

AAA E-RIDE SAFETY GUIDE

What parents and riders need to know about electric bikes and scooters.



Electric bikes and scooters are changing how people travel, offering a convenient and eco-friendly option for short trips. As e-rides become more common in communities, riders and parents should understand the unique safety risks that come with higher speeds and mixed traffic. This guide provides practical tips to help families make smart choices, reduce risk, and ride safely and more confidently.



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CHOOSING A DEVICE

Electric bikes and scooters may look similar to traditional bikes and scooters, but motors change how they accelerate, handle, and stop. Before you buy, match the device to your child or teen's size, skill, and where they will ride. **Here are the main characteristics of e-bikes and e-scooters.**

E-BIKES



Heavier than traditional bicycles due to the motor and battery.



Operate like a bicycle with electric assistance.



Require confident balance, steering, braking, and weight control.



Increased speeds raise crash risk and injury severity.

E-bike basics: pedal assist vs. throttle

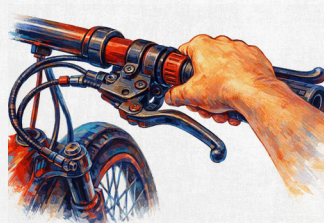
Understanding how motors deliver power helps explain why some devices feel harder to control.

Pedal assist



- The motor engages only when the rider pedals.
- Speed increases feel more gradual and controlled.

Throttle



- The motor propels the bike without pedaling.
- Speed can increase rapidly with one control.



Throttle-equipped devices can surprise new riders. Speed may continue even if the rider stops pedaling or panics.

E-bike classes and what they mean for parents

Many states use a three-class system, but rules vary by city, county, or state.

E-BIKE CLASS	POWER TYPE	TOP SPEED
Class 1	Pedal-assist only	20 mph
Class 2	Throttle-capable	20 mph
Class 3 <i>(Rider age, helmet use, and licensing requirements vary by state.)</i>	Higher-speed pedal-assist	28 mph

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

Start with the slowest class that fits your child's needs. Avoid devices marketed for speed or commuting in traffic when introducing a child to electric riding. E-bikes are heavier than traditional bicycles, so a rider must be able to confidently balance, stop, and handle the added weight before riding independently.

E-SCOOTERS



Are usually stand-up devices with a platform and handlebars.



Accelerate quickly with a thumb or finger control.



Have smaller wheels that can catch on cracks, debris, or uneven pavement.



Provide less stability, especially for younger or inexperienced riders.

Types of e-scooters parents should understand

Not all e-scooters are the same.

Recreational or youth scooters

- Lower top speeds.
- Lighter frames.
- Designed for controlled environments, not traffic.

High-powered or commuter scooters

- Can reach 15-20 mph or more.
- Accelerate quickly.
- Often designed for adults and urban travel.



Many e-scooters are built primarily for adult riders, even if they are easy for children to access. **Parents should review age recommendations, speed capability, and intended use** before allowing a child to ride.

Pediatric physicians warn that **falls can cause serious injury, and many communities restrict who can ride.** If your child rides an e-scooter, treat it like a vehicle with rules and protective gear, not a toy.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

Choose a low-speed e-scooter for beginners. Faster scooters are harder to control, less stable over bumps, and increase the risk of falls.

SMART E-RIDE SAFETY FEATURES TO LOOK FOR

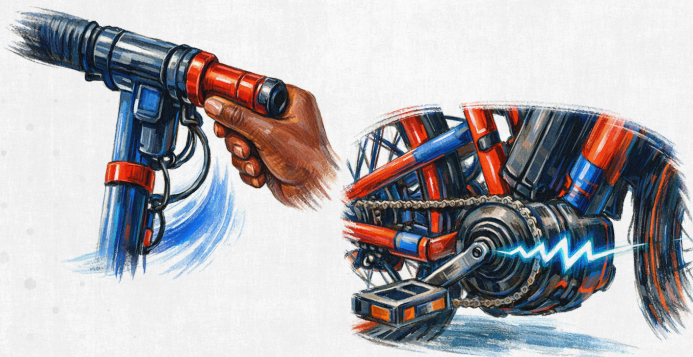
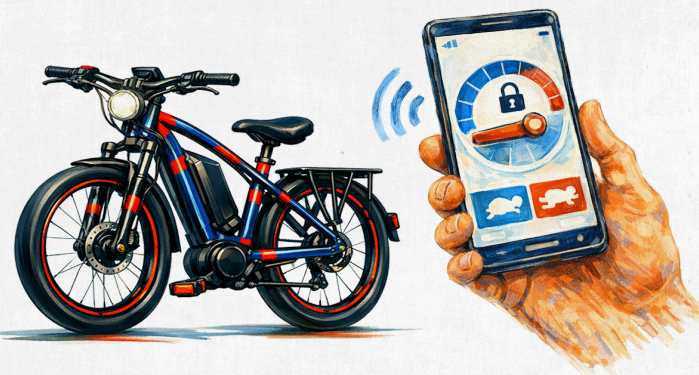
These features help parents set limits and give young riders more control.

