

Bike Helmets: Quick-Fit Check

Use this easy, three-point check to test for a proper helmet fit

1. Eyes

Helmet sits level on your child's head and rests low on the forehead, one to two finger widths above the eyebrows. Your child should be able to see the very edge of their helmet by looking up with their eyes only, while keeping their head still. A helmet pushed up too high will not protect the face or head well in a fall or crash.

2. Ears

The straps are even and form a "Y" under each earlobe. The straps are snug against the head.

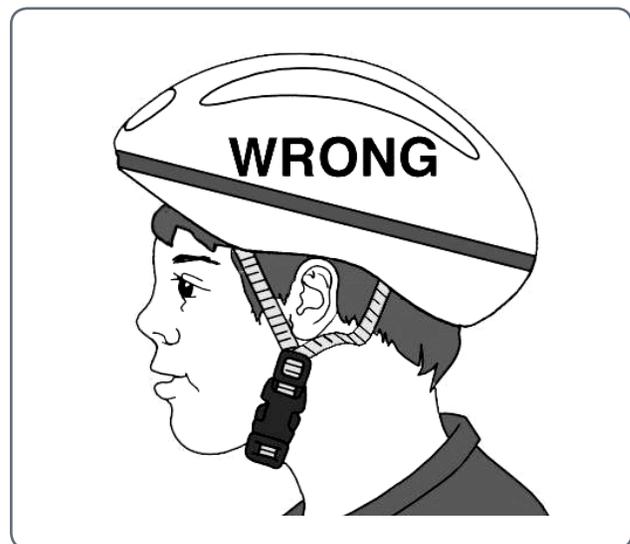
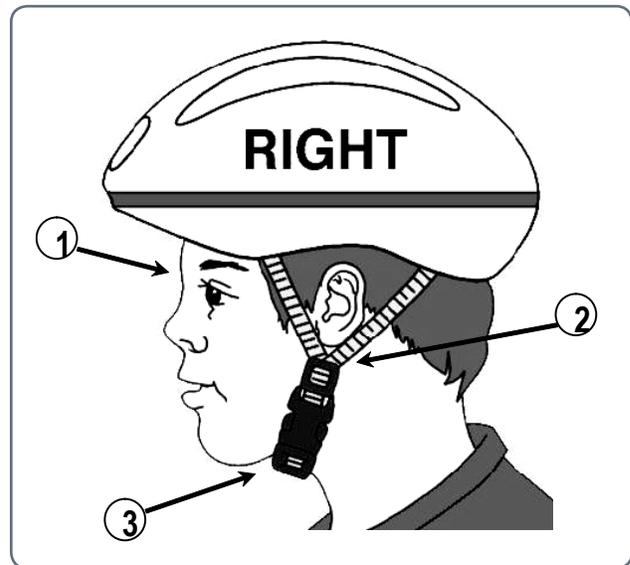
3. Mouth

The buckled chin strap is loose enough so that your child can breathe. There should be enough room so you can insert a finger between the buckle and chin, but it should be tight enough that if your child opens their mouth, you can feel the helmet pull down on top.

Why are bike helmets needed?

Helmets provide the best protection against injury, whether your child is riding a bike, scooter or on skates. Wearing a helmet can prevent about 85 percent of head injuries from bike crashes. However, a helmet will only protect when it fits well.

Help your child get in the habit of wearing a helmet by starting when they're young. Be a good role model and wear a helmet yourself.



The "Eyes, Ears, Mouth Test" is courtesy of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine.

How do I choose a helmet?

- Choose a helmet that meets safety standards. Look for a CPSC (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission) or Snell sticker inside the helmet.
- Helmet costs vary. Expensive helmets are not always better. Choose one that your child likes and will wear. Let your child help choose a helmet that fits well and looks good.
- Check used or hand-me-down helmets with care, and never wear a helmet that is cracked, broken or has been in a crash. Used helmets may have cracks you cannot see. Older helmets may not meet current safety standards.

What are the pads for?

Helmets come with fit pads to help ensure a proper fit. Use the pads where there is space at the front, back and/or sides of the helmet to get a snug fit. Move pads around to touch your child's head evenly all the way around. Replace thick pads with thinner ones as your child grows.

How do I check the fit?

With one hand, gently lift the front of the helmet up and back. The helmet should not move up and back to reveal the forehead. If it does, tighten the strap in front of the ear. Now lift the back of the helmet up and forward from the back. Can you move the helmet more than an inch? If so, tighten the back strap. If you can move the helmet from side to side, add thicker pads at the side.

When done, the helmet should feel level, fit solidly on your child's head and be comfortable. If it doesn't fit, keep working with the fit pads and straps or try another helmet.

Safety tips

- Teach your child to take their helmet off before playing at the playground or climbing on equipment or trees. The straps can get caught on poles or branches and prevent your child from breathing.
- Leave hair loose or tie it back at the base of the neck.
- Bike helmets can be worn with inline roller skates or scooters. For skateboarding or snowboarding, you will need another type of helmet.
- If your child does aggressive, trick or extreme skating or skateboarding, look for a true multi-impact helmet that has a sticker inside saying it meets ASTM F1492.
- Helmets are good for only one crash. Replace the helmet after a crash.

To Learn More

- www.bhsi.org, Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute
- www.cbcef.org, Cascade Bicycle Club Education Foundation
- www.seattlechildrens.org
- **Seattle Children's Resource Line**
206-987-2500 or 866-987-2500
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- **Your child's healthcare provider**

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205 or 206-987-2280 (TTY).

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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