



IMBA'S TAKE A KID MOUNTAIN BIKING DAY | Event Guide Best Practices

Join communities around the country for a celebration of youth mountain biking!

IMBA Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day (TKMBD) is an annual event that seeks to introduce the joy of mountain biking to the next generation. Created in 2004 in honor of Jack Doub, and recognized by the U.S. Congress, Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day is officially celebrated every year on the first Saturday in October.

TKMBD events can be hosted by almost anyone in any country. Participating groups include IMBA Local Partners, community organizations, scouting groups, youth programs, schools and others. Or, gather your family, friends and coworkers to host your own, local ride. Every mountain biker is invited to participate!

Since 2004, more than 100,000 youth have discovered and celebrated the joy of pedaling two wheels on dirt at TKMBD events, and many have gone on to become passionate riders, volunteer trail advocates and even high school mountain bike racers.

Thank you for organizing a group event for IMBA's Take A Kid Mountain Biking Day! These events have ranged in size from a few kids and families to several hundred gathering at a local park or trailhead. IMBA clubs and chapters, retail shops, Trips for Kids groups, schools, scouts and community groups are encouraged to host events. Here are some ideas to help you make your day a success.

Group Size

In the words of Jedi Master Yoda, "Size matters not." Start with a group size that YOU and your chosen location are able to handle. Consider forming an organizing team of willing parents or interested families. Develop a plan for how you would like the day to look and feel. Think about the ages of kids you'll be inviting and whether or not you will want (or need) to break them into groups. Make sure you have enough adults, or even NICA student-athletes, to manage, coach and guide the kids attending your event and to offer adequate supervision.

Location Selection

Pick a location where there are smooth natural surface trails, if possible. Beginner-level trails or smooth bike paths are suggested for kids and adults that may not have riding experience. A trailhead, open space area or park with multi-use trails suited to all abilities is best. This type of location allows groups to split up based on ability level. If you know the ability levels of your group, pick a trail or riding area appropriate for them.

Make sure to get permission and/or permits from the land manager, if needed! This is especially true if you are scheduling an event at a bike park and/or intend to have a tent, snacks, games, a skills course, etc. that may end up taking up a large space. Note that some trail systems have limits on the number of people that can go out in a group. If you aren't sure, ASK.

If you don't have any trails near your neighborhood or town, pick a school, bike path, quiet dirt road, ball field, yard or park that is bike-friendly. At a field or quiet parking lot, you can set up a skills area with typical sports equipment, such as cones, flags or other markers. Mountain bike "obstacles" can be created by laying 2x6 boards flat on the ground, simulating "bumps". We recommend setting alternative lines through obstacle courses, so kids can ride an easy path or add more challenges if they choose.

Use your imagination but keep safety and "challenge by choice" in mind. Encourage the kids to participate fully and look for experiences to stretch, learn and grow.

If you are thinking you need bikes to share or demo with kids that may not have a bike, consider contacting a local bike rental shop, Trips for Kids Chapter, YMCA Y-riders program, Boys or Girls Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or school bike program. If you live where there is a state-based bicycle advocacy organization, they might be a good partner as many of them have youth cycling programs.

Activities, Rides and Education

If you are expecting a crowd, consider planning fun bike activities or educational "stations". If you have very young kids, especially those on push-bikes (like Striders), consider planning games instead of an actual ride. For the older youth, events/stations can include topics such as hydration, nutrition, sunscreen, helmet fitting, safety, bike skills and bike handling, IMBA Rules of the Trail, etc.

With willing adult leaders to lead and sweep (follow), take small groups 4-8 kids (with two adults) out on an easy route. For trail rides, splitting kids up by age and ability seems to work best, but always encourage the slowest rider to set the pace. Another option is to set a loop skills course, supervised by a couple of adult "coaches". Kids can cycle through the course and get tips while they build their skills and confidence. This works great for the young ones while the older kids go out on the trail.

Treats always seem to help in motivating kids, so stock up on your favorites, just make sure to check with parents about allergies. All adult ride leaders should carry a small first aid kit and cell phone if you are heading out for any distance from the trailhead.

With regard to timing, don't plan an event to take up a full day. Depending on age and interest, you may only be able to engage the kids for a couple of hours. Make sure they get plenty of rest, water, snacks and encouragement on rides or between activities.

If you are an organization conducting a Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day ride (club, chapter, shop or other), IMBA recommends you have parents fill out your organization's acknowledgment of risk and release of liability form for all participants.

The sky's the limit and the most important thing is to have fun!

Take Photos!

Kids and parents love to see the results from the day. Take lots of photos and share them after the event with participants. Photos can be motivational, but make sure parents are OK with using their kids' faces if you intend to use them formally on an organization's website. To safeguard your organization, consider using this verbiage as part of your event waivers:

PUBLIC NOTICE OF PHOTOGRAPHY — Please be aware that authorized photographers will be documenting this event. These images are intended to be used for promotional purposes i.e. distribution on the internet, media and corporate publications, as well as for archival purposes. If you prefer not to have your image or likeness used, see a staff member so we can ensure your privacy.

If you share images on social media, please tag #TKMBD so your event can become part of the larger story of this holiday. You can find us @imba_us on Instagram.

Grab the Graphics

Download a race plate template, add your group's logo and numbers, and get them ready for ride day!

Download the logos and race plate template and use it to help promote your event.

Plan a Fun Event

Professional mountain bike coach Lee McCormack offers some simple tips for taking kids mountain biking.

TAKING KIDS MOUNTAIN BIKING

By Lee McCormack

Pick the right tool. Kids 2 and under should ride in a trailer. Kids 3-6 can ride small bikes or pedal trailers. Kids 7 and older can ride their own bikes. Helmets are mandatory. Gloves are an excellent idea. Knee guards won't hurt.

Pick a destination. Ride to a spot the kids will think is cool. A waterfall, a herd of bison, an ice cream shop... adults know it's all about the journey, but kids look forward to the destination. Not sure about the right trail in your area? Ask your local IMBA chapter or check out the trail guides on MTBProject.com.

Bring lots of drinks and snacks. Not only is nibbling fun, it keeps kids' hummingbird-like metabolisms stoked and ready to ride. Don't forget sunscreen.

Make it easy. Keep rides short and not steep. This is your chance to turn video game masters into mountain bikers. If the kids think riding is hard, it's back to the X-Box.

Stop often. Kids' energy comes in bursts. Give them a chance to replenish their bodies - and their attention spans.

There's more than one way to mountain bike. While old farts love long singletracks, young riders often prefer urban terrain, skate parks, dirt jump areas, BMX tracks and pump tracks. A fun ride might combine some of the above plus some trails. Be creative.

- Lee McCormack is a journalist, bike skills instructor and co-author of "Mastering Mountain Bike Skills." Lee lives in Boulder, CO with his wife and two kids. For more riding tips, check out Lee's site, www.leelikesbikes.com

Teach Rules of the Trail

Part of an awesome mountain biking experience includes knowing about how to care for our trails and respect fellow trail users. [IMBA's Rules of the Trail](#) promote responsible riding and are a great thing to teach the next generation of mountain bikers.