sixthreezero

The Ultimate Bike Buyer's Guide

How to Choose, Fit, & Maintain the Right Bike for You

With the Right Bike, the Road is Not the Limit...

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Introduction

For the true bike enthusiast, one's bicycle is an extension of oneself. It's not merely a tool for exploring the city or competing in a race or sharing an intimate ride with loved ones. For those who know the power and freedom of a bicycle, it becomes a way of life. That's why there is more to choosing the right bike than simply choosing one that looks good. Every new bike owner must determine exactly what their needs and goals are, and take into account a number of factors that combine body size and strength with one's unique goals.

Choosing and fitting just the right bike for you can open up new worlds of adventurous possibilities, and lead to improved strength, balance, and overall health. Riding the wrong bike, on the other hand, can lead to discomfort, dissatisfaction, and even injury over time.

Size is not the only factor to consider when choosing a bike. Bikes also come in different styles, each with distinct riding purposes. From cruisers to mountain bikes to racing bikes, these varieties offer different opportunities, advantages, and limitations for their riders. A bike built for speed will not be very comfortable or steady on a leisurely neighborhood bike ride. Likewise, some bikes are great on paved roads but are no match for off-road trails.

With so many factors to consider and so many variety of bikes, specifications, and accessories available, it can be difficult to figure out just the right bike for you. That's why we've created ***The Ultimate Guide to Buying the Right Bike***. We want you to have a great experience on your bicycle. We know that choosing the wrong bike can turn you off from the activity for the rest of your life. While choosing the right one can engender a life-long love affair with this timeless chariot of freedom and fun.

In this Introductory chapter, you'll find in-depth information on the differences between various bike types, specifications, accessories, price points, and buying experiences. All of which are important to consider when determining the correct bike for your needs. Then in Chapter 1, you'll find a comprehensive grid of bike types and specifications, all fitted to the most common types of biker's goals, needs, and terrains. This will help you choose exactly which bike is right for you. In Chapter 2, you'll learn how to fit that bike to your specific body and riding style. And finally in Chapter 3, we'll go over some of the basics regarding how to care for and maintain your bike. We hope this guide is as fun to follow as it was to create. Have a great time and get riding soon!

Differences in Type of Bike

To the untrained eye, a bike is a bike. Sure there are different styles, but that's all aesthetic, right? In fact, every minute difference in style and accessory makes a big difference in the way the bike is meant to be used. For instance, some bikes have low seats and relatively high handlebars, so you sit up straight when you ride them. Others have low handlebars, so you have to bend forward to ride. The thickness of bicycle frames and bike tires also vary. All of these factors makes a significant impact on how and why the particular bike ought to be ridden.

Bike designs are not interchangeable. Each type of bike is meant to perform in certain areas well, at the expense of other areas. Several types of bikes are ideal for leisurely riding and for non-competitive fitness activities, which are the ones this guide focuses on. Bikes designed especially for racing or for riding on very rough, mountainous terrain are not included in this guide.

The following 4 types of bicycles can be great for commuting, leisure, fitness, or some combination therein. See which one(s) sounds best for your bike-riding goals.

Cruisers

Cruisers are sometimes called "beach cruisers," even though they are made for riding on paved roads, not on sand. They are built for stability and comfort. Cruisers work best when you ride them at low to medium speeds and for relatively short distances. Because of their simple design, cruisers tend to be inexpensive.

Features of cruiser bikes include:

- Low seat position relative to the handlebars
- Wide tires (sometimes called "balloon tires"), which have more traction than other types of bike tires
- Upright handlebars
- Usually single speed, although some cruisers are available in 3-speed models
- Usually steel frames
- May have coaster brakes, hand brakes, or both
- Often painted in eye-catching colors

Cruisers are ideal for:

- People who are new to cycling
- People who ride for leisure or for short commutes to work
- Paved roads, even when the roads are wet

Comfort Bikes

Comfort bikes are stable and comfortable like cruisers, but they can handle greater distances and higher speeds. In some languages, they are colloquially called “grandma bikes” because of their popularity among elderly people. The ideal place to ride comfort bikes is on paved roads, but they also do quite well on unpaved nature trails.

