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Personal shopper Annalisa Barbieri

I'm looking for new transport options to get myself and my toddler around town. I don't drive and like to walk a lot, so until now we have mostly used a sling or a pushchair to get around. My daughter is now nearly three and keen to walk, which is great for short trips but she gets too tired to walk the long distances that we used to. I have considered a bike with a child seat, but am not a confident rider at all and would worry about cycling on the roads with her. Can you find any innovative solutions for us?
Diana, Oxford

If and when you ever do become more confident on a bike, I covered cycling with children in Personal Shopper on October 1 2005 so do look at www.guardian.co.uk (put in my name + tagalong and it'll bring you straight to the piece). I understand your frustration, as my child is three and a half and she wants to walk/doesn't/wants to be carried/doesn't. I too use a sling on occasion, and brilliant though they are, I struggle now over long distances, especially carrying other bags, which you invariably end up with. You could get her her own bike (put my name + rothan into the Guardian search engine to get my column of April 8 2006), but again there's the danger she will tire of it and then you will end up carrying both her and the bike. The short answer is that there is no definitive answer, because not only do children differ, but also each child can change preferences several times a day ... but I can make a few suggestions.

Had your child been younger, I would have suggested a Hippychick Hipseat (www.hippychick.com, 01278 434440), £34.95, but do look on eBay as they're often available for a lot less; this is an option for those up and down times (great for when you go to the shops or go looking at exhibitions or the like; the National Trust loans them out to parents for free at its houses). But it's of more use for younger children, I found.

Mini Micro Scooter £39.99



Strolli Rider £69.99



Italtrike Oko £89.99



Bugaboo wheeled board £49.95



Hippychick Hipseat £34.95



How about a scooter? I've always been guarded about one but I'm not sure why because loads of parents think they're brilliant, and children certainly love going on them. The Mini Micro Scooter, £39.99, ([\[co.uk\]\(http://www.letterbox.co.uk\), 01872 531007\) is particularly suitable for three-year-olds as it has a double front wheel, which gives more stability \(scooters usually have just one front wheel\). The only thing I would say is that you do need to be confident](http://www.letterbox.</p>
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that your child will stop when you say stop, as they can build up quite a speed and get away from you.

If you have a Bugaboo buggy, then you could get a wheeled board, £49.95, (www.johnlewis.com, 08456 049049,

and various nursery stores) that works brilliantly without another child in the seat (with every other pushchair I know of, wheeled boards only work if there is another child in the seat to counterbalance it). We used this extensively for a good few months; when my daughter was tired of walking but saw going back in the pushchair as a declaration of defeat, she'd love to stand up on the board. That was until she went off that idea ... But it worked brilliantly for shopping trips as she'd go on the board and the shopping would go in the seat.

I haven't tried this for more than for a few metres, although I've seen them on the streets (they are relatively new here), but the Strolli Rider, £69.99, (www.urchin.co.uk, 01672 518640) is a ride-on bike (no pedals) that is fitted to your pushchair and is suitable for children up to 20kg. When I briefly tried one that belonged to another mum, I did find I had to walk behind the pushchair a bit differently (but then I find that's also true of wheeled buggy boards) as the rider sits to one side. It also makes pushing harder, so, depending on your buggy, that may be a deal-breaker. I probably wouldn't recommend it if you are really short of cash and I think it'll be one of those gadgets you will either hate or love.

I didn't cover this when I did children's bikes as that problem was a bit different, but if your daughter gets some birthday money or has generous grandparents, do look at the Italtrike Oko, £89.99 (www.cyclesense.co.uk, 01937 530303). A lot of thought has gone into the design of this trike, both for the cool factor (it was designed by an Italian) and from an ergonomic point of view. The pedals are in the middle of the bike (as with an adult bike), not on the front wheel as they are with other children's bikes/trikes, and the handlebar and seat can be adjusted to nine positions. It's a very, very stylish trike with a parent handle, but again, I can't guarantee that your child will stay in it.

If any other parents have found things that work, please let me know.

Shopping problems
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