslist allows you to pick up your bike locally, and you probably won't have to assemble it. This gives you the added benefit of potentially being able to sit on and test drive the bike before you buy.
3. Major brand and corporate websites will have plenty of stock, and can often offer more competitive prices for their bikes.



**Use the chat feature to ask questions if the website has one.** Buying a bike online can involve a lot of guesswork, but there are still ways that you can ask questions to the seller. If you're buying a used bike, use the eBay chat function, or send an email through Craigslist. For new bikes, look for the website's

customer service email or phone number.<sup>[18]</sup>

1. Ask questions about the welds, frame, breaks, measurements, tires, chains, and anything else you can think of.
2. For used bikes, go out of your way to ask the seller if the bike has any body damage to the frame or if it has had repairs done previously. If you receive the bike and it's damaged, you can use the messages as proof for filing a complaint with the website.



**Order your bike and wait for it to arrive.** Some bikes will arrive partially assembled, while others will need complete assembly. If you're getting it shipped to a store, they may assemble it for you, and you might be able to do a test drive before you leave with your purchase.<sup>[19]</sup>

1. Keep the confirmation email from the order for your records, in case you need to return the bike.
2. If your bike comes in pieces, take it to your local bike shop and pay someone to assemble it for maximum safety.
3. Test drive the bike after it's put together. If you don't like it, check the website for the company's return policy. In many cases, you can disassemble it and ship it back or return it to a brick-and-mortar store.

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