MASSACHUSETTS
Safe Routes to School
MASS.GOV/SAFE-ROUTES-TO-SCHOOL

BIKE RODEO GUIDE:

Practicing real-world biking skills in a safe, simulated environment





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Massachusetts Department of Transportation

WHAT IS A BIKE RODEO?

A bicycle rodeo (Bike Rodeo) is a fun way to teach students about the rules of the road while practicing safe bicycling. The rodeo consists of stations and courses where students can learn about bike handling, bike safety, and practice safe biking skills at every level of experience. Students work on individual skills and eventually advance to a simulated road environment, where they must navigate real-world situations.

Bike Rodeos are typically offered to students ages 8 –12, though younger or older students may also benefit from the training. Participating students should have permission from their parents and guardians to attend (parents and guardians are also encouraged to join in on the fun).

How do I use this Guide?

This guide is intended to be used by Bike Rodeo organizers in Massachusetts (MA), with guidance from the MA Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. Bike Rodeos can be hosted by schools, clubs, municipalities, or local transportation groups.

This guide covers the two main components of a Bike Rodeo: stations and courses. Stations are educational and teach students about bike mechanics and safety, through interactive, outdoor group lessons. In addition, SRTS can visit schools to conduct bike safety assemblies for students prior to offering a bike rodeo event. Courses are active on-bike lessons that allow students the opportunity to practice their bike-riding skills in a variety of physical layouts and typically require more setup than stations. The courses and stations are adaptable and designed to suit a variety of spaces, skill levels, and number of students.

The Appendix includes optional stations and courses that may be incorporated into a Bike Rodeo based on the interests, skill levels, and needs of your school or community. The Appendix also includes a section on E-bikes and how to incorporate them into a Bike Rodeo.



Some of the courses and stations in this guide are:

- ABC Quick Bike Check Station
- Helmet Check Station
- Road Signs Station
- Scanning for Traffic Course
- Shoulder Scanning Course
- Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light Course
- And more!

Why should you host a Bike Rodeo?

Bike Rodeos help create safer, healthier communities by encouraging students and families to develop safe bicycling skills and active transportation habits. Some of the benefits of hosting a Bike Rodeo in your community include:

- Helping students build safe and confident bike riding skills – Ensuring students know the safest ways to maneuver and understand the rules of the road can help reduce injuries and create safer cyclists and future drivers.
- Encouraging active transportation – Giving students access to an active travel option is a great opportunity to address rising child obesity rates and encourage healthy choices.
- Teaching lifelong skills and independence – Allowing students to think critically and practice cycling skills can help them feel comfortable with biking independently and safely for the rest of their lives.
- Benefiting the Environment – Biking is an environmentally conscious mode of transportation open to anyone.
- It's fun!

Who do you need to host a Bike Rodeo?

Bike Rodeos rely on volunteers to ensure the event runs smoothly. School staff, parents and guardians, local law enforcement, high school students, Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs), and others may volunteer to assist with the rodeo. There should be a minimum of two volunteers on each course and one volunteer at each station—one to assist the students using the station and one to manage queueing students.

Local law enforcement can attend (if appropriate) to assist with traffic management at the Bike Rodeo, especially if the rodeo is held in a public area like a road or parking lot.

Confirming all volunteers before the event will help to ensure that each station and course are properly staffed. It is especially helpful if volunteers have experience riding in a range of environments, from shared-use paths and trails to neighborhood streets and roadways.



