



It's bike season on LI, so here are tips to enhance your pedaling joy, from beginners to seasoned riders

It's never too late — or early — to learn to ride a bicycle, as Dix Hill's Logan Rimler, 7, receives instruction from Don Eklund of Professor Pedals in East Northport.

# Bicycling built for you

BY ARLENE GROSS  
Special to Newsday

**S**pring is a great time of year to get the two-wheelers out of storage and go out and explore Long Island's miles and miles of paved bike paths, trails and roads. But before you dust off the old bicycle, here are a few things to consider.

## JOIN A BIKE CLUB

If you're not quite comfortable riding by yourself, you might consider joining a cycling club, where you'll find lots of advantages to group rides. "There's safety in numbers," says Russell Ottomano, president of Massapequa Park Bicycle Club, the oldest active bicycle club on Long Island, founded in 1970.

By riding in groups, you learn the rules of the road,

such as passing someone on the left only, while also benefiting from riders ahead calling out potholes and other hazards.

"It's a lot more fun riding with people than by yourself," says Ottomano. "You make new friends and sometimes make life bonds with people you never would have expected."

Since not everybody rides at the same level, the club offers different ride categories, rang-

ing from AA (faster) to C, with faster groups going longer distances and slower ones tending to avoid the hills, notes Ottomano.

"It's not like it's one big, gigantic group and everyone has to be of the same riding ability," he says.

Cycling, Ottomano says, is a great way to explore Long Island.

In addition to regular week-day and weekend rides, MPBC



MORGAN CAMPBELL



JEFF BACHNER

Sam Yuan of Great Neck challenges his biking skills on the Nassau-Suffolk Green Trail.

runs the supremely scenic Tour of the Hamptons each fall, with a choice of routes traveling 25, 50, 75 and 100 miles.

If you're riding in the area, try the Bethpage Bikeway, which is 13.2 miles long if you begin at Manetto Hill and Woodbury roads in Woodbury and ride to Bethpage State Parkway. The trail takes you through the Massapequa Preserve.

**GET A GOOD BIKE FITTING**

Being properly fitted for a bicycle helps prevent knee pain and other repetitive stress injuries, notes certified bike fitter Brett Cooper, owner of The Fit Space, who works out of Bicycle Planet in Syosset.

"Half my fittings may be because somebody's experiencing some discomfort already, whether that's hand pain or numbness, foot numbness, their back hurts, their neck hurts, or they just want to be in a better position," Cooper says.

A bike fitting involves taking pre-measurements on the bike, an assessment to determine the rider's hip and hamstring range of motion and overall flexibility and measurements lying down.

"After the flexibility assessment, they're on and off the bike for about an hour and a half, as we're making changes to saddle height, saddle fore and aft, saddle angle," says Cooper.

Though some people use computers in fittings, Cooper opts for a more old-fashioned approach.

"I have much better results talking with the rider about how they're feeling as those changes are made," he says.

Though he usually fits more serious riders — who

clock in 40 to 60 miles each outing — Cooper says any rider could benefit from a bike fitting.

"You're just going to have more fun in a proper position when things aren't bothering you," he says.

**GETTING IN TUNE**

It's important to get your bicycle ready for the season with an annual tuneup.

"Just like a car should be tuned up regularly, so should a bike," says Alex Zuckerman, owner of Bicycle Playground in Huntington and Port Washington.

With regular usage, the cables that control shifting and braking can become stretched out and rubber components — tires, brake pads and grips — dry up. During a tuneup, the bike is lubricated, spokes are re-tensioned and grease is reapplied.

"A tuneup makes sure that all of that stuff is examined so that the bike is safe to use," says Zuckerman.

**LEARN TO RIDE — SAFELY**

For little ones, or anyone who never learned how to ride a bicycle, it's never too early — or too late — but you have to be willing to learn.

"The hardest thing to teach with any student is interest," says Steven Finkelstein, owner of Professor Pedals.

Offering private one-on-one lessons in three locations on Long Island, Professor Pedals provides bicycles for students to learn on.

"It's always best, no matter who you're learning with, to not go out and purchase one until you know how to ride," Finkelstein says.

Students can choose between one-hour and 90-minute lessons and typically require between one and three lessons to learn.

"The ideal duration is an hour and a half," Finkelstein says. "But if a student doesn't have the attention or endurance to handle the

**Cycling info**

All clubs offer different groups for all levels of riding.

■ **Massapequa Park Bicycle Club** Most rides meet at the Bethpage Public Library. Individual membership: \$25; Family membership: \$35; massparkbikeclub.org

■ **Huntington Bicycle Club** Most rides meet at the Smith Street parking lot near the Greenlawn train station. Individual membership: \$30 per year; Family membership: \$40 per year; hbcli.org

■ **Suffolk Bicycle Riders Association (SBRA)** Various locations throughout Suffolk County. Individual membership: \$30; sbraweb.org

■ **Long Island Bicycle Club (LIBC)** Most rides meet at Westbury High School. Individual membership: \$20; \$5 per additional member of the family; Libike.org

■ **Bicycle Fitting** The Fit Space at Bicycle Planet, 340 Robbins Lane, Syosset, 516-364-4434; thebicycleplanet.com or thefitspace.net. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, a fitting takes up to three hours; \$299 for road bikes; \$249 for mountain bikes.

■ **Tuneups** Bicycle Playground, 256 Main St., Huntington, 631-683-5522, and 101 Manorhaven Blvd., Port Washington, 516-883-8243 bicycleplayground.com; Tuneup starts at \$95; plus more for brake pads, etc.

■ **Lessons** Professor Pedals: **One hour:** \$155; 90 minutes: \$185 (scholarships are available). Lessons include the bicycle; bring your own helmet. **Locations:** James Dever School, 585 Corona Ave., Valley Stream; Northport High School, 154 Laurel Hill Rd., Northport, and Paul Bellew Elementary School, 25 Higbie Lane, West Islip; 516-375-8492, professorpedals.com

hour and half, the hour lesson is designed for them."

Though some people might be interested in mountain bike riding or other specific uses, Professor Pedals just teaches basic neighborhood bike riding.

"Once they have that skill, they can go on to more specific riding types," says Finkelstein.