Features of comfort bikes include:

- Upright handlebars with a relatively low seat
- Coaster brakes, hand brakes, or both
- Wide tires which can be smooth or semi-slick

Comfort bikes are great for:

- Commuting to work in the city
- Paved roads and bike trails
- People with back problems
- People who want to lose weight

Road Bikes

Road bikes are the fastest type of bike you can get, except for racing bikes. Everything about their design is for the purpose of an aerodynamic ride. Their speed comes at the expense of stability, so road bikes are best for experienced cyclists riding on paved roads. Inexperienced riders may find the forward-leaning riding position uncomfortable. Because of their smooth tires and relatively low stability, road bikes are not reliably safe to ride on wet pavement.

Features of road bikes include:

- Lightweight frames made of carbon fiber or titanium
- Aerodynamic riding position with “drop” handlebars, so that you lean forward to ride
- Smooth, narrow tires

- Hand brakes
- Usually 7 speeds
- Sport saddles (narrow bike seats) or racing saddles

Road bikes are ideal for:

- People with a high level of physical fitness
- Long bike rides on paved roads

Hybrid Bikes

Hybrid bikes are a middle ground between high-stability low-speed bikes (like cruisers) and high-speed low-stability bikes (like road bikes). They require a higher level of physical fitness than a cruiser or comfort bike, but they are also designed with commuting and leisurely city riding in mind, not just fitness. Hybrid bikes usually cost more than cruisers or comfort bikes but less than road bikes.

Features of hybrid bikes include:

- Upright or slightly forward-leaning riding position
- Hand brakes (usually disc brakes)
- Sometimes have sport saddles
- Usually 3-speed or 7-speed
- Slightly wider tires than a road bike

Hybrid bikes are ideal for:

- Commuting in the city
- Riding on paved roads
- People with a medium or high level of physical fitness

Difference in Bike Specifications

Road bikes and cruiser bikes differ in their frame materials and tires, and each component of the bike makes it well suited for its intended purpose. This section will examine why each component or specification is most appropriate for the types of bike, according to how it used. For example, why are thick tires best for cruisers while narrow ones are better for road bikes? Why is steel, which is a relatively inexpensive bike material, appropriate for cruisers but not for road bikes? Why are the coaster brakes, the ones that lead to brake by pedaling backward, unsuitable for most serious cyclists, when every bike you rode as a kid had them? Let's explore...

Frame Materials

The bike frame is the main structure of the bike -- everything except the wheels, tires, and saddle. For many years, steel was the frame material of choice, but recently some other materials have come to be preferred for certain types of bikes. These are the most popular bike frame materials today.

- **Steel** - Steel is sturdy, stable, and shatter-resistant. Therefore, it remains a popular frame material for cruisers and comfort bikes. It is somewhat heavy, making it less than ideal for bikes that need to go fast. It is also vulnerable to rust.
- **Aluminum** - Aluminum is sometimes used for high-stability bikes. Aluminum bike frames are heavier than steel ones; and like steel, aluminum can rust.
- **Titanium** - Titanium is stronger and lighter than steel or aluminum, but it is expensive.
- **Carbon fiber** - Carbon fiber is also lightweight, but it is more easily damaged in collisions than steel. Carbon fiber is a popular frame material for road bikes.

Tires

Thicker tires are best for stability, and thinner tires are best for speed. Also, the smoother the tire, the faster it can go, but this increased speed is at the expense of traction.

The tires of road bikes are very narrow (about 23 mm) and smooth. These tires contribute to the lightweight and aerodynamic quality of the bike. Their disadvantage is that they provide almost no traction. Therefore, they are not safe to ride on wet pavement, and very difficult to ride on unpaved roads. Some road bike riders choose narrow tires with slightly more traction.

Most bikes have tires that are the same width as the wheel rim, but cruiser bike tires are wider than the wheel rim. These tires, called balloon tires, range from about 51 to about 64 mm in width. Balloon tires have lower pressure than other types of tires, which limits the speed the bike can reach.

