

The History of the Bicycle

Introduction

- 1 People started building bicycles in the 1800s. Since then, bicycles have grown more popular. Today, more than one billion people around the world ride bicycles.
- 2 The design of the bicycles has changed over time. However, one thing stays the same: two wheels and a lot of fun!

The Ordinary

- 3 Built in 1871, the ordinary had a tall wheel in front and a small wheel in back. The rider sat up on a seat above the high front wheel.

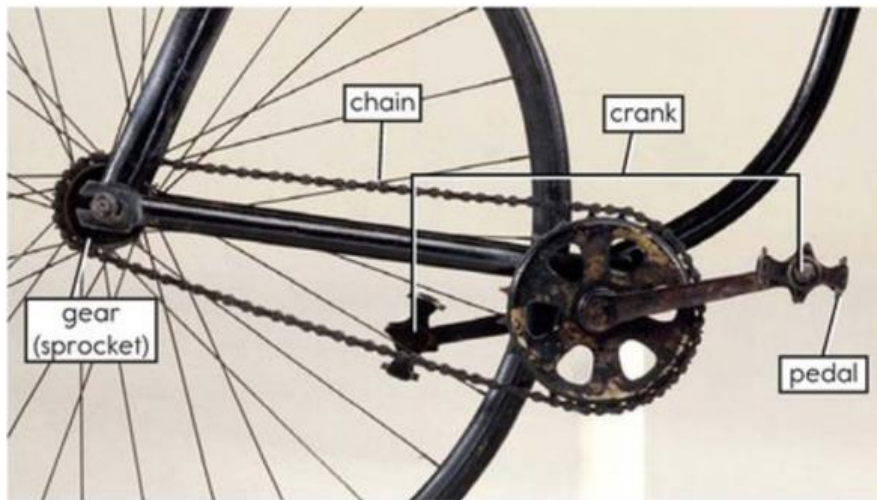


The ordinary bicycle was also called the *penny-farthing*. The penny and the farthing were two British coins of different sizes.

- 4 The ordinary moved faster than earlier bikes because of its large wheel. The big wheel also caused problems. It was hard to ride up a hill. It was also hard to get on and off the high seat. Riders often fell forward onto their heads when they tried to slow or stop the bike. All these problems made the ordinary dangerous for the rider.

Safety Bicycle

- 5 John Starley changed the bicycle in 1885 with the Rover safety bicycle. The bike looked similar to the bicycles of today. Most safety bicycles moved on two wheels of about the same size. A low seat between the wheels made the bike safer and easier to ride.
- 6 The first safety bicycles had solid rubber tires. Later, air-filled rubber tubes were added to the design. They made for a much less bumpy ride!



The system of connecting two gears, or sprockets, with a chain required less energy from the rider.

- 7 The safety bicycle used a gear and chain system. A chain connected gears on the back wheel to another gear attached to the pedals. Riders pushed the pedals to turn the back wheel and move the bike. Different-sized gears made it easier to pedal uphill, downhill, or on flat roads.