ADVENTURE ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

# CYCLING

Schools must follow the Department’s Excursion Policy and Guidelines and the requirements outlined in this document when planning, conducting and approving adventure activities.

These guidelines are for developing risk management plans specific to the location, activity and group participating. They are not intended to be used as a training manual. Staff instructing the activity must have sufficient knowledge/expertise in the activity.

## When to apply these guidelines

For the purposes of these guidelines, cycling refers to any cycling activities undertaken by students on bicycles on formed roads, tracks, trails or cycle paths **beyond the school grounds**. Cycling may include bicycle education programs, cycling skill development, undertaking a journey (cycle touring), journeying overnight or for extended periods of time and completing challenging trails and obstacles (mountain biking).

If conducting a bicycle education program **solely** on school grounds, staff must ensure that equipment meets safety standards and staff are appropriately qualified as specified in this document.

For cycling races, please see the Safety in Physical Education and Sport policy.

If an overnight camping component is planned, please also refer to Camping guidelines.

## ACTivity Definitions

**Bicycle** – a bicycle in this document refers to all forms of pedal powered cycles.

**Bicycle Education Programs ­**– refers to programs which provide students the opportunity to learn basic cycling and road safety skills. It is an ideal way to develop students’ basic cycling and safety skills, particularly if they have had no prior experience.

**Cycle touring** – refers to cycling activities on a bicycle that may extend for long periods of time from one point to another. Touring often extends overnight, when cycle touring camping equipment is often carried directly on the bike. Camping equipment can also be carried in support vehicles.

**Support vehicle** – usually a form of motorised transport which can serve a number of functions, including trailing/leading students to alert traffic, carrying food, camping gear, spare bicycles and repair equipment, and providing first aid support or support to students at the rear of the group.

**Mountain biking** – is riding a bicycle off road where a major element is the need to negotiate obstacles. Mountain biking usually occurs on unsealed surfaces, such as trails, single trails, open or rocky ground. Mountain biking often involves manoeuvring through or around obstacles such as fallen or narrowly spaced trees, creeks, mud, rocks, man-made structures, jumps and other technical features. Due to the type of terrain and obstacles to negotiate, the skills and cycle design required to Mountain Bike can differ from other forms of cycling.

## Staffing definitions

**Staff** – any adult approved by the principal who provides supervisory, instructional or educational elements of the activity or excursion. See Excursions Guidelines: Staffing for further details.

**Teacher** – a staff member registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching who provides a supervisory role on a program.

The following roles can be filled by school staff, a teacher or an external provider, or a volunteer (See [Volunteers in Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/volunteers/policy) policy).

**Designated Instructor** – the appointed staff member on a program who provides the lead technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Instructor** – a staff member who provides professional, technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Assistant Instructor** – a staff member who provides assistance to the instructor(s) in the provision of technical expertise and supervision for the activity. An assistant instructor role may be filled by a volunteer (See: Volunteers in Schools policy).

## Student preparAtion and skills

Cycling activities should begin with an assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in cycling, cycle trail and road environments.

The assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in the activity should be documented using [Documentation of Participant Preparation, Prerequisite Skills/Knowledge​ ​ (doc - 139kb)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/participrep.doc).

Instructional staff must brief students on:

* equipment, clothing and footwear that is suitable for the activity and location
* safety measures appropriate to control risks associated with the activity and the environment
* minimal environmental impact techniques relevant to the activity and location
* historical and cultural considerations relevant to the activity and location
* activity scope and boundaries
* communication and communication signals
* explanation of relevant terminology
* group cycling methods
* riding techniques suitable for terrain and location
* the effective use of brakes and gears.

## ROUTE PLANNING

**General Cycling Activities**

Where possible, designated bike paths, shared paths and bike lanes (where suitable) should be used in preference to public roads.

When route planning, consideration should be given to:

* traffic conditions
* road conditions
* bike paths
* skill and experience of riders.

Students up to the age of 12 years are permitted to ride on footpaths. An adult can ride on the footpath if accompanying a child or children up to the age of 12. Some children have not developed the necessary skills to be able to ride safely in or near traffic until the age of 12 years.

Students should not be taken on public roads until they have:

* demonstrated an adequate understanding of likely traffic conditions
* demonstrated the ability to respond appropriately to potential hazards
* developed the physical and cognitive skills to manage the road traffic environment safely as a cyclist
* developed responsible behaviour, attitudes and decision-making skills for the safe use of bicycles.