The tire width of hybrid bikes varies according to how you plan to use the bike. If you plan to ride fast on paved roads (that is, to use the bike like a road bike with a more upright riding position), choose 28mm tires, the same width as the wheel rim of a hybrid bike. If you value stability over speed, choose wider tires, between 38 and 50mm. The wider tires will make your bike feel like a faster version of a cruiser.

Seat Types

A bicycle seat is called a saddle. Bike saddles vary in width and in the amount of cushion they provide. They are narrow in the front and wider in the back.

Of all bike saddles, cruiser saddles make you feel the most like you are sitting on a chair. They are level (not tilted forward) because of the upright riding position, and are made to support the rider's weight. The back of the saddle is wider than the rider's pelvis, and the saddle has a lot of cushion. Therefore, it is comfortable to sit on a cruiser saddle for long periods of time.

Sport saddles are common in road bikes and hybrid bikes. They are only as wide as the rider's ischial tuberosities (sit bones), and they sometimes have a groove in the middle of the seat to avoid causing discomfort in the groin area. They are made for riding in an aerodynamic position, and thus are often tilted forward. Sport saddles have less cushion than cruiser saddles, because they do not have to support the rider's full weight like cruiser saddles do. Racing saddles are like sport saddles except with even less cushion; very athletic riders might choose a racing saddle for their road bikes. The padding in sport saddles and racing saddles is often made of gel.

Speeds

The "speeds" of a bicycle are different gears. Changing speeds on a bike is similar to shifting into third or fourth gear in a car with manual transmission. The more speeds a bike has, the more advantage it gives the rider in riding fast.

With a single-speed bike, all the bike's momentum comes from you pushing the pedals. Therefore, they are not capable of very high speeds. It is difficult to ride a single-speed bike on terrain that is not flat. Many cruisers are single-speed bicycles.

Three-speed bikes are good for riding on hills: One gear is for riding on flat surfaces, another is for uphill riding, and the third is for riding downhill.

Seven-speed bikes are best for people who need to ride very fast. A seven-speed hybrid bike is ideal for commuters who ride to work in the bike lane of major roads and need to keep pace with urban traffic. Although it is possible to buy bikes with more than seven speeds, seven is plenty. The only reason you would need more would be if you were trying to haul a trailer with your bike.

Handlebars

The two handlebar positions on bikes are upright handlebars and dropped handlebars. Upright handlebars can typically be found on cruisers, comfort bikes, and most hybrid bikes, or any type of bike that has an upright riding position. These are positioned at such a height relative to the saddle that your arms are in a similar position to how they would be if you were gripping a steering wheel or sitting in a chair and resting your hands on a dining table.

Dropped handlebars are common on road bikes and racing bikes, although the most fitness-oriented hybrid bikes can also have dropped handlebars. They require you to lean forward, so some of your weight is on the saddle and some of it is on your arms.

Size

The size of bike that you need depends on your height and weight. Contrary to popular misconception, two people whose height varies by more than a foot can comfortably ride the same size bike frame. Many differences in body size can be dealt with by adjusting the saddle or handlebars. The following table is provided for hybrid bikes, since they are a good middle point between road bikes and cruisers and should thus be comparable.

Rider height		Rider inside leg		Suggested frame size		
Ft/In	**Cms**	**Inches**	**Cms**	**Inches**	**Cms**	**Size**
4`10"-5`1"	147-155 cm	24-29"	61-73 cm	14"	47-49 cm	XS
5`1`-5`5`	155-165 cm	25-30"	63-76 cm	15"	50-52 cm	S
5`5`-5`9`	165-175 cm	26-31"	66-78 cm	16"	53-54 cm	M
5`9`-6`0`	175-183 cm	27`-32`	68-81 cm	17"	55-57 cm	L
6`0`-6`3`	183-191 cm	28`-33`	71-83 cm	18"	58-61 cm	XL
6`1`-6`6`	191-198 cm	29`-34`	73-86 cm	19"	61-63 cm	XXL

