



Group**test**

Child seats

A front or rear seat is the simplest and cheapest way to carry a preschool passenger. **Ed Shoote** and son **Orrin** test four



ED SHOOTE

Ed is a keen adventure cyclist who has previously cycled the Pamir Highway. His website is welovemountains.net

There are so many child seats on the market that choosing the right one can be daunting. As well as looking at the age and weight range, you need to consider your bike compatibility and what you'll use it for most of the time.

Do you want to commute to the nursery daily, for example, or just enjoy some easy off-road trails together at the weekend? For this review I tested two front and two rear seats. All four were quite different in design and intended use.

Orrin turned two just as we started testing the seats, and during lockdown we were out riding every day in Scotland. I used the seats on a variety of surfaces, from road to easy singletrack. The rear seats were fitted to a gravel bike, the front to a hardtail mountain bike.

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Safety features

Look for straps with good fit and adjustment, which your child can't slip out of by accident, and easy-to-use foot straps. Clear indicators that the seat is safely mounted provide peace of mind. Many rear seats come with a safety strap to go around the frame.

seats need a long steerer tube or tall head tube.

3 Comfort

Look at the quality of the padding on the seat and straps, and check whether it is waterproof. Also consider head support for mid-ride naps; some seats tilt back to support a sleeping child.

2 Fitting

Rear seats either clamp to the seat tube or attach to a sturdy rear rack, which demands a bike with rack mounts. Smaller bikes can be challenging to fit front seats to. Most front

4 Swappability

How easy is it to swap between bikes? Some seats simply click on and off, leaving a basic mount, while others demand a spanner for removing fiddly bolts.



Cycle's test promise

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1



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The trailer alternative

Take up to two children, with balanced handling and weather protection: cyclinguk.org/article/cycling-guide/guide-bike-trailers

3



4



Verdict

The WeeRide offers a safe first taste of cycling for small children, but I wasn't keen on the clunky attachment or the knees-out pedalling required. The Shotgun seat, especially with the Mini Bars, will get toddlers to love cycling. It was Orrin's go-to option for easy off-road trails.

The Urban Iki's low weight was appealing but it was not robust enough for me to be confident in using it again. Finally, the Hamax is quality Norwegian design. It's the perfect option for ditching the car and getting an e-bike for the nursery run and other utility trips.



More online

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cyclinguk.org/cycling-advice

1 WeeRide Safe Front Deluxe

£129.99

weeride.co.uk

THE WEERIDE mounts to a metal bar fitted between head tube and seatpost. This bar is quite a faff to fit; not all bikes' head tubes are compatible. The weight is well balanced but even on an XL size bike it forced my knees out a lot, making it awkward to pedal for anything other than short, flat trips. The seat is small, with a low back, although the front rest is ideal for naps. The shoulder straps can slip off if you're not careful. Ages: 9mths to 3yrs.

▼ **Balanced handling but hinders even tall riders. Clunky interface**

2 Shotgun Front Mounted Seat + Mini Bars

£120 + £27

kidsrideshotgun.com

THE SHOTGUN clamps to the top and down tubes using a protective rubber mount that's compatible with most mountain bikes. The seat didn't affect my riding at all, being narrow and away from my knees. I was nervous on the first ride but, with Orrin between my arms and his feet strapped in, it felt secure. This was Orrin's favourite seat, and I loved it too. The Mini Bars are useful and a lot of fun for your child. Ages: 2-5yrs.

▼ **Suits off-road paths more than road. Child's handlebar is nice**

3 Urban Iki Rear Seat with Rack Mount

£64.99

urbaniki.com/en

THE URBAN IKI is a lightweight rear seat at a good price. I tested the rack-fitting version, which clicks onto a suitable luggage rack. A safety cable around the bike frame adds security. I liked the seat until on one ride it fell off the back – Orrin was luckily unhurt! The seat was probably not fully clicked in. What concerns me is that I had checked it and thought it was on correctly, and also that the safety cable snapped. Ages: 9mths to 22kg.

▼ **Minimalist rear seat that worked well – until it fell off the rack!**

4 Hamax Caress Rear Seat (Rack Version)

£129.99

hamax.com

THE HAMAX CARESS is a high-quality seat with sprung suspension, height adjustment, a reclining option, and tool-free attachment with a built-in lock. The undamped suspension did smooth the ride but tended to bounce a lot off-road. When reclined, the seat shifts the centre of gravity backwards, making handling tricky with heavy children. A version that clamps to the seat tube is also available. Ages: 9mths to 22kg.

▼ **A quality seat, ideal for nursery runs and smoother bike paths**