For extended bicycle rides, students need to demonstrate appropriate fitness and technique.

For safety reasons, cycling activities should finish prior to dusk.

**Bicycle Education – on-road cycling**

On-road cycling is an important part of Bicycle Education.

When planning routes for on-road components of Bicycle Education, the instructor trained in Bicycle Education must:

* select a route for the on-road activity which reflects the road and traffic situations students are likely to experience. For example, in rural areas, within the town boundaries with a rail crossing, wooden bridge and unsealed roads
* carry out a survey of local roads on a bicycle to identify suitable low volume traffic routes for children’s cycling. Note that some streets will vary considerably in volume of traffic according to the time of day. If the school is surrounded by busy streets, have students walk their bicycles to a quieter location, especially for their first on-road session
* ride the selected route well before the activity to identify any possible hazards
* prepare and distribute a map showing the route to be followed and ensure all instructors, assistants and students know the route they are taking.

For beginner students, the criteria for selecting the traffic route for on-road riding practice are:

* quiet streets adjacent to the school
* a block with left turns only
* a quiet intersection nearby (including a single lane roundabout, if possible).

For experienced students, the criteria for selecting the traffic route for on-road riding practice are:

* a route of three or four kilometres which includes:
	+ a variety of intersections
	+ roads of different widths
	+ different gradients
	+ a rail crossing
	+ different surfaces (if possible).

**Support vehicle and warnings for other road users**

For large groups cycling on public roads, it may be feasible to have a support vehicle which tails a short distance behind the group. The vehicle should have a sign on the back which indicates its status as a support vehicle and advise other drivers of the cycling group ahead.

Where practical, consider placing signs on the roadside and on significant roads entering the proposed route. Staff should assess the risk to student safety with consideration to:

* the road environment
* time of day
* size of the group
* ability and experience of students

to determine if it is appropriate to advise local police of the route, time and date for the activity.

## Equipment

All equipment used must be in sound condition, suitable for the activity and must meet applicable industry safety standards as specified below.

**Bicycles**

Immediately before the activity, bicycles should be checked for roadworthiness for the proposed ride. As a minimum, a check should review:

* brakes
* tyre pressure
* tyre condition
* gear system operation
* steering mechanism
* pedals
* wheel hubs and seat posts clamps.

Bicycles should also be checked for suitability for individual riders. As a minimum, a check should review:

* frame size
* reach – seat to handlebar distance (to ensure the rider can operate the brakes and gears effectively)
* seat height and position.

Under no circumstances should students be permitted to ride a bicycle known to be unsafe or incorrectly sized.

**Carrying equipment**

Loads carried by students should be kept to a minimum. Small day-packs are recommended for carrying personal equipment.

Where students are to carry a substantial amount of touring equipment, they must be experienced cyclists. Touring equipment should be carried on the bicycle itself in a pannier or rear-rack bag.

**Helmets**

Helmets complying with AS/NZS 2063 must be worn during all cycling activities. They must be fitted and positioned correctly, with the chinstrap adjusted correctly and secured firmly. Students must be briefed on the correct fit and adjustment and how to check the condition of the inner and outer shell of their helmet. Before and during the ride, staff should check that the students have their helmet correctly fitted. Hats should not be worn under helmets unless they are cycling hats designed to be worn in conjunction with a helmet.

**Repair kits**

Repair kits are to be carried by staff or to be immediately available from support vehicles.

Staff must be able to make minor roadside repairs.

When repairs are being made during the ride, the group must be supervised. The group, including repairers, must stay off the road. Any activity done while awaiting repairs to be made must be in a safe place and be appropriately supervised.

## Clothing

Enclosed footwear must always be worn while riding.

Highly visible clothing is recommended. Each cyclist should wear a conspicuous vest, a bright top (yellow, orange, lime or white), or have a bright flag attached to the bicycle.

For long distance riding:

* padded cycling shorts or cycling knicks with chamois are recommended
* cycling gloves may be worn for grip, to absorb vibration and to help protect hands during falls
* cyclists may wear safety glasses or sunglasses to protect their eyes during cycling activities.

## Supervision

Supervision is a critical factor in managing risk in the outdoors.

A minimum of two staff members must be present for each activity, one with main responsibility for activity instruction and the other to assist the instructor.