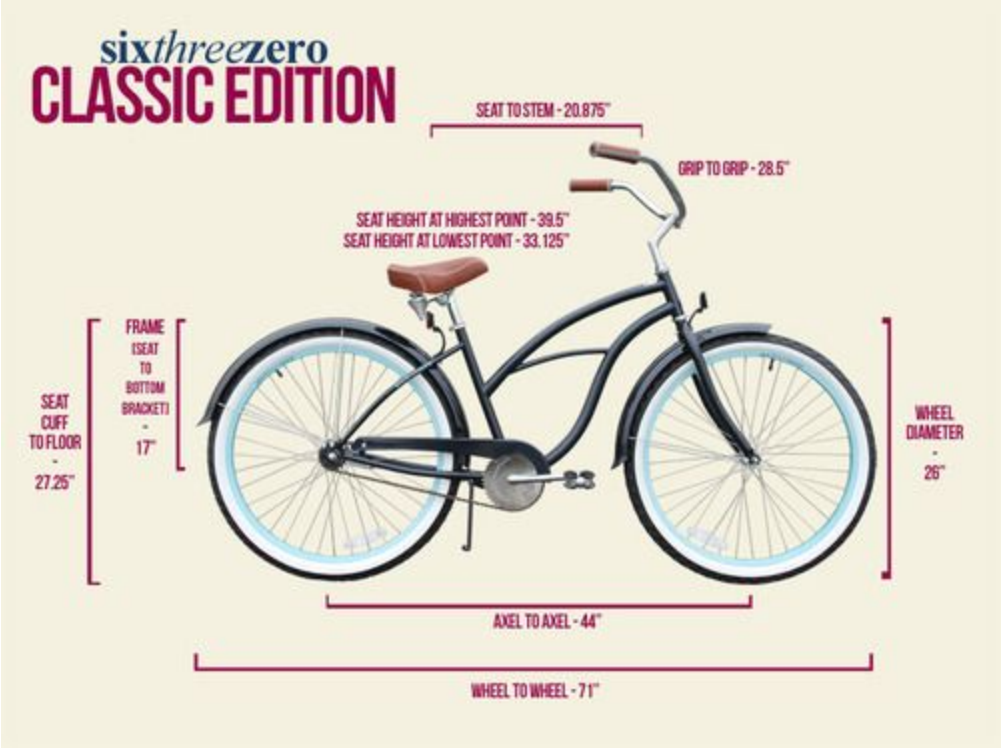
Brakes

The bikes you rode as a child probably had coaster brakes, which let you stop the bike by pedaling backward. Coaster brakes are a type of drum brake, the same kind of brake found in automobiles. Some single-speed cruiser bikes and comfort bikes have coaster brakes, sometimes in addition to hand brakes, but coaster brakes are not safe on multi-speed bikes.

Almost all bikes for adults have hand brakes of some sort, but the type of brake mechanism varies from bike to bike. Caliper brakes, those operated by a single cable and mounted above the wheel, are suitable for bikes with narrow tires, such as road bikes and hybrid bikes for more athletic riders. They do not work well on bikes with wide tires.

Disc brakes are a type of caliper brake; they are sometimes used on road bikes. While they make it easier to brake safely on wet surfaces, they negatively affect the bike's speed. A danger of disc brakes is that they can overheat when you ride at high speeds for a long time.

Diagram of Bike



Differences in Accessories

Bike accessories come in a variety of forms with an array of purposes. Some are for convenience, while others are for for safety or functionality. And while some bike accessories may even just be for show, many can make your bike more secure and suitable for particular activities.

Basket

Many cruiser bikes have a basket on the front. A bike basket is very practical for carrying groceries or even taking a lap dog for a ride around the neighborhood. The only disadvantage of a bike basket is that, when it is full, it makes the bike more difficult to steer.

Rear Rack

If you commute to work or school on your bike, it is practical to have a rear rack on the bike, so you can attach your backpack to it. Some rear racks are even strong enough to hold a surfboard. As with a full front basket, a rear rack with a heavy backpack makes the bike harder to steer.

Child Seats

Children who weigh 40 pounds or less can ride in a child seat on an adult's bike; however, they must wear helmets. Most child seats are positioned behind the adult's seat, but seats that go in front of the adult's seat also exist, so it is possible for two children to ride on a bike with one adult. Child seats must have foot rests, armrests, and a supported back, so that no part of the child's body is in contact with any moving parts of the bike. Child seats on bicycles also have several sets of straps to secure the child in the seat.

