

Backrests on tandems and tag-alongs: Alex Reeves: January 2015

Many parents/ carers think that their child will need a backrest when they are on one of our tandems or tag-alongs.

Yes, those with particular physical problems may need one to help them support their trunk. We have several backrests with side supports and straps round the waist and over the shoulder. You can buy them from companies such as Mission Cycles and Get Cycling for about £150 plus postage (in January 2016). They are very heavy and designed for tricycles. We have had most of ours modified, so that they don't clash with the back wheel of a bicycle, if the saddle is set at a low position. We can post one to you to borrow if you pay the postage (about £6 in January 2016). Note also that, as they fit on the seatpost, the saddle needs to be up a couple of inches from the minimum. You'll also need shims to suit your seatpost. We can post one of these backrests to you to borrow, if you pay the postage (about £6 in January 2016).



Rani from Bristol using one of our backrests on a tag-along bike

If you just need something to slow down a the child from escaping from the bike, then a much better option is a strap around the waist. Adams Trail-a-Bike used to supply something suitable. They don't seem to supply them anymore in the UK, but you might find one secondhand. There are also some available new from USA/Canada at extra shipping costs. They fit on the seatpost and hence the saddle has to be up at least an inch from minimum. You'll also need shims to suit your seatpost. We have one of these backrests that you can borrow, for the cost of postage.



An Adams Trail-a -Bike Backrest

An alternative is to use a readily available (about £20 in January 2016) Oxford LECO child seat. It is designed to be strapped to the top (horizontal) tube of the bike, but we have fitted it to a straight seatpost and therefore can be used in the normal stoker position. It comes with a special saddle, so you can have the saddle right down in the minimum position. You can buy straight seatposts for about £7 online. Again we can post one for you to borrow, if you pay the postage.



An Oxford LECO Child seat fitted in the stoker position

The best option is however is not use a backrest at all. It is a pain having to strap your child in and out of a backrest and you have to be wary of the risks in them remaining attached to the bike if the bike were to fall to the floor. I'd prefer my child to be able to move to keep themselves upright.

A safer option, I think, is to initially have a third person ride behind on another bike, slightly to one side. They can keep an eye on the child, to make sure that they are going to stay in place and give encouragement. It also gives a much more natural position for cycling.