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How to Measure Your Inseam

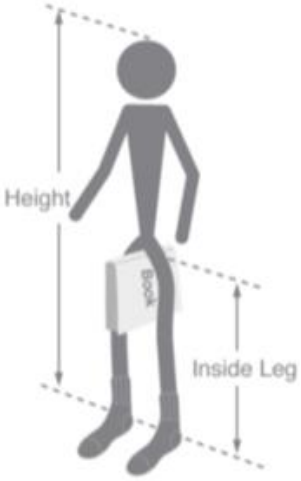
Measuring Your Inside Leg:

The most important thing to get right when purchasing a bike is the fit. You'll be going nowhere fast if your bike doesn't fit you properly. A new child's bike should be 'as large as possible' - to maximise the room for growth and get the most use out of it - but definitely not too large. Too large is dangerous, so an accurate inseam measurement is essential if the bike is to be both comfortable and safe.

There are several common methods, any of which will achieve much the same result. Your cyclist should be in socks or bare feet before you start.

The 'Book' Method:

Using a book as a right angle - Stand your cyclist with their back against a wall and place a book between their legs. With one edge of the book firmly against the wall slowly (!) raise the book up the wall until it stops. We're aiming to measure the distance between the crotch and the ground. See right >



The 'Standing Height Minus Sitting Height' Method:

Have your cyclist stand with their back against a wall and measure their height. Then have them sit with their back against the wall and measure their seated height. Subtract one from the other to give your inseam figure.

The 'Wedgie' Method:

For kids who, for one reason or another, won't sit or stand still for long enough to take a measurement - there's another sneaky method. If they're wearing trousers or jeans - basically, gently hoik them up by their waistband and quickly measure the distance between the hem of their trouser leg to the ground. Later, when they're not wearing their trousers, measure the actual inside seam of their trouser's leg and add this to the 'hem to ground' measurement to find their total inseam.

The more times you repeat the process, and/or the more different methods that you use to get your inseam measurement the more confidence you can have in the accuracy of your final figure.

For Hand Cyclists:

Measure 'reach' by sitting your hand-cyclist against a wall or other near vertical surface and having them grasp a cylindrical object of similar diameter to a handlebar (20 to 25mm), such as a broom handle. With the handle held vertically at full arm stretch, measure the distance from the wall to the centre of the handlebar.

Other Notes on Bike Fit:

- Only a level saddle can support your weight effectively. Your weight should be fairly equally spread between the front of your pelvis and your sit bones (Ischial Tuberosities). It's really easy to mess up an otherwise perfectly good set-up just by having the saddle a couple of degrees out.

  A saddle which slopes up at the nose applies excess pressure to soft tissue and forces the rider to rotate the pelvis backwards in an effort to get some weight onto the sit bones. It also makes the bars feel too far away. The rider cannot push hard on the pedals for fear of sliding off the back of the saddle.

  A saddle which slopes down causes the rider to constantly slide off the front. To compensate the rider must constantly push their body weight back off the bars and pedals. This set-up failure encourages the use of unduly high gears and, because so much weight has been transferred to the bars they feel way too low.

- As a general rule the more upright the riding position the wider the saddle should be.

- Bars, brake and gear levers are not set in stone. It's all just 'nuts and bolts', so go ahead and adjust them to suit the angle of your wrists and your own personal preference. Brake levers on flat or riser bars should be in-line with your arms when you are sitting on the bike. If the new position doesn't suit you, you can always move them back...

- Contrary to expectations firm saddles are more comfortable than squishy ones. It's because a firm saddle is better able to support your body weight.

  If your saddle is doing its job properly it should never enter your thoughts. The same can be said about the whole bike. For extreme long-distance cycling comfort is all important but the same ergonomic principles apply to whatever bike you ride.

Pedals, bars and saddle - when adjusted properly - can give you miles and miles of trouble free cycling. Or, if poorly adjusted, make your bike an instrument of torture!

Don't be afraid to adjust and micro-adjust again and again until you're 100% comfy.