Speed controls that limit risk

- Many e-ride models let parents restrict how fast the device can go by using a companion app or adjusting the physical settings on the device.
- Lower speeds give young riders more time to react and reduce the severity of crashes and injuries.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

Start at the lowest speed setting and increase only after your child demonstrates consistent control and judgment.



Simple, predictable controls

- Choose devices with straightforward throttle or pedal-assist systems that respond smoothly.
- Avoid overly sensitive throttles that can cause sudden acceleration.
- Controls should feel intuitive and easy to reach without shifting hand position.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

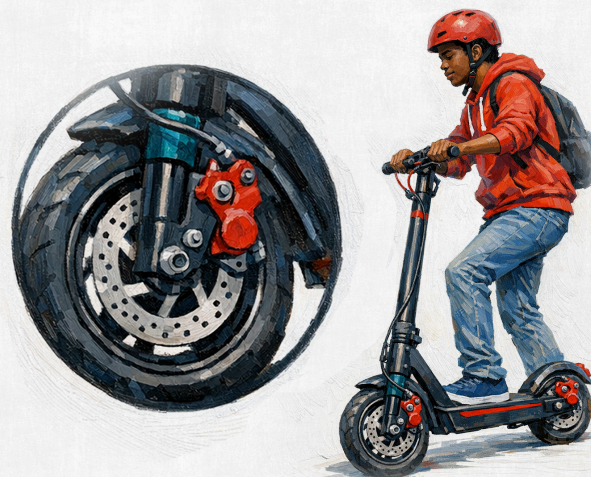
Complex or jumpy controls increase the risk of panic responses, especially for first-time riders.

Strong, reliable braking

- Look for responsive brakes that can stop the device quickly and smoothly.
- Test braking at low speed before your child rides independently.
- Poor braking performance becomes more dangerous as speed increases.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

If it takes too long to stop at walking speed, it will take much longer at higher speeds.



Safe, tested battery and electrical system

- Choose products that meet recognized safety standards (look for UL or EN certification).
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for device charging and use only the manufacturer's original equipment to charge the device.
- Don't charge unattended overnight, watch for swelling or odd smells, and avoid aftermarket batteries and chargers.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

Keep e-ride devices away from water and rain, as wet batteries can pose a serious fire risk. Always store and use them in dry conditions to reduce the chance of electrical hazards.



Stability and visibility features

- Wider tires can improve balance and traction, especially on uneven pavement.
- Built-in lights and reflectors help make riders more visible to drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.
- A bell or alert helps riders signal their presence around others.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

Visibility matters even during daytime riding.



Proper fit and manageable weight

- The device should match your child's height, strength, and coordination.
- Your child should be able to:
 - Sit or stand comfortably.
 - Reach handlebars and controls easily.
 - Place at least one foot firmly on the ground when stopping.
 - Handle the weight when turning or slowing down.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

If a child struggles to control the device while stopped, they will struggle even more while moving.



HELMETS AND GEAR: PROTECTION THAT FITS THE RIDE

Always wear a helmet, even for short trips. Helmets are one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce the risk of serious head injury. Many e-bike and e-scooter crashes happen suddenly, often leaving little time to react.

The level of protection a rider needs depends on how fast the device can travel. Faster speeds increase both the likelihood and severity of injury, making helmet choice just as important as helmet use.

Match the Helmet to Your Speed

A standard bicycle helmet may not provide enough protection as speeds increase. Helmet choice should reflect how fast a device can go and how it is used, not just how it looks.

Common Helmet Standards and What They Cover



CPSC (bicycle standard)

These helmets meet federal safety standards for use at speeds **up to 20 mph**.



NTA-8776 (e-bike standard)

This specialized safety standard is for higher-speed e-bikes and e-scooters **up to 28 mph**.



DOT (motorcycle helmet)

This standard applies to speeds **above 28 mph**, with stronger impact protection and better coverage of the face, back, and sides of the head.

Four key helmet reminders for all riders:

1

Wear a helmet on every ride, regardless of distance.

2

Make sure the helmet fits properly and stays secure.

3

Replace any helmet involved in a crash.

4

Replace helmets that are cracked, damaged, or no longer fit properly.

Fit matters (quick parent check)

A helmet only works when it fits properly and stays in place. AAA guidance stresses proper fit and consistent use.



