

To the Editor:

This is an article from Janet O'Connell, Executive Director of the Bicycle Trade Association of Canada (BTAC). It is available for publishing at no charge, provided Ms. O'Connell is cited as the author. She may be reached at 905-853-5031.

Gear up for spring!

How to get the most out of your new bike

Spring is upon us, and so is another cycling season. For many people, this will mean purchasing a new bike. The first thing you need to do is talk with sales staff in your local bike shop. They will be able to recommend a bicycle based on your needs and budget.

If you are not sure what you are looking for, ask yourself:

- What type of riding do you want to do? Off-road? Urban? All-terrain? Certain bikes are more suited to certain types of riding.
- How far will you be riding? If you plan to cover distances greater than 20 km, high pressure tires are a good choice, since they roll with less effort.
- Do you need to carry any equipment with you? Some bikes are built to accommodate cargo.
- Will you be riding in hilly terrain? If so, a sports bike with different gears is a good choice.
- Are you planning to commute by bike? If so, then reliability should be your primary concern. You will also need to consider storage, terrain, distance and your own level of physical fitness.

Having the right bike is crucial to enjoying yourself, so choose wisely. A specialty bike retailer can direct you to quality products, and back them up with capable, professional service. You'll support the local economy, improve your health and reduce pollution, all at the same time.

Once you have chosen a bike, you will need to perform basic maintenance to keep it in proper working order.

Every cyclist should own a tire patch kit, a pump, a spare tube, 4mm, 5mm, and 6mm hex wrenches 8mm and 10mm open-end wrenches, a small flat screwdriver and a Phillips head screwdriver. As well, it is a good idea to routinely clean your chains, inspect your brake pads and test your tires.

Remember your ABCs

- A is for air (in your tires) - they should be properly inflated, perfectly straight and not worn or loose.
- B is for brakes – they should tighten fully against the rim. Make sure your brake pads and cables aren't too worn and that your handlebars aren't loose.
- C is for chain. It needs to be lubricated, and tense enough that it won't fall off.

Adopting these steps into your routine will prolong your bike's life and will keep you prepared should you encounter any mechanical difficulties while riding.

Ultimately, having the right bike is crucial to enjoying yourself, so choose wisely. Specialty bike retailers can direct you to quality products based on your needs with capable, professional service.

For more information on bike safety and maintenance, visit www.btac.org.

See you on the trails!

*The **Bicycle Trade Association of Canada (BTAC)** is the national voice of cycling in Canada and the hub of the Canadian bicycle industry. BTAC advocates, builds partnerships, promotes trade and commerce and seeks to motivate, unit and inspire Canadians to make bicycling the pre-eminent form of transportation and recreation in Canada. See www.btac.org for more information.*