

Pull out this page and use it as a reference tool and learning aid.



Why cycle? Well, it keeps you fit; it doesn't cost much, and for short distances, at least, it's more convenient than driving. Read these four scenes and learn some of the words and expressions you can use to talk about cycling.

medium

1. No frills

Lynda is looking through a bike **catalog** with Doug.

- Doug: Do you really want something this fancy?
 Lynda: No. **No frills**. Just something comfortable I can carry the **groceries** on.
 Doug: This one maybe: the "Breezer Freedom"?
 Lynda: **OK**.
 Doug: It has the gears in the wheel hub. Three speeds.
 Lynda: **OK**.
 Doug: A good saddle and normal handlebars.
 Lynda: And for **running errands**?
 Doug: Yeah, a rear rack.
 Lynda: Available in "pure purple", it says.
 Doug: **Whatever that is**. Four hundred dollars.
 Lynda: Mmm, this one looks good. "It isn't just beautiful, it's won awards, too!"
 Doug: Look at the price, though. Six hundred!

Tips

- This scene is written in American English. British people write "catalogue" instead of "catalog".
- A product with no frills, or a no-frills product, has the basic features only: "It was a nice, simple dinner with no frills."
- Many people in Britain would say "shopping" instead of "groceries".
- Lynda says "OK" to tell Doug that he should carry on reading the information.
- "Running an errand" means leaving the house to do something quickly, like going to the shops or the post office.
- Doug says "Whatever that is" to show that he is confused by the expression "pure purple".

2. You'll feel the air

Dan, 12, has got a **puncture**, so his father, Joe, is showing him how to fix it.

- Joe: OK. First you put the **levers under here** to get the tyre off.
 Dan: Shall I pull out the **tube**?
 Joe: Yeah. Now pump it up a bit and find the hole.
 Dan: How do you do that?
 Joe: Put **it** next to your face. You'll feel the air.
 Dan: **Got it**. Wow, it's tiny.
 Joe: Right. Now use this **thing** to roughen the rubber.
 Dan: Can you do it, Dad?
 Joe: Right. Put some **glue** around the hole and wait for it to dry.
 Dan: Is that enough?
 Joe: Fine. Stick the **patch** where the glue is.
 Dan: **Is that it?**
 Joe: It's **dead** easy, isn't it?

Tips

- A puncture is a hole in the rubber tube inside your bicycle tyre. You use levers to pull the tyre off, and you stick a patch over the hole, using glue.
- When Joe says "under here", he is talking about the metal rim of the wheel.
- The word "it" in "put it next to your face" refers to the tube.
- Dan says "Got it" when he has found the hole in the tube.
- Joe doesn't know the word for the piece of metal used for making the tube rough (a buffer), so he uses the word "thing".
- Dan's "Is that it?" means "Is that all you have to do?"
- In informal English, the word "dead" also means "very": "It was dead boring."

3. I don't want to be pushed!

Irene and Scott are on their way home after a long bike tour.

- Irene: Scott! Stop!
- Scott: What's the matter?
- Irene: It's too steep. I'm **knackered**. I'm going to walk.
- Scott: I'll push you.
- Irene: I don't want to be pushed! And anyway, **my bum's sore**.
- Scott: Look, let's have a rest. There's no rush, is there?
- Irene: It's going to **get dark** soon.
- Scott: We should've turned round earlier. **I've had enough**, too.
- Irene: Yeah, we definitely **bit off more than we could chew**. Well, I did **at least**.
- Scott: I did, too. I can feel it in my legs.
- Irene: I bet I won't be able to walk properly tomorrow.

Tips

- "Knackered" ['nækəd] is an informal word used in British English. It means extremely tired.
- In British English, "bum" is an informal word for the part of the body you sit on. In American English you say "butt". If a part of your body is sore, it hurts.
- The verb "get" is often used to describe change. "It's getting cold. Let's go inside."
- You say "I've had enough" when you are unhappy with a situation and want it to stop.
- If you "bite off more than you can chew", you try to do more than you are able to do.
- You use "at least" to modify something you have just said. Here, Irene says "we bit off more than we could chew". Then she changes "we" to "I".

4. You'll need stabilizers

Liz wants to buy a bike for her three-year-old daughter, May. She is phoning Dan, her brother, to get some advice.

- Liz: So, what sort of price are we **looking at**?
- Dan: About £100, I'd say. But you could try to get one second-hand.
- Liz: That won't work. It's next week, her birthday.
- Dan: Oh, I see. I mean, are you sure you want a bike? You'll need **stabilizers**.
- Liz: Are they expensive?
- Dan: No. It's **just** that you could start with a scooter first. It's the best way of learning to balance.
- Liz: And how much would that **set us back**?
- Dan: Well, you need a **decent** one with rubber wheels and a brake. About £60?
- Liz: Do you remember Mum catching you cycling with me on the crossbar? I must have been about May's age. No helmets and all that fancy stuff then.

Tips

- Liz uses "look at" in the meaning of "to expect". She wants to know what price she will have to pay for a child's bike.
- Another word for "stabilizers" is "training wheels".
- "Just" is a very common word with many meanings. Here, Dan uses it to make his suggestion less direct.
- The verb "set back" means "cost a lot of money": "These shoes set me back £200." Liz's choice of vocabulary shows that she is unhappy about spending a lot of money.
- The word "decent" means "of good quality" and is a common word in spoken English: "I could really do with a decent night's sleep."

Exercises

1. What part of a bike is it? The first letter is given.

- You sit on it. **s** _____
- You put your basket on it. **r** _____
- This is rubber and covers the wheel. **t** _____
- You hold on to these. **h** _____
- These help children to learn to cycle. **s** _____
- You don't find this on a woman's bike. **c** _____

3. Replace the words in colour with words from the scenes.

- There was a **very small** hole in the tyre.
- The test was **very** easy, wasn't it?
- I like your jacket. How much did that **cost you**?
- We've decided to buy a **quality** TV.
- All they wanted was a **simple** meal; nothing fancy.

2. Match the definitions with the phrases on the right from the conversations.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a) He tried to do more than he was able to do. | 1. He's knackered. |
| b) Does he want to stop? | 2. He bit off more than he could chew. |
| c) He goes to the shops for me. | 3. Is that it? |
| d) Is that all you have to do? | 4. Has he had enough? |
| e) He's very tired. | 5. He runs errands. |