Role	Purpose
Outreach crew	Communicate event information to the PTO and/or school administrators, post on social media, and make/distribute event flyers to promote the event to the community. This guide will discuss event promotion in a later section.
Event set-up crew	Set up all the stations and courses at the Bike Rodeo prior to the start of the event, including organizing equipment, placing course materials, and ensuring the area is safe for students.
Student sign-in table welcome committee	Welcome students and families to the Bike Rodeo event and explain the event's purpose, activities, and safety guidelines. Having a sign-in option is helpful if there are other events planned in the future.
Prize table manager	If your Bike Rodeo includes prizes, having a volunteer manage the area where prizes are given out will help handle the potential influx of students.
Station manager	Each station at a Bike Rodeo should have two managers to assist with the lesson or activity. Depending on the size of the event, each station may need more than two volunteers!
Bike safety coordinator	Having volunteers available who are knowledgeable about bike mechanics and maintenance is helpful for the event overall. Setting up designated safety stations, such as an ABC Quick Check (Air, Brakes, Chain) and helmet fit checks, can help ensure students and their bikes are safe and ready to ride. Additional safety volunteers and mechanics can also circulate, answer questions, and provide support as needed.
School Nurse or first-aid volunteer	Having some first aid supplies and a volunteer on site for potential accidents or falls will help keep the event worry-free.
E-bike expert	If e-bikes are a popular part of cycling in the community, having a local e-bike "expert" is a good addition to assist any students or attendees who have questions on using an e-bike as a cycling option. This "expert" may just be a fellow e-bike rider, but local bike shop owners may be another reference or option for volunteering.
Clean-up crew	After the Bike Rodeo is complete, volunteers should expect to stay a bit later to help make sure everything is picked up and put away after the event. Leave the area where the Bike Rodeo was hosted clean, organized, and better than it was found.
Language Interpreter	If students need interpretation in other languages to be able to participate in the Bike Rodeo, offering interpretation through professional services or volunteers is important for making sure all students can feel included.

Where should you host a Bike Rodeo?

A Bike Rodeo can be adapted depending on the spaces you have available. Bike Rodeos are often held in school parking lots but may also be held in a large gym or auditorium, on a closed street, in a playground, or on another large, flat surface. When evaluating what spaces may work best for your Bike Rodeo, observe their size. Consider how much space you may need to gather students with bikes, line up for stations, receive prizes, and offer additional room for students without bikes who may want to observe and/or assist with the activities.

Bike Rodeos are versatile programs that can be adapted for any school or community. Even if space is limited, there are still stations and courses that can be used to teach students bike safety and skills in a fun and engaging manner.

In the *Courses and Stations* section of this guide, each station and course is labeled according to the following size requirements:

Small/Medium (S/M) spaces

Small or medium spaces generally include areas with boundaries like walls, curbs, or surface changes.

Large (L) spaces

Allow more flexibility for number of students and attendees, and number of courses that are set up.

Below are spaces that you may consider when choosing where to host a bike rodeo and how we've designated them by size based on typical layouts.

- Gym/Cafeteria - **S/M**
- Basketball/Tennis Court – **S/M**
- Playground/Blacktop – **S/M**
- School Driveway – **S/M**
- School Parking Lot - **L**
- Closed Street - **L**
- Public Park - **L**

Spaces may also differ depending on whether they are indoors or outdoors. Outdoor events will subject to weather conditions and may require a rain date and more safety precautions than indoor events, though neither option is better or worse than the other. Both indoor and outdoor locations can work well, depending on the space available and the goals of the event.



When should you host a Bike Rodeo?

Bike Rodeos may be held after school or on a weekend and typically require about two hours. They may also be set up for longer periods of time in conjunction with festivals or other events. Hosting a Bike Rodeo during concurrent events can help engage the broader community and increase participation.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Be sure to coordinate with school staff, families, and the PTO to reserve the date and time on the calendar in advance so that there is plenty of preparation time prior to the event. Keep community events, such as sports leagues, in mind when selecting a date and time!

How to Promote



To encourage student involvement in the event, consider advertising the event through school social media, local PTO announcements, and flyers or posters. An important part of a Bike Rodeo is getting students interested and excited to participate!

Creative social media posts will help get the message out to the school and wider community.

Consider including facts about bike ridership in your community or advertise any adjacent bike-related events occurring locally.

Language Access

Consider translating the advertising communications into common languages spoken at your school or in your community to ensure every student can participate. Both translation of materials and on-site interpretation are important to making students feel safe and able to learn. Planning in advance for having interpretation on the day of the event can make the event accessible for all students.



Materials

What materials do you need to host a successful Bike Rodeo? This depends on the types of courses you are including and where your Bike Rodeo is taking place.



