Teaching Unicycling

A Physical Education Classroom Guide

People of often perceive unicycling as risky and dangerous although in reality when basic safety procedures are followed unicycles are safer than bicycles, inline skates, and skateboards. Unicycles do not permit the driver to coast and it is hard for the driver to reach high speeds. Introducing unicycles into the classroom provides you with a unique opportunity to allow your students to learn something that is new and exciting in a safe environment.

Unicycling will challenge your students to push themselves beyond their comfort limits to achieve perhaps something they had never perceived possible. The sense of accomplishment when learning to do a unique and challenging activity such as this inspires students to try new and innovative activities.

When teaching unicycling in the classroom students must help and work alongside each other, but also need to challenge themselves in order to be successful. Therefore the rationale for introducing unicycling into the classroom is to bring a new and exciting activity to your class while promoting teamwork along with individual work ethic in order to accomplish a new and challenging task.

Contents

Unit Scope and Progression

It is important to gain a general understanding of the activity and its components before jumping in to try. Many students will want to try to ride as soon as they see or hear the word unicycling. To begin the unit it is important to allow the students time to understand the full view of unicycling and what it entails

Within the world of unicycles, many different forms of the sport have evolved. Just like biking there are various levels of performance, styles of riding and types of unicycles. In a classroom setting it is recommended to break up these styles for the class and explain exactly what each type of unicycle is for and how the styles have evolved.

General and *freestyle* unicycling is what the average person would think of when hearing about a unicycle. This involves a basic unicycle with no fancy addition and is mostly done on a flat surface. This style is often used in artistic and acrobatic presentations and is the most common when learning how to unicycle. Wheels for this style are generally in the 20 to 24 inch range.

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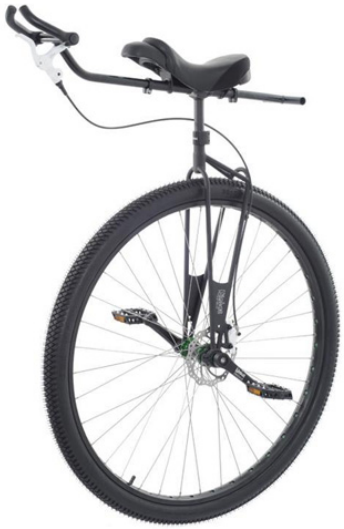
Muni is the term which was coined as people began riding off road on their unicycles. It is basically mountain unicycling, done on the same paths and trails as mountain biking. For this style, a heavier, more treaded tire is used for traction. Wheels are usually between 24 to 29 inch range. This allows for riders to easily travel over rocks, roots and other obstructions on the path. Most of the riding is done downhill simply because it is harder to ride uphill, however more experienced riders will do both.

The *trials* style is one that has been evolved in bicycling as well. This style is usually done with a 20 inch wheel with a rugged tire. The frame, hub and cranks are usually very light and strong, which result in these unicycles being more expensive. The main objective with this style is to keep your balance as you jump from obstacle to obstacle. Riding on thin rails, jumps and turning are all a part of the precision involved with this style.



The last notable style is one that involves unicycling for distance. The wheels are usually 29 to 36 inches and sometimes the frames have brakes to slow down from fast speeds. These unicycles can sometimes reach speeds of 30km/hour and are used to cover long distances on smooth surfaces.

In teaching these stages it may be beneficial to show students videos to further their knowledge and understanding of the various styles. Helpful resources for this can be found at www.municycle.ca or at www.unicyclist.com

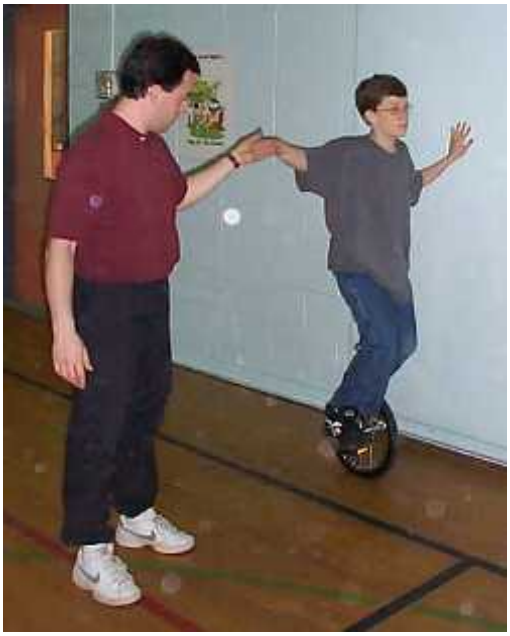
The following is a lesson plan aimed at allowing students to learn through a series of learning styles. Progressing from command and moving through guided discover and practice, students will be able to take their time to develop their balance skills on unicycles. This particular lesson can be used for a number of classes as students will need some time to learn how to master the unicycle.

