

## CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 29

# Bicycle trailers now come in all shapes and sizes

Bicycle trailers have been around almost as long as bicycles, but the range available today to consumers is quite remarkable.

With the correct type of trailer, riders can tow children, groceries, compost, kayaks - in fact just about anything that does not exceed the maximum load width of 660mm. There is even one Perth resident who comfortably transported a two-door refrigerator 25km from a suburban shopping centre to his home.

Consumers can choose from several trailer types including single wheel, multi-wheel and tag-along models. Single wheel trailers are good for hauling lighter loads. Having only the one wheel, the trailer can tilt from side-to-side when cornering thereby enabling a higher riding speed to be maintained, but if overloaded they can cause frame or hub damage to the towing bicycle.

Two-wheel trailers are by far the most popular because of their greater load capacity. But they do have a tendency to tip over if bends are taken at too higher speed.

Child trailers have some advantages over child carrier seats. It is easier to put a child in and out of trailer and a lower centre of gravity makes the bike more stable to ride. The better quality child trailers also come with UV tinting, rain protection and reflective piping.

A cyclist towing passengers in a bicycle trailer must be at least 16 years of age and the passengers must be under the age of ten. All must wear an approved helmet.

Tag-along bikes are great for family outings, especially when children enjoy riding but do not yet have the strength or endurance to follow the adults.



They look a bit like a child's bike with the front fork and wheel missing, but retain the seat, handlebars, rear wheel and drive train, attaching to the main bicycle via a hitch and allowing the child to contribute to the ride.

Riding with any trailer attached for the first time takes some getting used to because the extra weight requires longer stopping distances and higher braking force, while extra length means you must allow more time when crossing a road or negotiating a sharp corner. To maximise stability, the load should be placed so that there is slightly more weight in the front than the rear.

Trailers commonly attach to the bike at the seat post. Many one-wheel and a few two-wheel models attach to the rear axle and although this means more initial effort to set-up, the lower point of connection does produce better handling. Either type of coupling can create resonance when going down steep descents and the rider may feel like the trailer is "bumping" the bicycle. The only remedy is to slow down.

***This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. You can find more cycling fact sheets online at [www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling)***

Cycling Unit  
Department of Transport  
441 Murray Street, Perth WA 6000  
Tel: (08) 9216 8000  
Fax: (08) 9216 8497  
Email: [cycling@transport.wa.gov.au](mailto:cycling@transport.wa.gov.au)