

BIKE SCHOOL

(inspired by two big bikes and seven "young" ones at the store R. E. I.)

"My name is Denningsham the Dinosaur bike and this is my assistant teacher, Flowery Colorfully. We are here for your first step of learning in BIKE SCHOOL. Bike School is a fun, friendly, and fantastic place to learn how to become a proper bike. Those are the three "F"'s of Bike School Learning. So here... welcome to Bike School!"

Denningsham and Flowery stepped aside to reveal a cool outdoor play area with a long sidewalk where they would learn how to bike. Five of the seven bikes *oohed* and gasped.

Flowery took on talking. "Today, we are going to begin the learning by LEARNING HOW TO PEDAL."

"Ooooh!" squealed the young bikes.

"I've seen my parents do it," said the second-oldest bike, Stinger Buzzbike. The other bikes agreed. Then he continued, "Are we doing *fast* and *slow* today? I've been waiting to learn how, but my parents won't let me. They say, "Wait till Bike School". So now I'm REALLY EXCITED."

"Good, and yes, we are doing *fast* and *slow*," replied Flowery, smiling.

There were many excited squeals from the students again, and Flowery and Denningsham smiled at how ready for school they were. Luckily, the last batch had been ready, too.

"So, I will attach your pedals." And Denningsham pulled out seven brand-new pairs of pedals that matched each young bike's features: Sprinkles for Dotty, a bee on each for Stinger, plain purple for FloweryPurple, red/orange for LavaRed, nuts and weird lines for CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy, a lily flower for Beauty, and stripes going around in a circle for HypnoBike. The bikes were even more excited that they were getting PEDALS.

Then Flowery and Denningsham attached the fourteen pedals to the seven students, and they got a test out by pushing their pedals back and forth.

"So," Denningsham said, once they had tested for five minutes, "we are going to learn how to go fast and slow, take *curves*, uphill and downhill, and finally try biking with your training wheels off. I know you all will be excited, so come along, one thing at a time, will be good for your learning."

The students squealed excitedly again. "Good," Flowery said. "First step, going *fast*. Get a good feel of your pedals again, then push them forward. Do that over and over again until you go really fast. Ready-- Set--"

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"GO!" Denningsham and Flowery said together. All seven students started pedaling.

The only bike that didn't do well (after all, it was only the first try and this bike was one of the youngest) was LavaRed. He pedaled way too *fast* and couldn't stop because he didn't know how to brake. So he went BAM into a particularly thorny bush. He biked through the whole thing, muttering, "OW! OUCH!" all the way.

He got stuck at the end. He was crying. But Denningsham pedaled over, and when he got to poor little LavaRed, he patted his back with his pedal. "It's okay," he said, and pulled a thorn off of his bright red paint that had gotten stuck while going through the bush. "After all, it's only your first day."

LavaRed sniffed. "Okay," he said. Then they both pedaled slow back to the other bikes. Some of them asked, "Are you okay?" and "Did it hurt?" The young bike nodded.

"Okay, class, now let's try going *slow*," announced Denningsham. The bike class cheered. LavaRed looked calmer, obviously thinking that if he went slow, he wouldn't go boom! into a bush. And yes, throughout the next class, he didn't get poked by a bush. No one got hurt, but Dotty did get stuck because she was going too slow and couldn't pedal over a bump in the path. "Gee," considered Denningsham, "we should make this sidewalk flatter.... Then no one will get stuck when going slow." He gave Dotty an extra boost.

At the end of Slow class, Flowery this time told the group, "Let's do a class vote. Okay, who wants to try going in circles, and who wants to try zigzags? Raise your pedal for which one you want."

CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy, Beauty, Stinger, FloweryPurple, and HypnoBike wanted circles, and Dotty and LavaRed raised their pedals for zigzags. "Yes!" HypnoBike yelled. "It's just my thing!" All of the other bikes agreed, and giggled heartily. Even Dotty and LavaRed, who had preferred zigzags, were fine with it.

"Yes, everyone, the majority of the group was with circles," announced Flowery.

"What does *majority* mean?" FloweryPurple asked Stinger. She was the youngest bike, and had some vocabulary to expand.

"The most amount of something," replied Stinger. "Here, let's go." The other classmates had already started going in circles. Stinger and Dotty followed. A little while later in Circles class, CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy got so crazy that he almost spun into the fast-spinning, dizzy HypnoBike. "Whoa!" yelled CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy. "I should be watchin' out more!" It was, for a fact, *hypnotizing* to watch HypnoBike rowdily spin around in circles.

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“Okay, everyone, stop making yourselves dizzy,” Denningsham called to the class. The teachers had been spinning too. Everyone stopped... except HypnoBike. He was still spinning.

“Come on, HypnoBike!” warned Denningsham. “I know you love to do that, but— it’s lunchtime! Let’s go over to the pavilion.”

That certainly made HypnoBike stop. And it was really abrupt.

Flowery Colorfully added to the lunch quote, “And you can practice going *fast* or *slow* on your way. But please not circles. I don’t want you getting out of control.” She looked at HypnoBike, who seemed sad. Then, to comfort the young bike, she put in, “You can do it all you want at home.” That cheered HypnoBike up, and the nine bikes rolled out towards the pavilion.