Locks

When keeping your bike anywhere except the garage or shed at your home, it is a good idea to have a lock on the bike to prevent theft. There are two main types of bike locks appropriate for securing your bicycle to a bike rack.

- U-lock - A U-lock is a semicircular piece of metal that connects your bike to the bike rack. You lock and unlock it with a key.
- Cable lock - A cable lock is a thick cable that you thread through the bike rack and one of your bike's wheels. You lock and unlock it with a combination lock or a key.

Other Bike Accessories

- Front and rear lights - essential for safety when riding at night
- Bottle holder - great for holding a water bottle on long fitness rides
- Bell - alerts people to your presence for safety reasons, but also a fun retro feature, especially on cruiser bikes

Differences in Riding Positions

Depending on your goals as a cyclist, you will want to choose a bike with either an upright riding position or an aerodynamic riding position. Upright riding positions are more comfortable and give you greater stability, but they are better for lower speeds. Aerodynamic riding positions, where you are leaning forward, let you ride much faster, but they are less comfortable and require a greater level of riding skill and overall fitness.

Upright Riding Position

- Typical of cruisers, comfort bikes, and most hybrid bikes
- Very comfortable, feels like sitting on a chair
- Cruiser saddles, positioned horizontally
- Handlebars in a high position relative to the seat
- Makes the bike stable and easy to steer
- All of your weight is on the saddle
- Best for novice or elderly riders

Aerodynamic Riding Position

- Typical of road bikes, racing bikes, and some hybrid bikes
- Dropped handlebar position
- Sport saddle or racing saddle angled forward
- Great for high speeds
- Some of your weight is on the saddle, and some is on your arms
- Best for athletic riders

Differences in Pricing

Bikes vary a lot in price, so there is not one universal answer about how much is a reasonable price for a bike. Factors that influence the price include the brand, the bike frame material, and the number of speeds.

Beware of dirt-cheap bikes sold at stores that do not specialize in bicycles or sporting goods. New bikes sold for very low prices tend to be made of low quality materials and to malfunction very quickly. Bike sellers call these “bicycle-shaped objects.” They are similar to “lemon” cars in that they appeal to the bargain hunter in you, but they soon end up costing you a lot in repairs or replacements.

Cruiser bikes are quite inexpensive; prices for high quality cruiser bikes start at about $300. Cruisers are made of steel, which does not cost much, and they are usually single speed.

Road bikes and hybrid bikes cost more, starting usually between $350 and $400. Their lightweight frames are made of more expensive materials, such as titanium or carbon fiber. These bikes also usually have multiple speeds.

Buying a Bike Online vs. in a Store

The best place to buy a bike is at a store that specializes in bikes, whether it be an online or retail store. This way, the people you are buying from are actually bike specialists. Whether you buy from a brick and mortar bike store or an online bike store is your choice; both have their Pros and Cons.

Pros of buying in-store

- You can be fitted for your bike and have it adjusted, and then take it home the same day
- You can try out several bikes to see which one feels best
- Face-to-face interaction with a bike expert
- You can meet other bike enthusiasts at the bike shop
- Support local business and your local cycling community

Cons of buying in-store

- More expensive than buying online

- Time consuming, unless the bike store is very close to your house

Pros of buying online

- Less expensive than buying from physical retail stores
- Bigger selection than physical stores
- You can customize your bike online with a few clicks

Cons of buying online

- Bikes sometimes require assembly
- Repackaging your bike and sending it back for adjustments or repairs is a hassle and can take a long time

Choosing the Right Bike

So, now that you know all about the differences in bike types, specs, accessories, and pricing, it's time to consider exactly what type of bike is right for you. Remember, this depends largely on what you plan to use the bike for. In other words, what are your needs and goals, and what type(s) of terrain do you expect to ride on?

The following table accounts for the most common types of needs, goals, and terrains in the most comprehensive guide you'll find to determine exactly what type of bike is right for you. It also includes specific suggestions for specs and accessories, and what you should expect to pay.

