Cycling for transport is especially important right now. As well as promoting social distancing, it helps tackle congestion, carbon emissions, and obesity. Yet many employees, even some recreational cyclists, are reluctant to ride to work. Why?

TOO MUCH TRAFFIC
Busy roads can be intimidating. Assertive cycling, with correct road positioning, makes them easier to negotiate. The skills can be picked up through Bikeability training (bikeability.org.uk) or by reading Cyclecraft (£16.99, cyclecraft.co.uk). And the busiest roads can often be avoided. The best route from A to B by bike is seldom the way you’d go by car; it’ll use quieter backstreets, minor roads, and perhaps cycling facilities (see ‘Plan your route’).

BAD WEATHER
Soakings are rare. Full-length mudguards (see page 5 if you have a road bike) combined with decent waterproofs or a poncho-style cape will keep you dry enough in all but the worst downpour. A cycling cap, which will fit under a helmet if worn, can prevent rain-blurred glasses.

IT’S TOO FAR/TOO HARD
You don’t have to ride all the way to work and back every day. Maybe commute by bike two or three days a week? Or try mixed-mode commuting, making part of the journey – or all of the return journey – by public transport. This is much easier with a compact folder like a Brompton. Or invest in an e-bike if you want to cruise up hills or commute longer distances.

NO SHOWER AT WORK
This doesn’t stop millions of Dutch cyclists. Slow down: it’s not a race so don’t work up a sweat. Put your luggage on the bike instead of your back to prevent overheating. If necessary, take a spare shirt/blouse, underwear, and deodorant, then change in the loos. Nuclear option? E-bike.

WHAT IF I PUNCTURE?
While it’s worth knowing how to fix a puncture and carrying the wherewithal to replace a tube (see cyclinguk.org/article/video-guide-how-repair-puncture-bike), punctures are relatively rare, especially if you fit tougher tyres, such as Schwalbe Marathon Plus or Continental Contact Plus, and keep them firmly inflated. Still worried? Commute by folding bike and phone a taxi if you have a problem you can’t fix.

Commute essentials
Things to buy for a better bike trip to work.

- Waterproof luggage
  - Ortlieb Sport-Roller City panniers £85/pair, ortlieb.com

- Full-length mudguards
  - SKS Blumels Longboard set £42.99, sks-germany.com

- Good lights
  - Exposure Trace + Tracer Mk2 Daybright £85/set, exposurelights.com

- Tough lock
  - Abus Granit XPlus 540 £89.99, extrauk.co.uk

- Cycling UK Membership
  - From £24/year, cyclinguk.org/join

Plan your route
Google Maps (google.co.uk/maps) and the smartphone app of the same name have a cycling option. The routes generated are hit and miss; they can put you on busier roads. Cyclestreets navigation, used by Cycling UK’s Journey Planner (cyclinguk.org/journey-planner) offers ‘fastest’, ‘balanced’ and ‘quietest’ routes, which are more suitable for less confident cyclists. If you prefer plotting your own routes, try the subscription-based OS Maps website (osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) or app; Cycling UK members get 20% off (cyclinguk.org/member-benefits). Trial your route(s) one weekend to see what they’re like and how long they take to ride.