Bikes

Be sure to confirm if students are bringing bikes/scooters from home or if you are providing bikes for the duration of the event.

Decide if the event will allow E-Bikes (or prohibit them) and communicate that to participants.

Extra helmets

Be sure to confirm extra helmets are available if a student does not own a helmet or brings a helmet that fits them incorrectly.

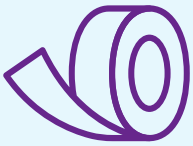




Cones

- Traffic cones
- Dome cones

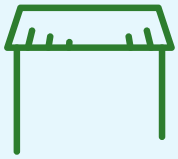
Tape or chalk to imitate road lines





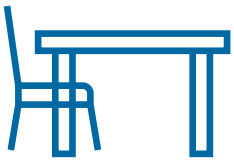
Road signs – either real or handmade

Pop-up tents (outdoor only)



Sunscreen (outdoor only)





Tables and chairs to support registration and prize stations

Participation prizes, which may include:

- Reflective bands
- Bike light attachments

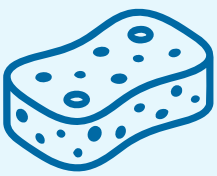




Bike repair tools (wrench, tire pump, etc.)

Sponges/soft items to use as obstacles

Using soft items as obstacles can help make courses a little less intimidating for new riders.



DAY-OF EVENT SETUP

The stations and courses listed in this section are typically recommended for all Bike Rodeos. Optional (or supplemental) courses and stations are included in the Appendix and may not be necessary for every Bike Rodeo. As a host, you should evaluate the needs and skill levels of your students to determine which (if any) optional courses and stations should be included. For example, if your students already have strong riding skills, a learn-to-ride station may not be necessary.

Pre-Rodeo Setup

Volunteers should arrive at least one hour before the event begins to assist in setting up the stations/courses and familiarize themselves with their role. The host should also ensure that the proper number of volunteers are in attendance to operate the rodeo safely.

Stations and Courses

ABC Quick Check Station (S/M)

The ABC Quick Check Station should be the first station that all students attend. This station ensures that the bikes are functioning properly and safe to ride. Having a volunteer who is familiar with bike mechanics and maintenance is beneficial for this station.

Before riding, students should check the condition of their bikes to make sure they are safe to ride. Students should follow these instructions to get their bikes ready to ride.



Air:

Inflate tires to rated pressure as listed on the sidewall of the tire. Use a pressure gauge to ensure proper pressure. Check for damage to tire tread and sidewall; replace if damaged. Proper tire pressure makes riding easier and helps prevent flat tires.



Brakes:

Brakes are essential for safety of the rider and other road users. If the bike has coaster brakes, check to make sure the bike will stop by spinning the back wheel and applying the brake.

If the bike has hand brakes, check to see that the levers don't hit the handlebars when squeezed. Lift one tire up at a time and spin it; squeeze the levers to make sure the tire stops. The brake pads should be clean, straight and contact the rims properly.



Chain and Cranks:

Try to wiggle the crank arms side to side. There should be no movement. Spin the pedals and cranks to see if the chain drives the rear wheel. The chain should look like metal, not rust or black gunk. The chain transfers power from the pedals to the wheels, allowing the bike to move. If the chain is old, rusty, or loose, it may need to be replaced, and regular cleaning can help extend its life.

If the bike has gears, check that the shifters and the derailleurs (the parts that move the chain between gears) are working properly.

Helmet and Bike Fit Station (S/M)

A properly fitted bike and helmet are essential for bike safety. At this station, instructors should demonstrate how to properly fit, wear, and buckle a helmet. In addition, the size and position of each child's bike should be evaluated. Before leaving this station, students should know how to wear and secure their own helmet and understand basic bike adjustments to help ensure a safe and comfortable ride.



Proper Helmet Fit



Power
Pedal Position

Helmet Fit

1. Helmets should fit snugly and move only slightly when shaking the head.
2. Helmets should sit level on the head, not tilted forward or backward, to protect the forehead and the front part of the brain.
3. Straps should form a "V" under each ear (use the plastic slide to adjust).
4. Strap fastens under the chin with one finger width of space between the strap and chin.