Movement Category:	Grade:
Active Living	Any High School Phys Ed Class

Nova Scotia General Curriculum Outcome(s):
-Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the concepts that support human movement. -Students will be expected to demonstrate creativity in all movement categories. -Students will be expected to demonstrate positive attitudes towards an appreciation of physical activity through participation.

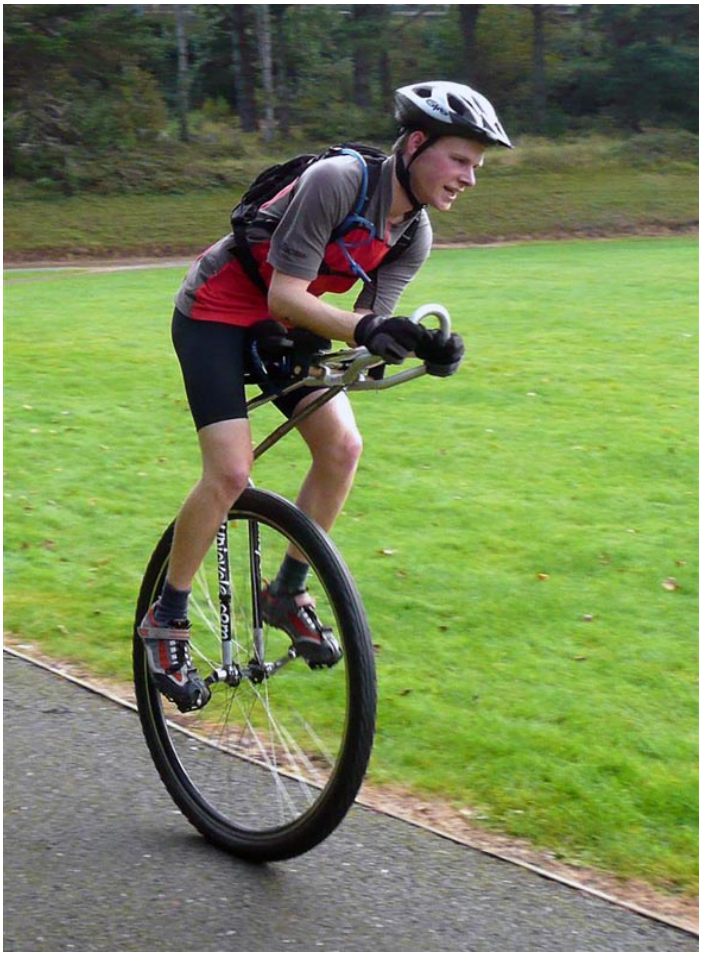
Nova Scotia Specific Curriculum Outcomes(s):
-Students will be able to set and modify goals develop personal fitness to maintain a healthy lifestyle. -Students will be able to participate in activities that enhance cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility.

Class Context (class size, skill level, students with special needs, prior learning, etc.):
Dependent on each class.
Equipment:
A class set, or as many unicycles as you can get. Some form of stable object students can use for support. Helmets for each student.
Safety Considerations:
Helmets must be worn at all times when riding. No open toed shoes or sandals. Suitable clothing and footwear must be worn.
Area (diagrams, formations):
A large area to give students a chance to move freely without bumping in to one another. Likely in a gymnasium or outside.
References and Resources:
Nova Scotia Physical Education Curriculum Nova Scotia Physical Education Safety Guidelines International Unicycling Federation website - www.unicycling.org/iuf/

Time:	Learning and Teaching Experiences:	Teaching Points (cues):
5 minutes	*Introduction/Warm-up*	
	Go over with the class the fundamentals of riding a unicycle focusing on how to mount and how to begin traveling. *Mounting* – Begin with the unicycle in front of you. Align the crank arms to have one facing straight up and one straight down. Holding the seat handle in one hand, step on the unicycle with one foot (step on the side in which the crank arm is facing down). Slowly put weight on this pedal and let the unicycle tilt towards that leg, allowing it to rest on your upper leg. Next, using the available supports, find a steady balance point and then place your other foot on the top pedal. Once both feet are on the pedals find a comfortable zone in which to sit. *Traveling* – To begin traveling, simply lean forward and start pedaling. Be sure to use the supports you have to keep your balance. It is very important to keep moving because just like riding a bicycle, the slower you travel, the more likely you are to fall to the side. This will take time to find that perfect zone but it will come.	When mounting, make sure not to have your weight on the top pedal. This will cause the unicycle to have a high centre of gravity and will become very unstable. Remind the students they must lean forward in order to travel or else the unicycle will roll out from under them. 

