

AGES 4-6:

- Simple, clear instructions
- Be patient and encouraging
- It's ok to be silly and goofy! Keep it fun!
- May not want to be far from Mom and Dad
- They like playful behavior that does not feel stressful.

Youth at this age are less interested in getting to a *destination*, such as a good view, (unless there is a reward), but rather **WHAT** they see along the way. It's ok to spend time off the bike enjoying nature.

Examples of integrating play: Explore a side trail on foot, collect a favorite rock/flower to bring back to base camp and share; use your “deer ears” to listen for hawks, feed ducks at a local pond, howl like coyotes. Bring the plush mascot along for the ride or invite them to bring a small friend that they can zip tie to their bike (like a small plush animal from home) *make sure it doesn't interfere with riding/steering!



Exploring along the way. Not worried about the destination

AGES 6-8:

- Simple, clear instructions but can handle more complex instructions
- High energy but need frequent breaks
- Beginning to use more teamwork or group activities
- Very important to recognize their efforts and give positive feedback
- Beginning to understand risk and may decide NOT to ride a section of trail
- Demonstrations of how to ride something work well! They may want to watch and imitate you.

Games: "Follow the leader", Obstacle courses or simple cone drills. Let them pick an animal sound and when they come around the cones they have to make their animal sound. Coaches should do the same! Use storytelling to engage them! Warm days might mean spray bottle tag or bringing out the bubbles to ride through.



Feeding ducks along the ride.



Stopping to watch a great horned owl swoop through the forest.

Ages 9-12:

- Handle more complex instructions with problem-solving
- Curious and exploratory
- Encourage more self-reflection
- Friends and relationships become very important (watch for peer pressure)
- They are seeking validation via their achievements.
- Girls become more self-conscious and worry about what others are thinking.
- Competition may become important

Engage this age group by: Map reading, deciding on where to ride or which trail to take; Have two riders design a route for the group; encouraging them to give kudos to teammates and encouraging them to be helpful to each other.

Most bike games would work with this age group!



Caleb leading pre-ride circle up!

Ages 13-18:

Adolescence is fraught with rapid physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development. Socially, teenagers are dealing with friendships, romantic relationships, peer pressure, and changing relationships with family. Intellectually and emotionally, young people are experiencing rapid development and change.

- Gain more independence and autonomy by developing their own opinions
- They may begin seeking leadership opportunities
- Look for ways to let the older riders mentor the younger ones
- Like to be the authority on something!
- Competition may become more important to them

Keep it fun!

Be compassionate and caring, yet firm with clear expectations.

Push and challenge those riders that are open to it!

Some may want to “compete” against their coaches. Riders at this age LOVE to beat their coaches up a hill or play a game of “circle of doom”.



Friendships and connections



Accomplishing a big challenge together!