Size

Measure your head for approximate size. Try the helmet to ensure it fits snugly. While it is sitting flat on top of your head, make sure the helmet doesn't rock side to side.



Position

The helmet should sit level on your head and low on your forehead – one or two finger-widths above your eyebrow.



Buckles

Center the left buckle under the chin. On most helmets, the straps can be pulled from the back of the helmet to lengthen or shorten the chin straps. This task is easier if you take the helmet off to make these adjustments.



Chin Strap

Buckle your chin strap. Tighten the strap until it is snug, so that no more than one or two fingers fit under the strap.



Side Straps

Adjust the slider on both straps to form a "V" shape under, and slightly in front of, the ears. Lock the slider if possible.

Final check

Does their helmet fit right? Open your mouth wide...big yawn! The helmet should be pulled down on the head. If not, tighten the chin strap.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

Add basic protective gear. Pediatric guidance commonly recommends:

- Closed-toe shoes.
- Elbow and knee pads.
- Bright reflective gear and lights for low-light conditions.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Laws governing e-bike use vary by state and city, including rules on age limits, helmet use, where devices may be ridden, and required equipment. Parents should review local laws before purchasing an e-bike and set riding rules that at a minimum reflect those requirements.



Class 3 e-bikes often have age restrictions. In many states, riders **must be at least 16 years old** to legally operate a Class 3 e-bike.



Helmet use is typically required on Class 3 e-bikes, regardless of the rider's age. This applies even in states where helmet use is optional for slower e-bike classes.



Where e-bikes can be ridden depends on the class. Some higher-speed e-bikes may be restricted from bike paths, sidewalks, or certain trails.



Lighting requirements apply after dark. Most states require a white front light and a red light or red reflector when riding an e-bike at night.

⚡ Parent guidance ⚡

A device that looks similar to a regular bike may carry very different legal responsibilities.





MODIFIED OR DECEPTIVELY MARKETED DEVICES WARNING

Some electric bikes and scooters can be modified or unlocked to go faster than advertised, often without parents realizing it.

In addition, some two-wheeled electric products are marketed as “e-bikes” even though they exceed the federal definition, which limits motor power to 750 watts and speed to 20 mph without pedaling. When devices go beyond these limits, they may be subject to different rules, restrictions, or requirements when used in public spaces.

Higher speeds lead to more severe crashes. Modified or higher-powered devices should be treated as higher-risk rides that require stronger supervision and safety precautions.

What parents can do:



Purchase devices from trusted retailers that clearly describe motor power, top speed, and device classification.



Look for models with parental controls, locked speed settings, or app-based limits.



Periodically check device settings to ensure speed limits have not changed.



Talk with kids about why speed limits exist and how higher speeds increase injury risk.



Match helmets and protective gear to the fastest possible speed, not the intended or advertised speed.

WHERE TO RIDE: SET RULES BEFORE THE FIRST RIDE

Where your child rides matters as much as what they ride. Electric bikes and scooters operate in shared spaces with vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, and the safest riding areas vary by device and community type.

Before riding, review your city and state rules for e-bikes and e-scooters. Laws differ widely by jurisdiction and may change based on device class, rider age, or location.

1. CHOOSE APPROPRIATE RIDING SPACES		
In metropolitan or higher-traffic areas		
E-bikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bike lanes when available. ■ Low-speed streets with clear sight lines. ■ Streets designed for bicycle use. 	Busy urban streets increase exposure to vehicles, turning movements, and driveways. Riders must be predictable and highly visible.
E-scooters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bike lanes where permitted. ■ Calm streets with light traffic. ■ Areas with smooth pavement and minimal obstacles. 	
In small communities or residential neighborhoods		
E-bikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Neighborhood streets with low speed limits. ■ Designated bike routes. 	Even in smaller communities, driveways, parked cars, and intersections remain common crash locations.
E-scooters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quiet residential streets where local rules allow. ■ Areas with minimal vehicle traffic and pedestrian crowding. 	
Parks and trails		
E-bikes and E-scooters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use only if local rules allow the specific device and class. ■ Some trails permit pedal-assist e-bikes but restrict e-scooters or higher-speed models. 	If a location feels unsafe at walking speed, it will feel unsafe at electric speed.

2. SIDEWALKS AND PEDESTRIAN AREAS

Sidewalk riding creates risk for both riders and people on foot. Many communities restrict or prohibit powered devices on sidewalks.