Bicycle Fit and Power Pedal Position

1. Adjust the seat so both feet reach the pedals with a slight bend in the knees. Both feet should be flat on the ground when standing above the bike frame.
2. When riding, the knees should not touch the handlebars.
3. When stopped, have one foot on the ground and one foot resting on the pedal up in the 2:00 position (or so the pedal is parallel to the bike frame). When on the road, the foot nearest traffic should be on the ground. This is the Power Pedal Position.

Road Signs Station (S/M)

At this station, instructors will review important road signs. Students should be able to readily identify and recall the meaning of each sign before moving to the next station.



Rules of the Road and Hand Signals Station (S/M)

At this station, students will review the rules of the road for cyclists and practice their hand signals before setting off on the courses.

Instructors should review the following rules of the road:

1. Always wear your helmet while riding.
2. Ride on the sidewalk or the right side of the street.
3. Stop at all STOP signs.
4. Use your hand turn signals when turning or stopping.
5. Yield to pedestrians.
6. Walk your wheels when crossing at a crosswalk.
7. Always have a white light on the front of the bike and a red light on the back of the bike.
8. Ride with only one person on a bike at a time.
9. Keep headphones and mobile phones put away while riding.

Instructors will explain how people riding bikes share the road with other vehicles and how to ride safely and predictably. Key concepts include following traffic rules, riding predictably, always remaining visible, communicating with other road users, and staying alert and aware of surroundings at all times.

After going through basic traffic procedures, instructors should demonstrate and have students practice the hand signals used by bicyclists. Before moving on, instructors can check for understanding by asking students to repeat and demonstrate the rules and turn signals they have learned.









Scanning for Traffic Course (S/M)

At the Scanning for Traffic course, students will practice balance, riding in a straight line, and control as they simulate looking over their shoulder to check for traffic. Students should first practice the scanning motion while stopped to understand the movement and then practice while riding slowly.

Students will learn to look back over their shoulder while maintaining control of their bike, despite a natural tendency to steer towards what they are looking at.

1. Instructor first introduces the scanning motion to students while in a stopped position to understand the movement.
2. Students line up at the start line, in a "power pedal" position. Students will proceed one at a time through this course.
3. Instructor holds up GO sign and students start riding.
4. Instructor calls out "Check Left" or "Check Right" and holds up either the "GO" or "STOP" sign (or holds up one or two arms as a visual signal)
5. The student turns their head to look over their left or right shoulder, depending on the instruction, and announces which sign (or number of arms) they saw when checking, while keeping their wheels moving in a straight line and maintaining control of their bike.



Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light Course (S/M)

This course is used to practice riding in a straight line, controlled braking, and observance of traffic signals and signs.

The goal is for students to learn to obey signs and brake effectively.

1. Students line up at the start line, in a "power pedal" position.
2. Instructor holds up GO sign and students start riding.
3. Instructor holds up the SLOW sign, and students begin to brake.
4. Instructor holds up STOP sign and students come to a full stop.
5. Steps 2-4 are repeated until students have come to the end of the course.

Conclusion

After completing the stations and courses in the Bike Rodeo, it is helpful to bring students together for a brief discussion to reflect on what they learned at the event. If available, this is also a good time to distribute stickers or small prizes to recognize participation and completion. As students leave, organizers can distribute a handout with key tips and takeaways for the students to take home.

Make sure to check in with the volunteer team before breaking down the courses and stations. Take time to talk about how the event went and gather any ideas for next time. Ask the volunteer team:

- What went well?
- What stations did students enjoy and at which stations did they struggle?
- How can we take the lessons learned here and apply them to future bike-related events?

Finally, contact your **Outreach Coordinator from the MA SRTS program** for assistance and share pictures when you have completed your event. MA SRTS is always looking for pictures to share for inspiration in future materials!



