



# Your Guide to Buying the Right Bicycle

Created by:



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# Your Guide to Buying the Right Bicycle

Whether you're a daily commuter, an athlete, a recreational rider, or an avid indoor-cycling participant (#soulcycle), there's a bicycle for everybody.

At World Bicycle Relief, our mission is to mobilize people through The Power of Bicycles, so we've created this guide to give you an overview on how to buy a bike that will fit your lifestyle - whether you're a beginner or a seasoned rider.



## STEP 1: CHOOSE YOUR BICYCLE STYLE.

Regardless of your skill level, you will need to determine the right type of bike for you before making a buying decision. Will you be riding to work? Gravel-grinding up the mountains? Participating in a triathlon? What weather conditions will you be riding in? Consider these questions before starting your research on specific bike options (even if you are buying a bicycle for someone else).



Road bicycle: the drop handlebars, narrow tires, and lighter frame help you become more aerodynamic.

### Road Bike

A road bike is designed specifically for riding on a surfaced road. The narrow tires and lighter frame all help to make you and the bike more aerodynamic and accelerate faster.

Many urban cyclists choose touring-style road bicycles because they provide an efficient and comfortable ride during daily commutes. These bikes have a slightly longer wheelbase to provide more overall stability and less sensitivity to handling when compared to a road racing bike.

Road-racing bicycles are built for athletes performing at high speeds. The dropped handlebars fall lower than the saddle to allow the rider to lean lower and create less drag. The components are primarily designed





to be lightweight and provide low aerodynamic drag, as opposed to the comfortable ride and low-maintenance performance of components designed for commuting or recreational riding.



Mountain bike: thick, rugged tires, flat or riser handlebars, and shock suspension make them ideal for off-roading.

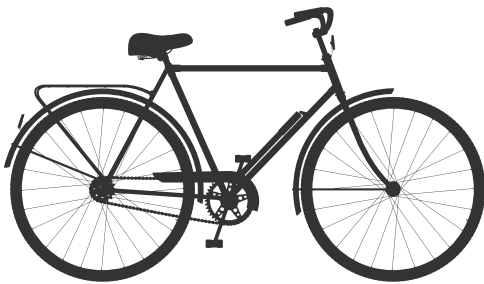
## Mountain Bike

Mountain bikes are designed for off-road cycling. The more pronounced, thicker tires and deeper tread will help you navigate uneven surfaces. Since your objective on a mountain bike is conquering obstacles, you're not necessarily looking to travel at higher speeds. Consequently, you'll find that most mountain bikes are geared lower than a road bike in order to tackle steeper, more rugged climbs.



A single-speed mountain bike will make your ride significantly more challenging, but will also help you become a more skilled mountain biker. Many features found on a typical mountain bike are stripped away so you're left only with the basics. This makes the bike more cost effective and easier to maintain.

Hardtail and full-suspension mountain bikes have similar gearing and components. The difference is in the shock absorption relative to the bike's frame. Full-suspension mountain bikes feature suspension for both wheels, while hardtails feature suspension for the front wheel only.



Hybrid bike: a combination of the ruggedness of mountain bikes paired with the speedy features of road bikes.

## Hybrid Bike

You can ride a mountain bike or road bike to work or casually around town, but neither is ideally suited for these applications. Hybrid bicycles combine features of both mountain and road bikes, allowing cyclists to navigate between terrains.



These bikes typically have a lighter frame, similar to a road bike, yet allow the rider to sit more upright due to either flat or riser handlebars that make the ride a little more comfortable. Many recreational riders prefer some type of hybrid bike if they plan to stick to low-traffic neighborhoods or

mostly flat trails.



Dutch bike: a stylish, comfortable commuter made popular in the Netherlands.

