

SpokeGIRL Speak

Step One: The Right Bike

You need to ask your self what kind of riding you want to do. Is it trail riding? Road riding? Touring? Club riding? This is the first step in deciding what bike to choose.

Here is a brief breakdown on what type of bike you may want.

- Trail riding – say you want to hit some of the many wonderful trails offered all over the country. Maybe a trail that has been built by the Rails to Trails Conservancy? You probably will want to look at a comfort or hybrid. These bikes will give you a feeling of more stability. You sit upright on these bikes.
- Club riding – If you are interested in joining a local cycling club, you may want to consider a road bike or a “fitness” or flat-bar road bike. These bikes will be lighter and should allow you to stay with the pack at the designated pace.
- Commuting – the sky’s the limit here. It’s so awesome to see how many people have started commuting to work. They will ride any type of bike they can get their hands on. You will usually see a lot of used bikes in the hands of commuters. They don’t want to “trash” a good bike riding to work, so they go for the older bikes. In addition, there are a lot of people who will ride hybrids as commuter bikes. They are a bit lighter than the comfort bikes, which allows for a somewhat easier commute. Throw a back rack and some panniers on it, or get a commuter back pack and you are ready to go.

The Bikes

Road Bike:

Maybe you have an old bike sitting in the garage collecting dust. Maybe you are just starting to look for a bike. New? Used? There are a lot of options out there. But, the idea is that you just get out there and ride.

If you are looking for a used bike, check the yellow pages or on-line directories in your area. There are usually one or two shops that specialize in used bikes.

If you are looking for a new bike, make sure you ask your local bike shop about women specific bikes. They are designed to better fit our body frames. Companies that make women-specific bikes include (but are not limited to):

- Specialized
- Trek
- Giant
- Terry

As it was explained to me, on a road bike, women tend to need a shorter top tube and stem. So, just buying any old bike won’t do.

Make sure you find a shop that will fit you to the bike. What this entails is taking measurements of your arms, your legs, etc., so the bike can be adjusted to fit you properly. Trust me, fit is very important. I went 2 seasons riding a bike that was too big for me. I was getting headaches and a sore neck. A properly fitted bike made all the difference in the world for me.

Notes:

Please remember that you should never embark on a fitness program without getting a check-up with your doctor.

In addition, SpokeGIRL endorses the wearing of helmets!!!! You should always wear a helmet when riding.

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Hybrids/Comfort Bikes

Many women prefer to ride hybrid or comfort bikes. Just about every manufacturer out there makes a decent hybrid or comfort bike. On a hybrid or comfort bike, you will sit more upright. You feel more in control because of sitting in the upright position.

The only real measurements involved in these bikes are the size of the frame, and a potential adjustment to the seat height and/or the handlebars.

The difference in the bikes? Comfort bikes are heavier than hybrids. And, hybrids are a cross between a comfort bike and a mountain bike. So, you can maneuver them a little better in different terrains than you can comfort bikes.

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