

# Start a Bike Train



## SO, WHAT IS A BIKE TRAIN?

A Bike Train is group ride designed to get participants safely to and from school or a special event. Designed for upper elementary through HS aged students, bike trains are led by adult volunteers. Bike trains are typically made up of either guardians and students who live in the same area and meet at an agreed upon starting point, or at “train stops” along the way.

### WHY SHOULD I START OR JOIN A BIKE TRAIN?

It's hard to imagine a more fun, active, or sustainable way to start the day! Organizing a bike train at your school also builds community and provides a valuable service to families who may not have other viable transportation options.



## GREAT! HOW DO I GET STARTED?

*IT'S AS EASY AS, YOU GUESSED IT, RIDING A BIKE. THERE ARE THREE STEPS TO STARTING A BIKE TRAIN IN YOUR COMMUNITY:*

### STEP 1: ROUTE PLANNING

#### 1. First, consider where your riders live.

Your bike train may meet in one central location or you may develop a schedule that allows the bike train to “pick up” student riders at different stops along the route.

#### 2. Evaluate your “bicycle Infrastructure” (ie. paths or bike lanes):

While safe biking routes can be planned for almost any area of the city, take advantage of any routes that are bike-friendly (ie. protected bike lanes), have lower car speed limits, or are on roads with less traffic.

#### 3. Consider the length of the ride:

Be careful to ensure that the distance of the ride does not exceed the age and skill level of your riders. Try to plan routes that allow for a slow pace while still allowing for a reasonable commute time.

#### 4. Know where you'll enter and exit the School Grounds:

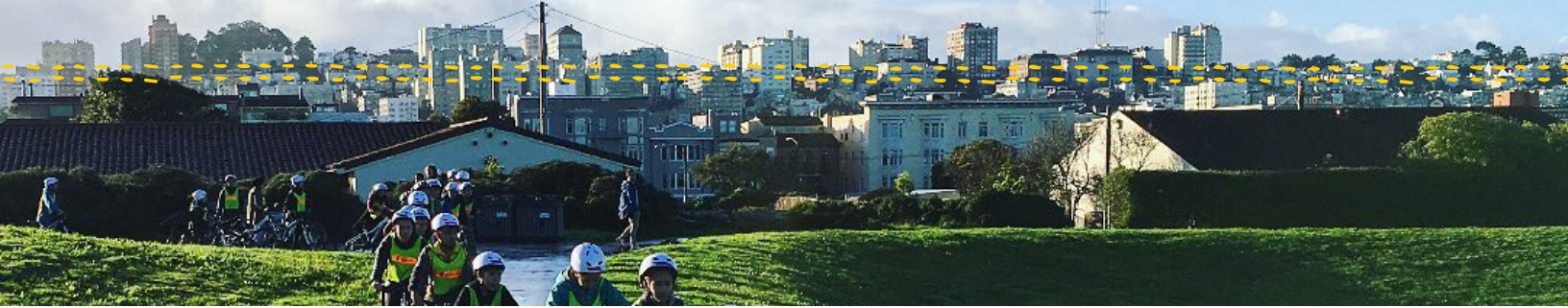
Pick a route that avoids traffic as much as possible (the AM dropoff may be different from PM pickup). Check with school about policies related to riding bicycles and make sure there are secure locations to store the bicycles (i.e. bicycle racks).

#### 5. Take a Test Ride:

Ride your potential route at least once without students but under the same conditions you expect when the bike train is running (ie. weekday arrival/dismissal times). Make notes of challenges or adjustments as needed.

#### 6. Consider your Train Schedule:

Figure out if bike train is both AM +PM or just a one way plan. Decide on a meeting time and plan to depart 10 minutes later. If picking up students at stops along the way, the bike train “schedule” should have a 5-minute window for the new rider(s) to join.



## BIKE LEADERS

Bike train leaders need to model safe bicycling skills. During the ride, all bike train leaders should remain encouraging and positive



### STEP 2: LEADER AND SAFETY PREPARATION

In San Francisco, some schools have wellness or after school programs that have their own bike blenders. Ask your school administration, or a nearby school, to see if they already have one you can use.

#### 1. Gear Up.

Everyone must have a bicycle and helmet that fits correctly and equipped to support safe commuting.

#### 2. Talk About Safety.

Safety is the most important consideration in running a bike train and should be restated at every opportunity. Students will be expected to follow the rules of the bike train, practice safe riding behaviors and listen to bike train leaders at all times.

#### 3. Conduct a Basic Skills Test.

Before giving permission to participate in a bike train, guardians or caregivers should observe whether their child can (a) start/stop smoothly, (b) ride in a straight line without weaving, (c) use hand signals and check surroundings while maintaining their balance.

#### 4. Choose Bike Train Leaders.

Bike train leaders need to model safe bicycling skills. At minimum, bike trains require two leaders, front and back of the train. For larger bike trains, keeping a ratio of 3-4 students per adult is preferable.

*RESPONSIBILITIES OF BIKE TRAIN LEADERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:*

#### 1. Positioning.

- **If Front:** The Leader in the front is responsible for leading the train by modeling safe bicycling behavior, keeping track of time, and stopping at designated stops. The Leader also provides alerts when the group should pay extra attention (ie. approaching an intersection, driveway, or hill)
- **If Back:** The Leader in the back makes sure that no students fall behind and checks the behavior of students in front of him/her. This Leader also gives instructions as needed (i.e. alerting riders if car is approaching from the rear)
- **If More Than 2 Leaders:** Other Leaders should be evenly spaced between the students in the bike train to watch, instruct, and assist students as needed. Leaders should form a protective “bubble” around students when riding on roads or shared paths.

#### 2. Attitude & Communication.

- **All Leaders:** During the ride, all bike train leaders should remain encouraging and positive while checking the road, letting the group know about upcoming stops and turns, and helping maintain the pace of the bike train.







## ENJOY THE RIDE!

You have put forth a lot of effort into making this a great experience — so have fun! As with all new things, there may be some issues to work out so be prepared to be flexible.

You will learn a lot from your group and may be surprised by how wonderful a Bike Train can be!

## The Rules Of The Road

EVERY BIKE TRAIN IS UNIQUE, BUT EACH SHOULD FOLLOW A SIMPLE SET OF GROUND RULES. SOME COMMON RULES INCLUDE:

- **No Helmet, No Ride.** All riders must wear well-fitted helmets. (This is the law!)
- **Be on time**
- **Listen for and obey directions** from the bike train leader at all times
- **Stay in formation** with an adult leader in front and back
- **Do not pass** other members of the bike train
- **Follow all local traffic laws** (In San Francisco, these include: Children under 13 should ride on sidewalk with adults next to them on the street; Yield to pedestrians; Obey all traffic signals; No headphones)
- **Stick together** while keeping a safe distance from other riders
- **Communicate!** If a rider needs to slow or stop for any reason, let all bike train participants know.

## STEP 3: FINAL PREPARATIONS AND FIRST RIDE

Now that you know where and when to ride and have all your safety steps in place, you'll want to gather your students and ride leaders to review details and take the train out for a test run.

- **Take a Practice Ride:**  
Options for the practice ride vary; some groups have a “bike rally” the weekend before the event while others just pick a time before the first official ride to gather the leaders and riders to practice riding the route.
- **Information Review:**  
On the day of the ride, all leaders and riders should review the required equipment, rules of the road, community ground rules, and practice group riding skills along the route. You should also discuss emergency plans and strategies for when there is bad weather or other issues along the route.



**Safe Routes to School**

**SAN FRANCISCO**