It may be necessary to increase the staff allocation based on ability to observe or monitor students on activity with consideration to:

* students (medical conditions, age, physical, mental and emotional maturity, ability and experience)
* group (dynamics and size)
* staff (medical conditions, age, ability and experience, qualifications and skills)
* location (remoteness, communications and environmental conditions).

Reasons for increasing staff allocations must be documented.

The following table shows the minimum staff-to-student allocation that must be used for any cycling activities (outside of school grounds).

|  |
| --- |
| **General Cycling activities** |
| Staff numbers | Student numbers |
| 2 | 1–20 |
| 3 | 21–30 |

In addition, the following table shows the minimum recommended staff-to-student allocation for Bicycle Education Programs with an on-road component:

|  |
| --- |
| **Bicycle Education (on-road cycling activities only)**  |
| Total staff  | Staff qualified in Bicycle Education | Student numbers |
| 2 | 1 | 1–20 |
| 3 | 1 | 20–30 |

If the group is over 30 students consider breaking into smaller groups.

For mountain biking activities, schools should consider increasing the staff allocated based on:

* mountain biking requiring higher skill acquisition and closer supervision
* mountain bike trails and surrounding environment hazards
* degree of trail difficulty
* remoteness of trails from vehicle access.

The teacher in charge is responsible for the supervision strategy, which must be endorsed by the school principal as part of the excursion approval process. Staff members must supervise students according to that strategy, and in accordance with their duty of care. It is the role of the teacher in charge to clearly and adequately explain the supervision strategy to all participating staff members.

Students not directly participating in the activity must be separately supervised in line with Excursions Guidelines – Supervision.

## Experience and qualifications

Staff instructing the activity should have sufficient knowledge and experience of the activity and the activity environment to operate in all reasonably foreseeable conditions.

When conducting practical elements of a bicycle education program, at least one staff member must be qualified in Bicycle Education, or equivalent documented experience.

The designated cycling instructor(s) must have, and provide evidence of, the following knowledge and skills:

Required cycling knowledge:

* cycling equipment and its use
* the technical aspects of cycling
* common injuries/ailments associated with cycling
* the selection and use of equipment for cycling
* equipment and touring bicycle features that provide comfort
* personal cycling gear
* bicycle maintenance and tools
* relevant road rules (see [Department of Transport: Bicycles Road Rules](https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/road-rules/a-to-z-of-road-rules/bicycles)).

Required cycling skills:

* personal cycling skills to a high level of technical competency
* personal cycling skills suitable for cycling type and location
* decision-making skills to tailor the activity to meet group needs
* observation skills to maintain group control
* problem-solving to eliminate or minimise hazards
* ability to use repair equipment
* first aid.

**Mountain biking staff**

In addition to the cycling knowledge and skills above, designated Mountain biking instructors should have:

* a [Mountain Bike Australia level 0](https://www.mtba.org.au/development/coaching/) or above, mountain biking coaching qualification, or
* a Mountain biking instructor qualification drawing the relevant units of competency from the national training package, or
* an equivalent international mountain biking instructor/guide qualification
* equivalent documented mountain biking instructor/guide training and experience.

The designated assistant to the instructor should have sufficient experience in the activity and must:

* be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity
* be competent in emergency response procedures
* have conferred with the instructor to establish the emergency response and supervision responsibilities
* have the ability to comfortably ride the terrain to be encountered on the designated trails.

**Note**: It is considered best practice that the designated mountain bike instructor or guide has taken a familiarisation ride on the intended trails.

For current information about relevant Australian Outdoor Recreation Industry training please refer to [training.gov.au](http://training.gov.au/).

 [Documentation of staff qualifications and experience (doc - 151kb)](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/staffqual.doc) must be used to document staff experience and training in lieu of the listed qualifications.

Where an external contractor is chosen to run all or part of this activity, see: Excursions Guidelines – External Providers.

## Peak bodies and expert advice

Cycling Victoria <https://cycling.org.au/vic>

Department of Transport – Bicycle Road Rules <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/road-rules/a-to-z-of-road-rules/bicycles>

Department of Transport – Cyclist Safety <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/cyclist-safety>

Department of Transport – Bike Ed <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/road-safety-education/primary-schools/bike-ed>

Bicycle network <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/>

Ride2School <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/rides-and-events/ride2school/>

Mountain Biking Australia <https://www.mtba.asn.au/development/coaching/>

Professional Mountain Bike Instructor Association <http://www.pmbia.org>

Outdoors Victoria <https://outdoorsvictoria.org.au/>

For further enquiries, please contact community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au

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