Fitting the Bike Properly

So, you've found just the right bike, with the right specs and accessories, for your particular needs and goals. But your journey to obtaining the absolute right bike is not over yet. Now, it's time to fit that bike properly to your body and riding style. So let's explore how to fit your new bike.

Riding Position

Riding position is fundamental to the structure of the bike, and it is one of the most significant factors that influences a bike's performance and feel. Your riding position will be determined by your needs and goals, and thus by your bike style. Part of fitting the bike is to determine your most comfortable riding position, and adjust as necessary. Here is a brief review of the two major riding positions:

- **Upright** - You are sitting up straight on a bike with upright handlebars (cruisers, comfort bikes, and most hybrids). The upright riding position gives more stability, and most people consider it the more comfortable riding position, but it not conducive to very high speeds.
- **Aerodynamic** - You lean forward to ride, dividing your weight among the saddle and your arms. Bikes with dropped handlebars (road bikes and the sportier hybrid bikes) allow for an aerodynamic riding position. The aerodynamic riding position lets you ride very fast, but the bike is less stable and less comfortable for leisure riding.

Bike Sizing

Bike sizing is not exact, and it does not correspond exactly to your height. Choosing the right sized bike is like choosing a suit or evening gown; even if you find the right size, you will need to have some alterations made before it fits you perfectly. No one can just choose a bike off the rack at a bike store and immediately take it on a miles-long bike ride without some custom fitting.

The reasons that bike frames come in standard sizes is that people and bikes are big enough for minor discrepancies not to make a big difference. If your bike frame is 3 mm too tall, you probably will not even notice, but if the saddle is 3 mm too high, it will be uncomfortable. Either your behind will hurt after riding the bike for any distance, or you will not be able to pedal while sitting.

The ideal height for a bike frame depends not only on your height, but also on the type of bike. For example, hybrid bikes are lower to the ground than road bikes, so if the same person buys a road bike and a hybrid bike, the road bike will have a taller frame. To tell if the bike frame is the correct height, straddle the bike frame while wearing your bike shorts and cycling shoes. If you cannot easily straddle the bike, the frame is too tall.

Which Parts of the Bike Do You Need to Fit?

Customization for bike fitting involves adjusting the pedals, handlebars, and saddle. Your leg length is more important that your total height when choosing a bike frame, hence straddling the bike frame to see if it is the correct height. You can adjust the saddle and the handlebars based on the length of your torso and arms.

The Five Points of Contact

Adjustments to the bike depend on making it fit with the five points at which the bike comes into contact with your body:

- Right foot
- Left foot
- Pelvis
- Right hand
- Left hand

As you can imagine, fitting the feet involves adjusting the pedals, fitting the pelvis requires adjusting the saddle, and fitting the hands means adjusting the handlebars. One of the biggest challenges in bike fitting is that, while bikes are symmetrical, the human body is not.

Bike Pedal Fitting

You can tell that the pedals of your bike have been properly fitted to your feet if, when you pedal, your knees are directly above your feet. Your knees should not be closer to or farther from the bike frame. If your knees are not directly above your feet, you must have the pedals adjusted. Do not just live with it and adjust your riding position to adapt to the improperly fitted pedals; this will make it uncomfortable to ride and can lead to injury over time.

These are the factors to take into consideration when fitting the bike pedals to your feet:

- Forward or backward position of the cleats
- Lateral position of the cleats
- Cleat rotation
- Foot tilt
- Asymmetry (if any) in the length of your legs

If your knee is not directly above your foot when you pedal, the first thing to do is adjust the cleat. If this does not work, try these other remedies.

- Add spacer washers
- Choose a pedal with spindles
- Add cleat wedges

When you are riding your bike, your feet should point the same way as they do when you are standing on the ground. If they don't, adjust the cleat rotation.

If the problems with fitting the pedals are because of unequal leg length, you should use leg length shims. Have a bike expert at a bike store fit them for you.

Bike Saddle Fitting

The only way to know if a saddle feels right is to sit on it while it is attached to your bike. You cannot tell just by squishing the saddle with your hands. Do not assume that saddles with cutout grooves are more comfortable than those without; it is a matter of personal preference. Some people even find that the most comfortable saddle for them is one that was designed for the opposite gender.