At lunch, Stinger was the only one that didn’t bring a sandwich. He brought a honey wrap. Stinger loves honey. His wrap also had cheese and lettuce. Honey was rubbed all over the outside, made from the BuzzBike Family bees. Denningsham came over while the bike was eating. “That looks unusual... but good. I might like to eat it sometime. It stands out from the sandwiches.” The teacher laughed.

Across from Stinger, the bike’s new friends LavaRed and CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy were both eating peanut butter and jelly. HypnoBike, Stinger’s friend that he’d had since they were babies, was sitting to the right of Stinger. He had a cheese sandwich with circle-shaped onion rings placed inside each other. It certainly matched the bike’s personality, but onions aren’t very hypnotizing, just eye-watering. Stinger’s honey wrap matched his personality, too.

A little while later, the bikes finished their lunch. Beauty was the last one to finish her BLT. She had a BLT because it it matched her initials: Beauty Lala TerrifiBike.

“Guys, let’s go do reading now. Head over to the library with me,” announced Denningsham once Beauty put her lunch back in the bin. “Reading is going to be really fun. Today, you get to do a free read for the first half, and then I’ll read some of Wheely the Flying Bike’s Adventures on Snowmobile Mountain.... This afternoon will be really exciting!”

Flowery Colorfully gestured to the bookshelf. “Students, you can now pick out your books. You can also read with a partner. I recommend the Good Dog series or the Harry Biker series, or maybe How to Train your Bike.”

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There were lots of laughs. “One of my favorites to read on this day is Mr. Peddall’s First Day of Bike School.

Another good one is 12 Famous Bikes. That one is good, too.”

Denningsham added, “Enjoy your reading, students!”

Stinger picked out “Harry Biker and the Sorcerer’s Lost Pedal” to read with LavaRed. LavaRed could not read that good, as the second-youngest bike. They finished up to Chapter 8 by the time Denningsham called the bikes to gather around and listen to the read-aloud of Wheely the Flying Bike’s Adventures on Snowmobile Mountain.

“Let’s read more tomorrow,” LavaRed told his older friend. “That is, if no one else gets it before we do... FloweryPurple wanted to read it.” The friends then settled down on the library carpet, and listened to the bike teacher read.

Denningsham finished reading ten minutes later and told the class that it was math time. CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy groaned. He wasn’t a big fan of math.

But we are learning about addition and sides of shapes. That’s fun, right?”

“I guess.”

Flowery and Denningsham wheeled over to a whiteboard on a wall. There were seven desks with paper and a pencil. With a marker, Denningsham drew a plus sign, then a 2 and a 3. Two plus three. What’s the answer? Add them together, and write it on your paper for Question One!”

All the students wrote $1. =5$ on their paper. Even CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy. The next question was $4+4$. The students wrote $2. =8$. Then $5+6$, $7+2$, $3+9$, and $10+10$. The last one was tricky: $11+14$. After all of the questions, Denningsham told the students to put their name on it and turn it in to a box. “Okay,” said Denningsham, “Flowery will check them while I explain about shapes. You probably all know about triangles, circles, squares, stars, and rectangles. Right?”

The class nodded their handlebars.

“Good. They have three, four, ten, and circles have one curving side. There are other shapes, though. Pentagons have five sides...” The bike teacher told the class about 6-, 7-, 8-, 9-, and 10- sided shapes. It *was* very fun. Even for CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy.

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“Now we are going to try zigzags,” said Denningsham when math was done. The class went back to the training grounds. Everyone was excited—especially Dotty and LavaRed— but not HypnoBike. He was determined to do circles.

But HypnoBike said, “Fine,” after a while, still a little mad. The bikes started going in zigzags wildly. Of course, CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy was the most zigzaggy.

Suddenly, Stinger hit the math wall on a zigzag turn. “Ouch!” he complained. He did not notice that his training wheels were starting to come undone. After he did five more zigzags, they fully loosened. One training wheel popped off. Stinger was getting wobbly. Then the other! Stinger tried to pedal straight, but he was extremely tippy.

“Oh no!” Stinger yelled as he unsteadily went towards the naughty bush that had poked his new friend earlier. And then— BOOMPH! The bike crashed into the evil thorny bush, screaming “OUCH!”, just like LavaRed. Stinger got all the way through, but he was hurt. Then he got super unstable. He fell on the ground in a heap.

“It’s okay, Stinger,” soothed Denningsham, bringing back the bike’s training wheels. We should get rid of this bush and replant it in the forest, flatten the bump, and tighten your training wheels extra-well so that Bike School is an even more fun, friendly, and fantastic place to learn and have fun. And the fourth “F” of Bike School: saFe! I’ll work on that tonight,” he announced to the bikes.

Stinger smiled.

Two minutes later, Denningsham pedaled hurriedly over to the math wall. He got a bell, then pedaled back. As the students were gathering their lunch and chattering, he rang the bell. “Bye!” called Flowery and Denningsham. The young bikes waved.

“We had a fun day today, didn't we?” Stinger asked LavaRed.

“Yeah, well, except for the part where we got poked by the naughty bush. Other than that, it was great.” Stinger agreed. “I see my parents,” added LavaRed. “Bye!” Stinger and LavaRed waved to each other.

As the two friends departed, Stinger overheard Dotty chattering away about how great the day had been. CrazyExcitedNuttyGuy was spinning around wildly; his parents were too, as they were much like him. The parents talked about the day with their kids happily, and the bikes went home, excited about the next day in Bike School.