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Finding the Right Bike

By Ellen Fix

Your body is different from everyone else's, so your bicycle should be, too. There are now numerous unique bicycle designs that can help keep you cycling in comfort. So how do you know which bike type is right for you? Here are a few general guidelines that can help you find the right bike.

First, skip the discount toy store racks. Instead, let an expert at a bicycle shop help you determine what style of bike suits your needs and riding plans, and find the right bike size for a good fit.

A test drive will tell all, so always take a test ride before you buy. Bike shops should let you take their two-wheelers outside for a test ride. Comfort is king – no matter what your confidence and ability level – so ask yourself if you're comfortable behind those handlebars.

Bike sizes vary from by manufacturer, but in general, for good fit and comfort, you should be able to stand comfortably and stably with your feet flat on the ground with the top bar of the frame under you. Step-through frames – once called "girls" bicycles, because they were ridden while wearing a skirt – are still available today. Unless you are aiming for high mileage, these bikes are quite stable and may be appropriate for either men or women.

Here are four unique bicycles designs with body-friendly features.

Comfort bike. Built for recreational riding on flat, smooth terrain a comfort bike (often called a "cruiser") has higher handlebars than a race or road bike and a lower seat, all of which provides better handling and stability.

Mountain bike. Wide, knobby tires and thick frames for off-the-beaten-path cycling are the trademark design elements of a mountain bike. They are strong and usually heavy bikes with good stability and popular even on city roads, because included suspension helps cushion road bumps. The handlebars are usually upright and wide, providing stability.

Hybrid bike. With larger wheels and narrower tires, a hybrid provides

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more efficient travel over long distances than its mountain bike cousin. While a hybrid is stable enough for the occasional ride on unpaved terrain, it's a good choice for casual riding in neighborhood parks. The handlebars have an upright stem, which lets you pedal in a comfortable upright position.

Recumbent bike. Although considered the most comfortable of bikes to ride, it can take some time to get used to the feel of riding this long and low bike. The wide, high-backed seat evenly supports and distributes the weight of your torso, relieving pressure on the arms, shoulders and back. Think of sitting in a reclining chair and pedaling in that position. Some pricey recumbents have an electrical power feature that provides automated pedaling assistance.

Prices vary widely based on components and manufacturer, but expect to pay between \$250 and \$600 for a quality bicycle.

D.C. Ferrand MD 30 Jul 2009, 18:39 report abuse

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Recumbents can be pricy. Either a Revive or Day 6 is an excellent less costly alternative.

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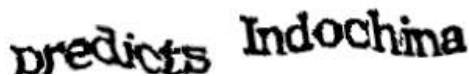
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