

**THE BEST BIKES & KIT FOR YOUR CASH!**

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Olympic know-how to keep you riding

No.124 Summer 2011

# WHAT MOUNTAIN BIKE

**»»»TRAIL TESTED**

**19 saddles**  
**14 budget wheelsets**

- Workshop gadgets
- Trail helmets



**Discover Snowdonia**

OS maps + free GPS downloads

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One man's non-stop epic across Wales and back

**KIDS SPECIAL**

**THE COMPLETE GUIDE to Kids' Bikes & Riding**



- Bikes ✓
- Gear ✓
- Skills ✓
- Know-how ✓

**The best budget hardtails**

# £500 HEROES

**Four bikes prove you don't need to spend a fortune for trail fun**

**HOW TO**

Fit a BB30 bottom bracket

Cockpit set-up



**FIRST RIDES** Boardman HT Pro Carbon ■ Ellsworth Evolve ■ Jones steel spaceframe

AGE 3-6

# Starter singlespeeds

With the balance sorted, it's time to take things up a gear

## Upright riding position

It's awkward and less comfortable for small children to ride leaning over: they've got relatively bigger internal organs and heavier heads than adults, and their arms aren't as strong. The reach to and height of the bars should enable them to sit upright, throughout their ownership of the bike. Look for BMX-style bars, a stem with a decent amount of rise and/or a high head tube.

## Easy to use brakes

It ought to go without saying that levers should be in easy reach and the brakes light enough to operate. On some bikes they're not. The rear brake in particular can be stiff. Try reaching for and operating each brake with just your little finger. It should be easy, as it is with this Cnoc.



**Islabikes Cnoc 16** £170



## Steve says...

"My 13-year-old daughter has ridden her way through almost the whole range of Islabikes, and the ones that she liked best for all but proper hilly mountain biking were the ones with only one gear. Single-gear bikes are lighter, more resistant to abuse and less complex for young minds to tackle."

## No stabilisers

If the bike comes with stabilisers, bin them. They don't do any harm but your child can't begin to learn to ride until they've been removed. If your child is too big for a balance bike, adapt a starter singlespeed by removing the pedals and lowering the saddle. You can refit the pedals once they've mastered balancing and braking.

## Short cranks

For an efficient pedalling action, someone less than two thirds of your height needs cranks less than two thirds as long. Around 100-110mm should suit. Cranks that are significantly longer distort the design parameters of the bike, demanding a higher bottom bracket (BB) to avoid grounding a pedal. A higher bottom bracket sits the rider higher up, making foot dabs precarious.

## CONTENDERS



### B'Twin Hyper Hero E70

It's a steel frame, but it's proportioned well and uses ball bearings for the headset, bottom bracket and wheels. Braking is via a rear drum brake and a front cantilever. Weight: 9.2kg. [www.decathlon.co.uk](http://www.decathlon.co.uk)



### Ridgeback MX16 E130

The aluminium-framed, steel-forked bike scores over many singlespeeds due to its lower weight. The brake levers are reach-adjustable and the 28-spoke 16in wheels should survive mistreatment. Weight: 8.9kg. [www.decathlon.co.uk](http://www.decathlon.co.uk)



### Islabikes Cnoc 16 E170

It's really light and designed with unsurpassed attention to detail. Cranks are an ideal 102mm. The 'small hands' diameter handlebar is adjustable for reach, while the cartridge-bearing headset has a steering limiter. Weight: 7.7kg. [www.islabikes.co.uk](http://www.islabikes.co.uk)



AGE 8-11

## Second junior MTB

As your child's experience grows so will the bike's spec list



### Dan says...

"Once your child is on 26in wheels, you can save money and/or improve performance by recycling parts that you have accumulated from upgrading your own bike. For ages 11-plus, you might need only a frame to build a bike. On-One's Scandal 26 is available in 14in (£235) and Merlin's Malt 1 in 13in (£140). When your child gets bigger, swap the bits to a bigger frame."

### Better brakes

Bigger, faster-travelling riders need more stopping power and control. Hydraulic discs are best, assuming levers with a short enough reach. With cable systems - rim or disc - you can maximise effectiveness by minimising cable friction. Lube is cheap; Gore Ride On cables are expensive but effective.

### Lightweight suspension

You know what proper suspension costs; it doesn't get any cheaper because it's on a child's bike. So stick with a hardtail. If it's a coil fork, get your child to compress it in the shop to check the spring is light enough. An air fork is best, not just because it's lighter and can be set to suit a low rider weight but because you can easily make the suspension firmer as your child grows.



**Islabikes Creig 26** £700

### More gears

With experience, children this age can tackle red and black routes. But they won't have your strength to muscle uphill on a 32T chainring, so a smaller (22T) inner ring is helpful. Bigger outer rings aren't used much and can be replaced with a bash ring - which will prevent chainring-based leg injuries when feet slip off pedals. Children should now have enough thumb strength for trigger shifters.

### Short cranks

Primary school age children are seldom tall enough for adult-length cranks, although some manufacturers will fit them anyway. Look for cranks around 150mm, with frame dimensions to suit. To check the bottom bracket is low enough, sit your child on the bike in the shop (if possible) and see if he or she can get a toe down when the saddle is high enough for normal pedalling.

### Off-road tyres

Different tyres can transform a bike's singletrack traction or rolling performance. Most bikes for this age category have 24in wheels (ISO 507). Big and heavy downhill tyres are available in this size (if they'll fit in the frame), as are a few cross-country (XC) tyres - such as Schwalbe's Rocket Ron and Kenda's Small Block Eight. If the bike has been designed around 26in wheels, like this Islabike, choice is unlimited.

## CONTENDERS



### Dawes Phantom £210

The steel-forked Phantom is a bigger version of the Rocket, with 24in wheels and a triple chainset. Weight is pretty good despite solid-axle wheels, quill stem, etc. Tyres fitted will suit the local park better than trails. Weight: 12.5kg. [www.dawescycles.com](http://www.dawescycles.com)



### Scott Scale JR24 £370

Not to be confused with the higher-spec Scale RC JR, this one is still light and has a coil fork that's soft enough to give all its 50mm travel. Proportions are good and the 21-speed drivetrain uses a narrow freehub. Weight: 11.8kg. [www.scott-sports.com](http://www.scott-sports.com)



### Islabikes Creig 26 £700

Equipped with a RockShox Recon air fork, 24-speed SRAM X5, and Avid Juicy 3 hydraulic disc brakes. Aimed at riders aged nine-plus, it uses 26in wheels. A low BB, short cranks and low bar height ensure it fits small riders. Weight: 11.8kg. [www.islabikes.co.uk](http://www.islabikes.co.uk)