

Say hi for a cycle-friendlier hayling island



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I don't know what to wear

There is no uniform for bike riders. You don't need to wear any special gear to go cycling, and many people don't. The health benefits of cycling far outweigh the risks. So, if worrying about clothing is holding you back, just get cycling!

We'd like to encourage you, however, to spend some time thinking about your comfort and safety on the bike.

Here are some items of cycle clothing you might like to consider...

▼Cycle helmet

There's a lot of debate on the value of wearing a helmet. In the UK, it's not compulsory to wear one. Most cyclists in the UK wear helmets, however. Here are some reasons why:

- The more cycling you do, the more chance you'll come off the bike onto your head. It might never happen but, if it does, you'll be glad you're wearing a helmet
- People learning to cycle and inexperienced cyclists are more likely to come off their bike.
- Children are less aware of dangers than adults.
- If you want to encourage children and grandchildren to wear helmets, then you should consider wearing one too.
- Some cycling events and cycling holidays require you to wear a helmet.

There's some useful information about cycle helmets here.

You should pay close attention to helmet fitting instructions. They are far less effective if fitted incorrectly.

If you decide not to wear a helmet, you should consider wearing some kind of protection from the sun. As you cycle you generate a cooling breeze, so you can easily burn without realising it.

▼Jacket

Unless you cycle only in good weather, you'll want some protection from wind and rain. Ordinary jackets you might use for walking are fine for casual cycling.

Specialist cycling jackets offer the following additional benefits:

- The material is thinner and much lighter while still being waterproof and windproof
- The material is usually 'breathable', allowing sweat and excess warmth to
- Zips under each arm allow ventilation where it's needed while still providing good protection from wind and rain
- Day-glo colours (typically yellow) give motorists a better chance of seeing
- Reflective patches and piping make you more visible at night
- Pockets placed strategically at the rear of the jacket help you get to your stuff on the move
- A back longer than the front gives you more protection as you lean over your handlebars

▼Gloves

Gloves keep you warm in winter and protect your hands if you come off the bike. Specialist cycling gloves provide the following additional benefits:

- Better grip on the handlebars
- Strategically placed padding gives you more comfort and safety
- Fingerless gloves provide more feel for brakes and gear shifters, and help you operate other equipment – such as cycle computers
- Mesh on the back of summer gloves provides ventilation to keep you cool
- Reflective patches and piping help visibility when signalling at night

NB there are different types of cycling glove suitable to different types of handlebar.

▼Glasses/goggles

It's a good idea to wear something to protect your eyes as you cycle because they are exposed to:

- Objects thrown up by traffic
- Dust
- Flying insects
- Wind
- RainSun

If you normally wear glasses, they will give you some protection. So will nonprescription sunglasses. Specialist cycling glasses provide the following additional benefits:

- Rubber grippers, rather than hooks over the ears, keep the glasses more firmly in place
- They wrap around the eyes giving greater protection
- Some cycling glasses come with interchangeable lenses for different conditions

If you need to wear glasses, you can increase protection by wearing goggles over your glasses or by buying specialist cycling glasses with prescription lenses.

▼Reflectives

In poor lighting conditions reflectives use the power of motorists' headlights to increase your visibility. They are not a substitute for good lights of your own, but you should combine the two especially when cycling at night. Reflectives come in several forms:

- on the rear of your bike (positioned centrally or to the side away from the pavement) and a yellow reflector on the front and back of each pedal. New bikes are usually delivered with white reflectors placed in the spokes of each wheel.
- Reflectors built in to cycle lights.
- Reflective patches and piping on clothing.
- Reflective slap-wraps that fasten around wrists and ankles.

High viz tabards incorporating reflective patches and piping are a cheap way to enhance the visibility of ordinary clothing.

▼Tops

Ordinary shirts and t-shirts are fine for many conditions. But, if you cycle hard or for any distance, you'll find they get sweaty and uncomfortable. Cycling jerseys are made from specialised material with a particular cut designed to:

- Obispel sweat (a process known as wicking)
- Reduce exposure to wind (normal shirts can act as a sail, holding you back)
- Help you manage ventilation by opening and closing a front zip (the longer the zip, the greater the control)
- Provide pockets strategically placed at the rear to help you get to your stuff on the move
- Give you more protection as you lean over your handlebars by having a back longer than the front
- Prevent the jersey from riding up by providing a silicone gripper around the bottom of the jersey

For increased effectiveness in hot or cold, you can wear two tops instead of one: a close-fitting, wicking base layer and a looser-fitting thin jersey over the top.

For extreme wet weather, a cycling cape will keep you mostly dry (it can't protect you from spray coming up from the road). Capes tend to act as sails in the wind, however, so can make cycling harder.

▼Bottoms

Getting your clothes tangled in your chain is likely to ruin them. Worse, you could damage your ankle and/or come off your bike. Some bikes have a chain guard to help prevent clothes getting tangled. If you have one, you should have a good look to see if it's adequate. Some are much better than others. If you don't have an effective chain guard, consider wearing:

- Shorts
- Tights
- Slim cut trousers
- Trousers with elastic or Velcro designed to keep fabric out of your chain
- Trousers with:
 - Cycle clips
 - Slap wraps
 - Bottoms tucked into socks

Not cool, but safer than doing without!

▼Cycling shorts/tights

Yes, we're talking about Lycra! Quite unnecessary if you cycle for short distances. The further you go, however, the more you'll benefit from:

- Padding! Even gel saddles start to feel hard after a while and built-in padding always fits in the right places
- Lightweight material without seams to keep you cool and protect against chafing
- Silicone grippers prevent them from riding up
- Reflective patches to aid visibility at night

Long cycling tights help you keep warm in rain and cold and can't get tangled in your gears.

▼Shoes

What you wear on your feet depends a lot on what type of pedals you use. If you have plain, flat pedals look for comfortable shoes with:

- Thin soles so you can feel where your feet are on the pedals
- $\ensuremath{ \Theta }$ Non-slip soles to keep your feet on the pedals
- Uppers fitting below your ankles so they don't chafe or restrict your movement
- Waterproofing for rainy days, and ventilation for hot days you're unlikely to get both in one shoe, though!

If you wear shoes with laces, don't have the laces so long that they might get tangled in your chain. Use a double knot to ensure they can't come undone while you are cycling. Specialist cycling shoes either use Velcro or provide a way to secure the laces.

Toe clips allow you to apply pressure to the pedals for more of each cycle. You don't need special shoes with toe clips. Heavy shoes and boots don't work well with them, however.

Clipless pedals engage with cleats fitted to the bottom of your shoes so you can apply pressure throughout the full cycle of each pedal. They also make sure you foot is in exactly the right place on the pedal. You disengage them with a sideways twisting motion. These obviously require special shoes. Typically, they come well ventilated to keep you cool. For cold or wet conditions you should consider cycling overshoes which come with cutouts to accommodate cleats.

▼Balaclava/scarf/bandana

Good for keeping ears warm while cycling in the cold.

Bandanas provide better sweat absorption than the pads provided in cycle helmets.

▼Extreme cycling kit

If you are going in for more adventurous cycling such as BMX, downhill, cross-country or trick cycling, you should consider additional protective gear. Ride organisers might insist on particular equipment. You should find out from them what protective gear is appropriate. If in doubt consider:

- Elbow pads
- Knee pads, shin pads or combined knee and shin pads

Full face helmet
 Body armour
 We're happy to help you choose suitable clothing for cycling.

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