

A Beginner's Guide to BMX

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It is seen that freestyle BMX is one of the last extreme sports to get an interest from girls. I have heard many girls say that it is very intimidating. That is because you have a 35lb bike with you that you are using to go really fast and high. Then going fast and high is associated to crashing, and crashing with a bike may seem inescapably painful. Although this may be the first impression that scares many girls away from wanting to ride BMX, I want to show how it is actually one of the most fun. If the proper steps are taken into riding freestyle BMX, it can be awesome for every girl...

The most important thing a girl should do to start riding is ride a bike preferably a BMX bike but any bike will do. This will help with getting some bike control when it comes to braking, turning, and speed. I remember I would go to a skate park and ride other people's bikes to get comfortable with just riding the bike. This also helped me see if riding BMX was what I really wanted to do before I went out and spent the money on buying a bike.

Once you feel comfortable riding a bike around (and with that I mean that you can pedal fast, pedal while standing up, turn corners easily, and stop quickly), you can consider buying a BMX bike and also some pads to ride with. Pads are really important when you ride and especially when you first start out so using them will save you. The most important is your helmet because you only have so many chances that you can hit your head so why not reduce a bad concussion by wearing one. I also suggest that beginners wear shin guards because you will be hitting your shins a lot with the pedals. So if you don't want to have leopard printed legs with bruises then you should think about buying these. Elbow pads and kneepads are important as well so starting out with all pads is a good way to stay injury free for longer and reduce pain from any crashes.

Now you're ready to find the perfect bike to start out with. I find that in the first two years of riding you don't tend to ride as fast or go as high since you are still learning the basics. With that I think that finding a bike that is strong and fits you well is that most important. You don't have to go out and buy the most expensive top of the line bike because you really don't need to waste the money. There are great complete bikes out in the BMX market that are perfect those just starting out. Companies that I suggest are Federal Bike Co. (www.federalbikes.com) or Eastern Bikes (www.easternbikes.com) for their complete bikes because they are great frames with good components at a good price. The average price for a complete bike ranges from about \$375 to \$575 depending on what you're willing to spend. I also think that ordering your bike through a mail order company such as Staff (www.staff-bmx.com) is a good idea because they tend to have lower prices. You can also buy your pads and helmet through the mail order companies such as Staff as well.

When it comes to choosing a bike you also need to see what size frame and bars are right for you. I suggest going to a bike shop and sitting on some bikes to see how they fit or go around to a skate

park and ask if you could try someone's bike out to see what's comfortable. I am 5'6" and I ride a 20.5" size tube top, which is the length of top of the frame. This normally comes in sizes ranging from 20" to 21", going up a quarter of an inch each size. Bars should also be considered when buying your bike because there are so many different styles. Some people tend to like really wide high bars that give them a wide grip, which is good for riding trails or airing. Other people like to use smaller bars that are easier for tricks such as bar spins and x-ups and are good for if you choose to ride brakeless. Some other things to consider are the sweep of the bars, how light they are, and if they are two-piece or 4 piece bars. By going to your local bike shop you can check out all different types and test them out to see which feel the best.

After you have all your pads and your bike you are ready to move on to riding freestyle BMX. I think the best places to start out learning are at a skate park and outside in front of your house or a parking lot. Skate parks are great because normally there will be other riders there that can help you learn a lot of basic tricks and tips. Don't ever feel hesitant to ask for help either. With all of the years I have been riding, I have always asked questions and I have never had anyone be negative to me about it. Also, with skate parks you can work your way up from small ramps to bigger ramps. Then there is riding in a parking lot or in front of your house, which is great to working on bike control and the basic tricks and skills you need to ride ramps, trails, or street better.

Some of the first tricks you should consider learning are how to bunny hop, manual, pump ramps, and rolling over wedges or box jumps. By riding in parking lots or at your house you can easily practice bunny hopping or manuals. With bunny hops you should ride at a place with curbs and practice trying to get you and the bike up the curb by hopping. Then with manuals I always would try to use the lines with parking spaces to see how many spaces I could go. Next when you go to the skate park you should start off by just riding the ramps. Try to learn how to carve and pump around on quarter pipes and mini ramps and then move onto riding up and over box jumps before you actually try to jump it. Once you get manuals good on the ground you could even try to roll over the box jumps by doing a manual while on top.

Good luck and keep riding!