

I. Bicycle Selection. Decide first what kind of riding you want to do: short excursions around the neighborhood or in a local park on paved surfaces, longer distances for touring on paved surfaces, cross-country rides, racing, off-road on rough unpaved surfaces or commuting to and from work.

A. Types of bicycles: In general, these are the types of bicycles you will be looking for. Rule of thumb—The lighter the bicycle and the more gears it has the easier it is to pedal, especially uphill. Weight is a function of heaviness of the frame and the tires. Usually, the lighter the bike the more it will cost.

A.1. Road bikes: These bikes have a fine frame, thin tires, a short wheelbase and drop handlebars. They are light and designed for speed but not as strong structurally as a mountain bike. They won't stand up to any off road work and are only meant for use on superior surfaces like paved streets.

A.2. Racing bikes. These bikes are aimed at those who like to go fast, whether it's in a race or just in a pace line with friends. They are lightweight with drop handlebars, thin tires and a lightweight frame.

A.3. Flat-bar road bikes: These bikes have a flat handle so that you sit more upright. They are more comfortable to ride, but offer more wind resistance.

A.4. Touring bikes : Similar to road bikes but with wider tires. These bikes are good for long distances and for carrying cargo. They have a bigger frame triangle and are structurally stronger than road bikes. They still have the drop handlebars and more gears than a road bike. The lower gears are particularly useful when you're trying to move a load up hills. These bikes are slower than road bikes.

A.5. Mountain bikes: The wide tires and suspension absorb shock, making for a more stable ride and a bike that can handle rugged terrain without falling apart. While they are not as fast as road bikes they do have a wider range of gears suitable for climbing. If you plan to do more on road riding than off, or a combination, you can put on slick tires that are better suited to asphalt or bitumen. If you are riding on smooth pavement, you will have to pedal harder and generally go slower on this bike than on a road or touring bike.

A.6. **Hybrid bikes.** Think of a cross between a road and a mountain bike and you basically have your hybrid. Hybrids also combine the best features of both bikes. They make for very good riding on shorter paved rides. They have slimmer frames than mountain bikes and narrower tires but slightly raised handlebars for a comfortable upright position. They do perform better on road and are generally used for leisure or commuting. They are usually a little more comfortable and stable than road bikes but not as fast and don't have as high a gear range as a mountain bike. These in-between bikes do not do as well as road bikes on the paved surfaces for long distance riding nor do they do as well as mountain bikes for off-road riding.

A.7. **Cyclo - cross Bikes.** A cyclo-cross bicycle is a bicycle specifically designed for the rigors of a cyclo-cross race. Cyclo-cross bicycles roughly resemble the racing bicycles used in road racing. The major differences between the two are the frame geometry, and the wider clearances that cyclo-cross bikes have for their larger tires and mud and other debris that they accumulate. Typically, the frame geometry is a bit more relaxed than that of a road bike, not as upright in the seat tube, which allows for more shock absorption. Also, the wheelbase is a bit longer, which provides a more stable feel over rough terrain, and helps keep the rider's feet from contacting the front wheel during tight turns.

B. Prices

B.1. **Mountain bikes** are the cheapest, but they have limited usage since they are primarily designed for off-road riding. Entry-level price for mountain bikes is **\$380** and can go as high as **\$3500**. Price of these is influenced by the shock absorbers they have to cushion bumps.

B.2. **Racing bikes** start at **\$500**, but to get a bike that goes really fast you should plan to buy one with a carbon frame (**\$2000**) or a titanium frame (**\$3000** and up)

B.3. **Road bikes** that will hold up to frequent use on the road start at **\$599**, but plan to spend a little more if you are a serious rider.

B.4. **Flat-bar road bikes** start at **\$500** and go as high as **\$3500**.

B.5. **Touring bikes** cost from **\$1700** to **\$2000**.

B.6. **Hybrid bikes** run between **\$400** and **\$800**.

B.7. **Cyclo-cross bikes** cost about the same as a racing bike or a road bike.

- C. Places to buy bikes.** Go to a reputable bicycle shop that will outfit you with a correctly sized bicycle. One size does not fit all. You may pay a little more than you would at Wal-Mart or Target, but you will get a bike that will be fitted your size and your riding style and one that you will be comfortable riding on for long distances.