APPENDIX





SUPPLEMENTARY COURSES AND STATIONS

These stations can be useful additions to the core stations listed above depending on the needs and wants of the community. A Bike Rodeo has interchangeable components for each community, so organizers can choose a combination of options based on the size, space, and time of their event.

Turtle Race Course (S/M)

The Turtle Race is used to teach students to balance and ride in a straight line, both of which are critical skills for bike safety.

The goal is for students to practice balancing and controlling their bikes at slow speeds.

1. Students line up at the start line, in a “power pedal” position.
2. The instructor holds up the “GO” sign.
3. Students ride slowly in their lanes and try to avoid swerving. Swerving or losing balance when bicycling can be very dangerous on the street.
4. The last person to cross the finish line without touching the ground with their feet wins!



Zig Zag/Obstacle Dodge Course (L)

The Zig Zag course gives students a safe place to practice turning, while also continuing to practice balance and riding in a straight line. Students should be instructed to look where they are going, not at the ground in front of them, to help them maintain control and steer properly.

The goal is for students to practice making turns while following a set path. Turns should be smooth, tight, and controlled.

1. Students line up at the start line, in a “power pedal” position. Students will proceed one at a time through this course.
2. The Instructor holds up GO sign and the student starts riding.
3. Students will follow the course, practicing controlled turns. The Instructor may place large cones at turning points to make it easier for students to identify where they are supposed to turn.
4. As students become more comfortable, the Instructor may ask students to ride this course and use hand signals at the turning points.

Model Street Course (L)

The Model Streets Course brings together all the skills practiced throughout the day. This integrated course allows students to practice these skills together in a realistic riding environment. In this course, students apply their skills by riding in a straight line, making turns, scanning over their shoulder, obeying signs, and avoiding obstacles.

Note that sidewalk chalk, rather than dome cones, can be used to create a course layout.

Instructors should be stationed at key points of the course to provide any reminders about power pedal position, obeying signs, turn signals, and safety as needed.

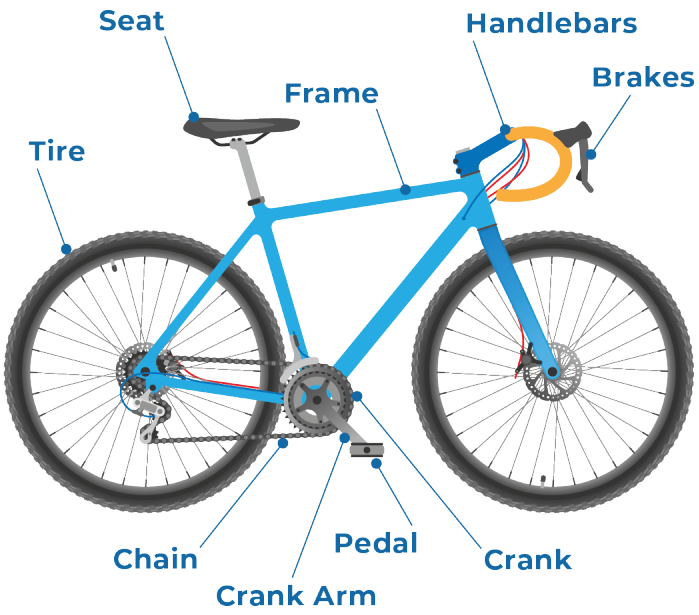
1. Students line up at the start line, in “power pedal” position.
2. Students ride along the course, staying in the right lane.
3. Students must obey all signs, including STOP, YIELD, DO NOT ENTER, and ONE WAY.
4. Students must use hand turn signals when turning.
5. Students should make tight turns around obstacles in the road, avoiding swerving into the opposite lane.
6. The course can be adjusted as space allows, to include the elements from the previous exercises.

Learn To Ride Station (L)

Set aside a station for students who are still learning how to ride a bike. This area should be an open, flat space where students can practice starting, stopping, balancing, and steering with support from volunteers. Cones can be added to create simple challenges as students gain confidence. After learning basic safety skills, students can continue practicing in this space with volunteers nearby to provide guidance and encouragement.