## Other Types of Bikes

Road, mountain and hybrid bikes are typically the most popular types of bicycles, but there are many others out there. Other styles of bikes include BMX, cyclocross, gravel, track, triathlon, e-bikes, and cargo bicycles, but there is a bicycle for almost every kind of activity. Each of these bikes serves its purpose in a very specific way, so keep an open mind before committing to a bike style. Focus on what you want to do with your bicycle.



## STEP 2: INTERACT WITH YOUR LOCAL BIKE SHOP

### Select a qualified bike shop



Whether you've determined your bike style or are still stuck on what you'll need, the next step is to find your local bicycle shop. Go to a brick-and-mortar shop and interact with the representatives there.

Start a conversation about the bikes you're interested in, ask which brands customers seem most satisfied with or which brands they have the most experience with, and find out what services they offer after you make your purchase. Also, take this opportunity to get on the saddle and try some bikes out!

To find the bike shop that's right for you, take the following into consideration:

- Do you feel comfortable inside the shop?
- Are the employees responsive and did they take genuine interest in helping you?
- Do they answer your questions by letting you get hands-on with the bike?
- Do they have trained bicycle mechanics on staff?

## Take the bike for a test ride

Having the opportunity to get on the bicycle and go for a test ride will help you decide if the bike is right for you. There's more to the fit of a bicycle than adjusting the handlebar and saddle position. Do you feel stable? Do you lock your elbows in order to reach the handlebars? Can you comfortably place your feet on the ground while standing over your bike? Visiting a local bike shop that carries different brands will give you the chance to compare how you feel on several models.

## Buying a new bicycle vs. a used bike



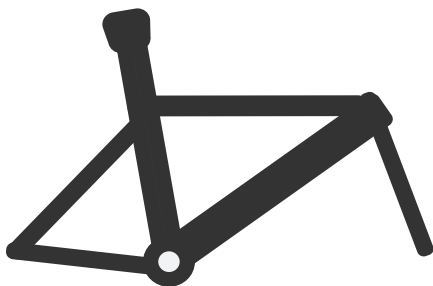
Buying a high-quality bike can be an investment, so it's important to understand the pros and cons of buying a new bike versus one that's used.

If this is your first "big kid bike," we recommend you buy a new bicycle for several reasons. First, a new bike is more reliable as it hasn't yet endured the typical wear-and-tear from frequent use. Second, even though it may seem like just a bike, bicycle technology has evolved over time, giving way to advanced shock absorption, handling and braking systems. New bikes are generally more expensive than used bikes, but it's important to buy a bike based on fit and comfort rather than buying a cheap bike just to get a bargain.

We recommend buying the bike used if you're a more seasoned rider and you know exactly what you need (or exactly what you don't need). Often times you can find a great deal on an older model at bike swaps, or a rare model you've been wanting to add to your collection in an online forum. Depending on from whom you're buying your used bike, inquire about the mileage so you understand what type of servicing the bike may need going forward.

## STEP 3: CONSIDER YOUR COMPONENTS.

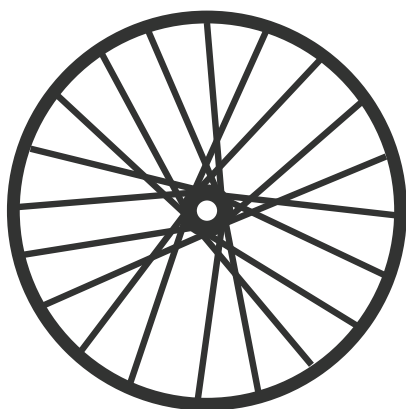
Understanding the main components of your future bicycle doesn't require a huge vocabulary, but it's important to have a baseline of terminology, so you know how the bike parts work together to support your journey.



## Bicycle frame

The bicycle frame is sometimes referred to as the “tube set,” which acts as the foundation for connecting the different parts on your bicycle. Some are built to be lightweight, which can be ideal if you’re looking for a bike you can easily pick up and carry, while other frames allow for a heavier load capacity. Bicycle frames that have a heavier gauge, or metal thickness, are typically stronger than their lighter-gauge counterparts and provide more durability. However, there are exceptions, such as carbon frames.