These are the factors to take into consideration when fitting a bike saddle to your body.

- Saddle choice

- Saddle tilt
- Saddle height
- Fore (front) or aft (back) position of the saddle

Whether the saddle is perfectly level or whether it is pointing slightly up or down is a matter of personal preference. If you have to tilt the saddle forward for it to be comfortable, then it is not the right saddle. Riding on a very forward tilted saddle means that you have to put too much of your weight on your upper body.

To find the right saddle height, sit on the saddle with your hips level. Let one leg hang down; it should touch the pedal. If you have to move your hips from side to side to reach the pedals, the saddle is too high.

The saddle should be positioned in a way that the front and back wheels bear an equal amount of weight. If it is too far forward or too far back, the bike can tip over.

Handlebar Fitting

These are the factors to consider when fitting the handlebars to your hands.

- Position
- Width
- Rotation
- Height
- Reach

On bikes with dropped handlebars, your arms are at a 90-degree angle to your torso. On bikes with an upright riding position, they are at an acute angle to your torso. Some bikes have adjustable stems; adjusting them allows you to vary your arm angle more.

The ideal width for handlebars is the distance from one of your armpits to the other. On dropped handlebars, the reach is the distance from where the handlebar meets the stem to where it curves into the dropped part, and the drop is the distance from the top to the bottom of hooks (the dropped part of the handlebars).

Rotation refers to where the bottom of the hooks are in relation to the top. Road bikes arrive at the store with the bottom of the hooks directly below the top, but many riders find it more comfortable to rotate them slightly toward you. If you ride with the hooks rotated too far forward, it will make your hands feel numb.

Handlebar height is a matter of personal preference. The handlebars should be at the same height as it would be comfortable to type on a computer keyboard.

Troubleshooting

Here are some common problems with bike fitting and ways to fix them.

Problem: pain in the front of the knee
Solution: Move the saddle up and backward.

Problem: pain in the back of the knee
Solution: Move the saddle down and forward.

Problem: pain in the outside of the knee
Solution: Adjust the cleat so that your foot is farther from the bike frame

Problem: pain in the inside of the knee
Solution: Adjust the cleat so that your foot is closer to the bike frame.

Problem: discomfort in the Achilles tendon area
Solution: Move the cleat backwards,

Problem: pain in the bottom of the foot
Solution: Add a wedge to the pedal.

Ownership Information

So you've chosen the perfect bike for your needs, and fit it properly to your body. That's great! Even the best bikes, however, still require routine maintenance if you want them to work well for many years. What you need to do to keep your bike in working order depends on the type of bike and on the conditions in which you ride it.

Maintenance

Bikes last a long time if they are well maintained. Just how long depends on the type of bike and on the materials from which it is made.

- **Aluminum** - The average lifespan of an aluminum bike frame is eight years. While aluminum is somewhat rust-resistant, it becomes more brittle over time, so aluminum bikes more than eight years old are not reliable.
- **Steel** - As long as you protect the bike from rust, steel bike frames last for decades. It is not hard to find people who rode the same bike their parents rode as children.
- **Carbon fiber** - Because carbon fiber bike frames are a new invention, no one is quite sure how long they last, but it seems to be at least a few decades. Bike frames made of thicker carbon fiber are even more durable than thinner ones. However, carbon fiber resin grows weaker over time.
- **Titanium** - Titanium bike frames are also too new to tell how long they last, but they appear to be the most durable bike frames of all. Titanium is more rust-proof than aluminum or steel, and it does not weaken over time like carbon fiber.

How to Wash a Road Bike

Road bikes are intricate, high-tech machines. Washing a road bike after every ride will cause unnecessary stress on the bike; only wash it after the bike gets wet or dirty. Here are some tips for washing a road bike.

- Remove the wheels, and then wash the bike frame with soap and water. Scrub it with a brush and then rinse it with soap and water.

- Clean the chain, derailleurs, front chainrings, and rear cogs with diluted citrus degreaser. Do not use solvents, because modern bike parts do not need them, and they will cause unnecessary wear and tear.
- Clean the rest of the bike with diluted isopropyl alcohol.
- Lube the chain after washing the bike, not before. Wait for the lube to dry before your next bike ride.