Parts of the Bike and Accessories Station (S/M)

Learning the names and purposes of the main parts of a bike helps students understand how their bike works and how to use it safely. At this station, instructors should identify each part of the bike labeled below and briefly describe how it works.



ELECTRIC BIKES (E-BIKES) GUIDANCE

E-bikes are rapidly gaining popularity in recent years, both with adults and kids under 18. However, with this surge in E-bikes on the roads, the number of accidents has also risen.

If you are expecting students to bring E-bikes, or you wish to provide an E-bike Station, we've included some information below.

In Massachusetts, E-bikes are put into different groups called classes. Each class operates differently and has its own rules for where and how you can ride. (Ideally, the event could feature a large poster board type display to show the different classes that can be displayed with more information.) Understanding the three e-bike classes can help riders identify their device. Vehicles that do not fit within these classifications may have different regulations and could be considered electric motorcycles or other motorized devices.



Class 1:

Pedal assist only, helps while you pedal, stops helping at 20 mph. Most common and allowed in more places. Usually allowed on roads, bike lanes, and paths where regular bikes can go.



Class 2:

Pedal assist and throttle. You can ride using the motor even if you don't pedal. Goes up to 20 mph. Usually allowed on roads, bike lanes, and paths where regular bikes can go.



Class 3:

Pedal assist only, but faster—up to 28 mph. Has a speedometer (shows your speed). Usually allowed on roads and bike lanes, not on sidewalks, trails, or shared-use paths (unless a town says it's okay).

Different towns can make their own E-bike rules, so it's always smart to check local regulations first.

E-bike paths and spaces are still being built, but not everywhere yet—so sometimes it can cause confusion or unsafe situations.



There are significant safety considerations that differ from regular bikes to review:

- They can help you pedal or move on their own with a throttle.
- Can go 20–50+ miles before needing a recharge.
- Typically travel in the range of 12-20 miles per hour (faster than a regular bike).
- Harder to fix and more expensive than normal bikes.
- Heavier, usually 40-80 pounds (as heavy as a big dog!).
- Because they're heavier and faster, they are trickier to steer and take longer to stop.

Ask the students: "what are some reasons why people ride e-bikes?"

- They make biking accessible to many more people than 'regular' bikes do
- More affordable than cars
- Ideal for commuting, running errands, and recreation

Some people modify their e-bikes by:

- Taking off speed limits
- Putting in stronger motors
- Using bigger batteries

Why this is dangerous:

- You can crash more easily
- Brakes and tires might not handle the extra speed
- The motor or battery could get too hot
- It might be against the law

E-bike ABC Check and How to Ride:

Just like with regular pedal bikes, riders should always wear a helmet and follow the rules of the road. In Massachusetts, riders must be at least 16 years old to ride a Class 3 e-bike.

Do an ABC safety check before every ride:



Air:

Check that tires are properly inflated



Brakes:

Make sure the brakes are working properly



Charge:

Make sure the battery is charged and securely connected

Safety First!

Practice first:

Start riding in a safe, open area. E-bikes are heavier than regular bikes and may balance, steer, and stop differently. The motor can provide sudden power that may surprise new riders.

Adjust your riding for weather and road conditions:

Slow down on wet or slippery roads. Rain, gravel, and leaves can reduce traction and increase stopping distance.

Know the rules: Follow the E-bike laws and traffic rules where you live.

Take care of the battery: Use only the charger that came with the bike and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep batteries and chargers away from heat and water. Low-quality batteries or improper charging can increase fire risk.

One rider only (unless designed for two): Don't carry passengers unless the bike is designed for it and proper safety gear is used.

Be seen and safe: Wear bright or reflective clothes and always wear a helmet.

Pay extra attention: When riding an E-bike, don't get distracted. Be aware of what is happening around you, be predictable, be visible, communicate with other road users, and follow traffic rules.

Control your speed: Slow down in crowded areas or challenging conditions. Steep hills, gravel, and wet roads can be more dangerous at higher speeds. E-bikes are heavier and need more time and distance to stop safely.

















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