Most importantly, you want to be sure your bike’s frame fits you properly to ensure good posture, a proper pedal stroke and overall comfort.



## Bicycle wheels

Similar to your bicycle’s frame, fabrication is key to strength and durability. Heavier-gauge spokes will allow for more strength and bicycle wheel durability. Alloy rims are found on most modern bikes to keep the bike lighter and more aerodynamic. Less common steel rims may make the bike heavier but will also hold up against your carrying capacity and the shock absorbed from rougher rides.



## Bicycle helmets

There are currently laws in 22 states within the U.S. requiring riders to wear bicycle helmets. Even if it’s not required by law where you live, you should purchase and always wear a quality bicycle helmet when riding.

Most helmets today meet safety guidelines. It’s best to look for fit by making adjustments so the helmet fits snugly on the top of your head - not pushed back or tilted down. Racers will want helmets aiding in aerodynamics, while downhill helmets are better for mountain biking and may have detachable chin-bars and additional side coverage to provide more impact protection.

It’s also important to remember that your old helmet’s protective foam liner can deteriorate over time and may no longer provide sufficient protection in case of an impact. Many helmet manufacturers recommend replacing your helmet every 3 to 5 years because of deterioration of glues and resins that keep the helmet together. When you wear your helmet, always look over it first to make sure it is free of damage that could compromise your safety.





## Building and customizing your bike

At World Bicycle Relief, we don't think of a bicycle as a single object. A bicycle comprises many different parts that can be swapped out, modified or upgraded to meet your performance needs. With this philosophy in mind, consider the following approaches when purchasing:

- If you have an existing bicycle, can it be modified to give you what you need?
- If you are buying a new bicycle, what kind of bike will give you the most room to grow?

If you've considered building a bicycle from the ground up, start with the bicycle frame and work your way out. You can even enlist your local bike shop for help with this!

**Pro Tip:** If you are planning to build your dream bike (and money is not a factor), consider visiting a Fit Specialist. A Fit Specialist, found within premium bike shops, will measure you for the right frame and bike components to fit your body. Bicycle geometries and ergonomics are important factors to consider for comfort as well as for avoiding injury long-term.

## STEP 4: MAKE YOUR DECISION.

After you've considered the bike style that's right for you, visited your local bike shops and looked at necessary components, you should be ready to make a decision. No matter what bike you've chosen, you'll soon belong to a strong community of cyclists who have embraced the power of mobility.

If you found this guide useful, consider [making a donation](#) to our social impact organization. World Bicycle Relief aims to deliver the same power of mobility to individuals in rural communities around the world.



Buffalo Bicycle: a rugged bike made to mobilize people in developing countries.

## Learn About A Bicycle With a Humanitarian Mission

Since 2005, World Bicycle Relief has designed and distributed Buffalo Bicycles into developing countries. These durable bicycles improve access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. They have changed lives the world over.





World Bicycle Relief's team of engineers designs and builds the Buffalo Bicycle with the needs of communities in rural Africa in mind. The sustainable bike is built with heavy-gauge steel and a rack able to carry 100kg loads. High-quality, well-designed parts improve the bicycle's functionality, reliability and strength. They also keep more of the bikes on the road where they are needed the most.

Essential to our program's success and sustainability are our local field bike mechanics, who are specially trained to care for the Buffalo Bicycle. World Bicycle Relief recruits one field mechanic for every 50 to 100 bikes distributed. Interested in learning more? [Watch the story of our Mechanics of Mobility](#) and see how our field mechanics work!

[WATCH THE MECHANICS VIDEO](#)

## **World Bicycle Relief mobilizes people through The Power of Bicycles.**

We envision a world where distance is no longer a barrier to independence and livelihood.

[worldbicyclerelief.org](http://worldbicyclerelief.org)



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