Other Bike Care Tips

- When you transport your bike for travel, secure any loose parts to prevent damage.
- After you ride over a pothole, check your rims, spokes, and bearings. Even if you do not ride over any potholes, check them once per month.
- Refresh the sealant on your tubeless setup every three months. If you have a hybrid bike that is more like a mountain bike, refresh the sealant more often than that.

Routine Repairs

Every bike needs routine repairs, but how often you should make them depends on how much you ride your bike. If you ride your bike six times per month or fewer, you are recreational rider. If you ride seven to fifteen times per month, you are a frequent rider. If you ride more than fifteen times per month, you are an avid rider.

Here are some routine repairs and how often you should make them.

- On a road bike with seven speeds or more, replace the chains every 1200 miles.
- If you live in a humid climate, lube the cables four times per year. If you live in a dry climate, the cables will not need to be lubed as often.
- Remove and grease the bottom brackets twice per year. Also do this after each time your bike is exposed to a heavy rain, whether you are riding it or it is chained to a bike rack outside.
- Check the torque on your bolts twice per year. Check them even more often if your bike has an aluminum frame.
- Wash the bike frame every 500 miles, which is equal to about once per month for avid riders. While you are washing the bike, inspect the frame for cracks and dents. Check for loose spokes and replace missing ones. Also check the cleats for loose bolts and tighten them if necessary. Check the cables, and if they are rusty, replace them. Lube the brakes, derailleur pivot points, and pedals.

- Wax the bike frame every 2,500 miles, which is equal to about once every six months for avid riders. Waxing the frame will protect its paint. At this time, you should also check the tires; replace them if any part of the tire appears worn out. Check your tire repair kit and spare tire. Check the hubs, bottom bracket, and headset and adjust them if necessary. Check the brake pads, cables, and handlebar grips; replace them if they are worn out. Clean the cassette, chain, chainrings, and front and rear derailleurs with biodegradable solvent.
- Every 6,000 miles, which is once a year for avid riders, check the hubs, bottom bracket, headset, pedals, brake cables, gear cables, and cable housing, and replace them if necessary. (You do not need to check the bottom bracket unless the bike is at least three years old.) Replace the brake pads, brake hoods, and handlebar tape, even if they do not look worn out. Check the wheels for cracks. Check the bolts on the basket, rack, and other accessories, and tighten them if necessary. Lube the suspension components, bike frame, and home tire pump.

Do It Yourself or Take the Bike to a Bike Shop?

Some bike repairs are easier to do than others. Which bike maintenance tasks you perform by yourself and which ones you have done at a professional bike shop depend on your level of skill and how much time you have to devote to bike maintenance. Almost anyone can wash their own bike successfully. But, it is quite a challenge to grease the bearings on the pedals, so even people who do most of their own bike maintenance usually take their bikes to the shop every year to have the pedal bearings greased. For almost every other bike repair, it comes down to personal preference and knowledge. Avid and competitive cyclists usually take their bikes to a bike shop for inspection and maintenance twice per month. Depending on how often you ride, the type of bike you have, and what you use the bike for, you can determine the level of skilled maintenance necessary.

Conclusion

At sixthreezero, bikes are our life. Our passion for the biking lifestyle, all the fun and freedom it brings, and biking's tremendous physical benefits, inspired us to create this ***Ultimate Guide to Buying the Right Bike***. We want to help as many riders as possible find the joy we've found through biking. From inexperienced riders looking to try a new leisure activity to hardocre adventurists seeking the next challenging activity, individuals of all ages all around the world fall in love with bicycling every day. And we know that is in large part due to those individuals getting help from professionals to choose, fit, and maintain the right bikes for them. We hope this guide helps you find just the right bike for your life adventure. Never let the road be your limit. Soar free and have fun as often as you can. We'll be on the journey with you.

Have a great first experience on your bike after reading this guide? Let us know at info@sixthreezero.com. We'd love to hear your story. You can also join our Journey Club, for all sorts of tips and tricks, ride ideas, and adventure stories about bike lovers around the world. Join our community today!