<p>E-bikes and E-scooters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ E-scooters pose a higher risk in pedestrian areas due to quick acceleration and smaller wheels. ■ E-bikes travel faster than pedestrians expect, increasing the chance of conflicts. <p>If your child rides anywhere near people walking, require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Slower speeds. ■ Full control at all times. ■ Yielding to pedestrians every time. 	<p>Sidewalk use should be the exception, not the default, and only where permitted.</p>
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3. RIDING AT NIGHT OR IN LOW VISIBILITY

Visibility drops quickly after sunset, and crash risk increases.

<p>E-bikes and E-scooters</p>	<p>Require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A working front light and rear light. ■ Reflectors on the device or rider. ■ Bright or reflective clothing. 	<p>If your child cannot be easily seen from all directions, they should not ride at night.</p>
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4. RULES OF THE ROAD: WHAT YOUNG RIDERS MUST DO

In many communities, e-bike riders must follow the same traffic rules as bicyclists when operating on streets or in bike lanes.

<p>E-bikes and E-scooters</p>	<p>These rules often include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Obeying traffic lights and stop signs. ■ Following right-of-way rules. ■ Riding in the same direction as traffic. ■ Stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks. 	<p>Parents should reinforce that traffic rules apply even on short trips or familiar streets.</p>
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Important reminder for parents

Check local rules before allowing your child to ride. Review them together so expectations are clear.

State and local laws may set different rules for:



Where each class of e-bike can ride



Where e-scooters are allowed



Helmet requirements



Minimum rider ages



Sidewalk and trail access

SAFETY TIPS FOR RIDERS (KID-FRIENDLY CHECKLIST)

Here is a AAA E-Ride Ready checklist to use before every ride.



Gear up

- Helmet. Strap it snug.
- Closed-toe shoes. Pads are recommended.
- Bright and/or reflective clothing.



Check the ride

- Confirm battery level so your child does not “race home” when power drops.
- Be sure you have enough air in your tires.
- Test brakes and ensure that the handlebar feels tight and stable.
- Take a slow, brief ride to check that your e-ride is working properly.



Ride smart

- Start slow and build skill before speed.
- Keep both hands on the handlebars. No texting.
- Avoid wearing earbuds. Stay alert.
- Obey traffic signals, signs, and posted speed limits.
- Watch for cracks, gravel, potholes, and wet leaves, where small wheels can catch.



Be predictable

- Slow down at driveways and intersections.
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing.
- Signal turns and look over your shoulder before moving left or turning.
- Yield to pedestrians. Slow down and use an audible signal before passing.



THE PARENT SAFETY TALK: A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK THAT WORKS

Clear expectations reduce arguments and help kids build safer riding habits.

The 5-minute E-Ride Safety Talk (script + rules)

1. Set the tone

(30 seconds)

“ I want you to ride and have fun. I also want you to come home safe. E-rides go faster than regular bikes and scooters, and crashes can cause serious injuries if you aren't careful. ”



2. Agree on non-negotiables

(1 minute)

- Wear a helmet every ride, fully strapped and fitted correctly.
- No phone use and no earbuds while riding.
- No riding at night without lights and reflective gear.
- No passengers, no matter the type of e-ride.

3. Pick where they can ride

(1 minute)

- Approved routes only.
- Follow bike lane and sidewalk rules based on local laws.
- Obey traffic lights and signs, just like drivers do.
- Slow down and prepare to stop near driveways, intersections, and crowded areas.





4. Teach one core skill

(2 minutes)

Practice these in a parking lot or quiet street:

- Smooth starts and controlled stops.
- Looking left, right, then left again at intersections.
- Signaling and checking behind before turning.

What signaling means:

Hand signals tell people around you where you are going. Riders use their arm to point left or right before turning, just like drivers use turn signals.



Left

Right

Stop

Before signaling, teach your child to glance over their shoulder to check for cars, bikes, or people approaching from behind.

5. Create a check-in plan

(30 seconds)

“ Text or call me when you arrive. If the e-bike or e-scooter feels unsafe, stop riding and call me. ”



Family riding agreement (one-box pledge)

I agree to:

- Wear a helmet every ride, properly buckled and secured.
- Ride without distractions.
- Follow our approved routes.
- Slow down near people, driveways, and cars.
- Stop riding if conditions feel unsafe.

Parent/Guardian:

Rider:

Date:



Reminders for drivers:

Drivers play a key role in keeping e-riders safe:

- Stay alert behind the wheel. Avoid distractions and keep your focus on the road at all times.
- Expect e-rides to accelerate quickly and appear suddenly.
- Check your surroundings before turning or reversing. E-riders are smaller and can be harder to see, especially in blind spots.
- Watch for e-riders in bike lanes and near intersections. Give riders extra space when passing.
- Slow down in areas where riders may be present, including trails, crosswalks, parks, schools, and neighborhoods.



