Check the bike before each ride.

Bikers should know how to look their bikes over before each ride. Show your beginning biker how to:

- Keep all the moving parts of the bike clean and greased.
- Check the brakes.
- Check tires for the right air pressure.

Don’t ride at dusk, dawn, or night, when drivers can’t see you. If you have to ride at night, install extra reflectors and wheel-powered lights (or a flashlight taped to the front of the bike), and make sure your child wears light-colored or reflective clothing. Never allow your child to ride in the rain, because hand brakes don’t work well when they’re wet.

Bike riding is not only fun, it is also a great way to exercise and an environmentally smart way to get around. For more information to help you teach your child about bike safety or maintenance, call your local Extension office.
Bike Safety

By the time most children leave elementary school, they know how to ride a bike. At least they know how to get on, stay on, and pedal to where they want to go.

Bike accidents will send 350,000 children to the emergency room this year. Why are so many children getting hurt while biking?

- Bikes don't have the protection of metal around them that cars provide. A fall or collision is much more harmful to a biker than a driver.
- Bikers can be hard to see, and many drivers aren't used to sharing the road with cyclists.
- It's much easier for bikers to lose control of their bikes by sliding on gravel or while being chased by a dog.

What can you do?

To make sure your biker remains safe, follow these steps:

Choose the right size bike.

Bikes that are too big for the rider cause many crashes. To reduce the risk of bike injuries, start with a well-maintained bike of the correct size.

On “boys’ bikes,” the rider should be able to straddle the bike with one inch of clearance above the top bar when feet are flat on the ground. On “girls’ bikes,” the rider should be able to sit on the seat with one leg straight and the foot flat on the ground.

Adjust the seat height and angle to help provide the proper fit. Each year, check to be sure that your growing child still “fits” the bike.

Provide safe biking wear.

Wearing the right biking clothes can prevent some injuries. Your child should wear sturdy shoes that won't slip off the pedals and pants that won't catch on the gears but are thick enough to protect him if he falls.

The most important piece of bike wear is a safety-approved bike helmet.

By Georgia law, children under age 18 must wear an approved safety helmet when cycling on public property. And all helmets made after March 1999 must meet the new federal safety requirements set by the government (Consumer Product Safety Commission, or CPSC).

If your child's old helmet meets the safety standards of ASTM, Snell, or ANSI (look for these letters on the label), she can safely use the helmet. However, when you replace the helmet as the child outgrows or damages it, be sure to choose a new helmet with the CPSC label or sticker.

Let your child pick out her own helmet so she will be more willing to wear it. Make sure it is snug and comfortable, but not too tight, and that it sits level on the head and not tilted to the front or back.

Set a good example by wearing your helmet when riding and always enforce the helmet rule for your young rider.

Teach and enforce the rules of the road.

The most common cause of bike crashes is not following traffic laws. Traffic laws for bikers are very similar to those for drivers. Your bike-rider must follow signs, speed laws, and signal rules.

Talk to your child about rules and enforce them. Set a good example by following the rules yourself. Notice when he follows the rules and correct him right away when he doesn't.

Beginning bikers should be restricted to riding on sidewalks, paths, and driveways until parents are sure they ride well and observe the basic rules of the road.

Do:

- Use hand signals.
- Walk the bike across busy intersections.
- Obey traffic signs and signals.
- Keep to the right with the traffic.
- Ride in single file.
- Find a smooth paved area, such as a sidewalk, for riding.
- Use a basket, backpack, or bike bag to carry things.
- Always wear a helmet!

Don't:

- Ride double.
- Try to perform stunts or tricks.
- Hitch rides on other vehicles.