

# Learn Mountain Biking

Riding a mountain bike is pretty much the same as riding any other type of bike. Except for the rocks, the fallen trees, the streams and the occasional mountain. In other words, mountain biking is the extreme version of two-wheeling around the neighbourhood. It can be dangerous, so should be respected and even a little feared. If you want to hit the trails, you need to learn mountain biking skills.

Mountain biking skills involve agility, balance and stamina. Review the following list of exercises, and find a suitable place to practice. These can be done at home, at a school or park, on a bike path and ideally, at a place with a steep hill.

## Sit and Spin.

In other words, just go for a ride. Get on your bike and cruise around to find the best position for mountain biking. Your arms should be slightly bent. Your legs should be 70 to 90 percent extended at the bottom of every stroke on the pedal, so it may be necessary to adjust your seat higher or lower. Get used to keeping your body relaxed because when you're on the trail, your knees and elbows should never be locked.

## Feel the Pedal

While on your bike, practice moving your foot away from the pedal. Do this first while sitting on your bike with one foot on the ground, then try releasing and replacing your foot while pedaling around. If you have toe clips on your pedals, you'll need to spend a little extra time with this exercise. There will be times on the trail that feet will have to leave the pedals. Make sure you're comfortable with this move, before you have to use your feet to balance yourself over a bumpy path.

## Switch Gears

Get used to shifting gears. You'll use them a lot on the trails. Higher gears make the bike go faster, but it's harder to pedal. Lower gears make pedaling easier, so you'll use these gear positions when climbing hills. Be sure to shift to a low gear before you reach the hill, rather than when you're already climbing it.

## Drop a Curb

Ride down the sidewalk, and then find a curb that's easily accessible. Approach the curb at moderate speed, stand up and coast right down onto the road (look for cars first!) If you want to learn mountain biking, you need to know how to handle sudden drops. Try this exercise at different speeds until it becomes second nature.

## Coast is Clear

Coasting on a bike can feel like flying. Get your bike up to a reasonable speed, stand on your pedals and just cruise without sitting down. Keep your arms bent, don't lock your knees, and try to lean your body towards the rear end of the bike. Mountain biking involves very little sitting, so spend some time coasting to get used to the feeling.

## Stand and Pedal

Just like coasting, you'll also spend a great deal of time pedaling while standing. While pedaling, simply lift your body off of the seat. Or, start off standing on the pedals then start cranking them. After you've mastered standing and pedaling on flat ground, practice while climbing a hill in lower gear.

It's easy to learn mountain biking. You already know how to ride a bike, so now it's time to master these additional techniques. Once you're comfortable coasting, dropping, standing, pedaling, spinning and switching gears, you'll be ready to hit the trails, and tackle any challenge along the way.