	Learning Activities/Teaching Strategies	
Majority of class	Review again quickly with the students how to mount and then travel on a unicycle. If you are comfortable with it, demonstrate for the students. Show the students how to properly dismount the unicycle.	If the seats have a quick release feature point this out to the students and make sure they adjust the seat to a height that suits them.
	Dismounting – As you begin to fall reach out to grab the barriers close to you to support yourself as you step off the unicycle as well. Do not try to stay on because this will likely cause you to fall faster. If there are no barriers close by, try to safely step away from the unicycle as it falls. Catch yourself before catching the unicycle.	
	Set up as many parallel barriers as possible to allow students to spread out and try mounting and balancing alone. When students feel comfortable with sitting on the unicycle, have them slowly lean forward as they hold on to the supports and take one pedal forward. After one pedal, try two, then three, then as many as they can get as they travel along the support barriers.	Remind students to take these steps slowly and to be comfortable with taking the next steps.
	When students feel comfortable with this, take away one barrier leaving them with just one for support. Allow them to continue to work on their forward traveling skills. If students become comfortable with this allow them to ride freestyle in open space or set up a small obstacle course for them.	

	Closure/Cool Down	
	Review the steps taken to mount the unicycle and then how to begin to travel forward. Have the students lead this discussion.	Ask the students what muscles they feel they used a lot during the class. Most would say their legs, specifically their quadriceps. This is a great opportunity to mention how great of a workout unicycling is. Stress how it can build strong muscles and improve your cardiovascular system.



General Curriculum Outcomes

Knowing

- Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts that support human movement

Doing

- Participate regularly in a variety of activities that develop and maintain personal physical fitness

Valuing

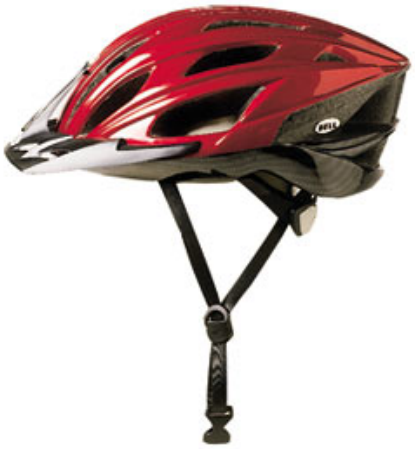
- Demonstrate positive personal and social behaviours and interpersonal relationships

Safety Guidelines for Unicycles

Physical activity, by its very nature, involves a certain element of risk and danger. Teaching students to unicycle is no different. There are lots of opportunities for injury should teachers fail to implement proper safety procedures. When teaching students to unicycle, instructors should carefully ensure activities are age appropriate, developmentally appropriate, and conducted in a clean safe environment free of safety hazards. When designing lesson plans teachers should examine the learning environment, consider health and safety, special needs, gender, and cultural differences among students.

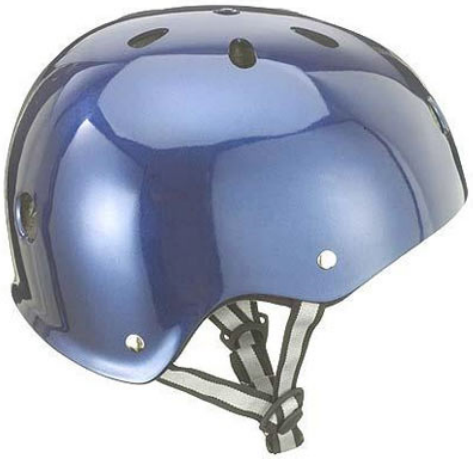
All teachers should address the following questions prior to, during, and after activity.

- Is the activity appropriate to the student's physical age and mental and physical conditions?
- Has the instruction been sequenced progressively to ensure safety?
- Have the students been given specific instruction about how to use and handle the equipment appropriately?
- Are the facilities appropriate?
- Are the students being properly supervised?



Students should…

- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- Follow rules and routines set by teacher
- Select tasks that are within their ability and comfort zone
- Move in designated space with control and respect for others
- Recognize hazards in the play areas
- Follow fair-play principles



Students Should also…

- Wear helmets, elbow pads, wrist protection, knee guards, etc..
- Always have a spotter close by.
- Unicycle only in areas designated by teacher
- Never attempt to unicycle alone or unsupervised
- Ensure unicycles are in proper working order before attempting to ride

Unicycle Assessments

Valuing [Affective]

Nova Scotia Curriculum Outcome: Demonstrate positive personal and social behaviors that emphasize fair play.

N.S. Curriculum Outcome in Parent and Student Friendly Language: Students will be expected to act in an appropriate manner and build positive relationships with others.

	Low				High
Student shows interest and enthusiasm in the variety of activities performed.	1	2	3	4	5
Student actively participates in activities and clearly shows effort in attempts	1	2	3	4	5
Student participates with and respects individuals of like and different skill levels	1	2	3	4	5
Student follows rules, instructions, and safety guidelines as well as stays on task during activities.	1	2	3	4	5

Summative Assessment:

This rubric can be used at the end of a semester in order to give an idea of how each student acted during activities and how they valued the physical educative experience they have gained. Each outcome is expected and can be reached no matter what lesson is being taught.

Doing [Psycomotor]

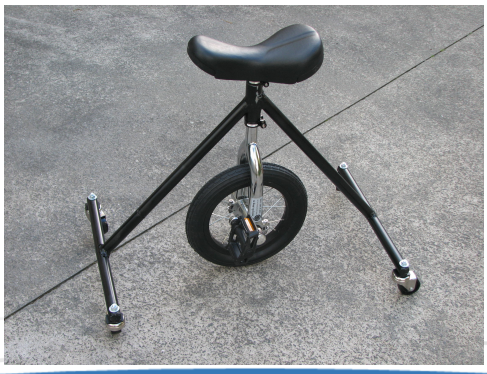
Nova Scotia Curriculum Outcome: Identify the relationship between body mechanics and performance.

N.S. Curriculum Outcome in Parent and Student Friendly Language: Students will be expected to demonstrate effective body control and balance in order to ride a unicycle.

Categories	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Consistency
Student properly adjust seat to desired position				
Student knows the “safety” and the “dead spot” pedal positions				
Student knows how to mount a unicycle with support from the wall				
Student knows how to properly spot classmates				
Student can ride unicycle forward along the wall				

Summative Assessment:

At the completion of the unicycle unit; the instructor can use this rubric as a guideline to assess the improvement of each student with respect to their abilities to properly adjust and mount a unicycle, and how to ride a unicycle with support of a classmate and/or the wall.



Knowing [Cognitive]

Nova Scotia Curriculum Outcome: Demonstrate safety procedures and practices to avoid risks

N.S. Curriculum Outcome in Parent and Student Friendly Language: Students will be expected identify safety procedures in relation to unicycling.

Journal Reflection

Please answer the following questions in your journal:

1. What are the names of the 2 pedal positions for safe unicycling?

- The Safety Position
- Dead Spot Position

2. What are 3 safety tips for students to follow when participating in unicycling?

- Always wear a helmet
- Always spot your classmates when they are riding a unicycle
- Never interfere with a unicyclist who is practicing

Formative Assessment:

This formative assessment tool can be used after the first unicycle lesson to ensure that all students understand the importance of safety when participating in unicycling. Also, this will provide the instructor with insight to who is interested in this form of physical activity.

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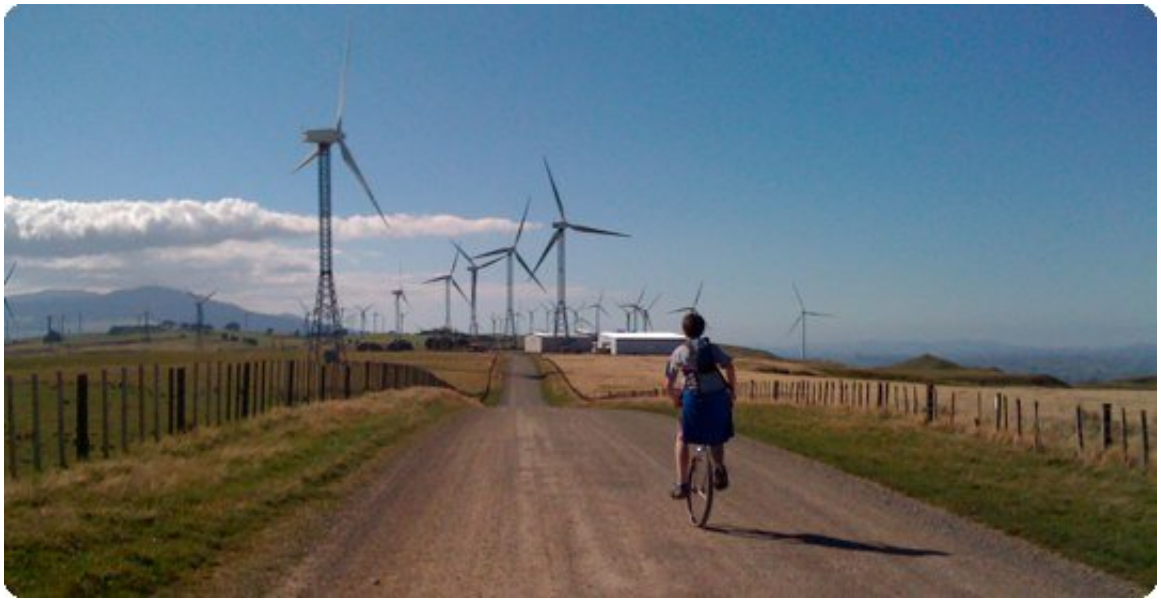
A comprehensive website where you can buy unicycles, parts, safety equipment, books, videos, and clothing all related to unicycling.



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