



## Verdict

All these bikes offer that important gateway into a lifelong habit for the smallest people in your life. They will likely love any of them until it's time to start pedalling.

The Tadpole and JNR 12" are two bikes with similar designs: they're lightweight, well thought out, adjustable and suitable for the youngest of riders. Your choice is likely to be determined by gut feel and the availability of stock. In our case, the Tadpole trumped.

The Dirt Hero is a bold vision of what everyone's first mountain bike should be. It's just missing suspension to make the complete package. Those thinking that this is overkill will appreciate the simpler package of the heavier and more robust Scoot, which is just over a third of the Dirt Hero's RRP.



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[cyclinguk.org/advice](https://cyclinguk.org/advice)

## 1 Frog Tadpole

£195 [frogbikes.com](https://frogbikes.com)

**THE TADPOLE WAS** an instant hit with its reviewer due to its vibrant colour scheme and ease of rolling straight out of the box. My scales said this aluminium-framed bike weighed 3.86kg, against the manufacturer's 4.17kg. Pocket a 5mm Allen key and you'll find it easy to adjust both at home and away. The green spoke to locate the valve is a nice touch. With steerer spacers, a mini BMX handlebar and the widest seat height range in test (320-430mm), it's highly and easily adjustable as your rider grows. Price is relatively high but Cycling UK members get 10% off ([cyclinguk.org/frogbikes](https://cyclinguk.org/frogbikes)). The only downsides are the delicate hand grips, which lack wide ends to protect little hands.

Fully featured, bold colours, good growing room – and a fun little ride

## 2 Boardman JNR 12" Balance

£180 [boardmanbikes.com](https://boardmanbikes.com)

**CUT FROM THE** same cloth as the Tadpole, the aluminium JNR 12" is both cheaper and lighter (3.77kg). It comes in a teal-like blue. Unlike the Frog's, the Boardman's brake sits under rather than above the chainstays, which feels a neater setup. Some initial brake adjustment was required to prevent drag on the rear wheel, which dampened the enthusiasm of a reviewer eagerly wanting a go. Seat height ranges from 345-420mm, meaning that smaller toddlers might have to wait until they can get riding. Grips are good and solid, with fatter ends, and come with an adjustable if hard-to-pull brake. A standard multitool is all you need to make adjustments.

Lightweight, good grips, nice ride. Everything you'd want

## 3 Kids Ride Shotgun Dirt Hero 12"

£290 [kidsrideshotgun.co.uk](https://kidsrideshotgun.co.uk)

**THE ALUMINIUM DIRT** Hero attempts to rewrite the balance bike with its 2.25in knobby tyres, thru-axles, 460mm wide handlebar and hydraulic disc brake(!). As a mountain biker, I loved it; my reviewer less so. It's relatively heavy (4.37kg) and the wider stance made him stand astride it like a mini John Wayne. Little legs grow, however, and so will the Dirt Hero (it can also take 14" wheels), so this should be less of an issue over time. Length of service might also justify the high cost for some. In the 12" version the seat height is 320-400mm; 14" wheels will start you at 437mm. It comes with stickers (a win), and in a delicate white. The price was down from £360 at time of writing.

A mountain bike balance bike that's better for older dirt heroes

## 4 Ridgeback Scoot

£124.99 [ridgeback.co.uk](https://ridgeback.co.uk)

**THE ONLY STEEL** frame in the review, the more wallet-friendly Scoot is also the heaviest at 5.11kg, but it's built to last. The quill stem and traditional wheel nuts hark back to an earlier age, which will make it more difficult to adjust for those parents accustomed to modern bikes. Once the brake was properly adjusted, the 12x2.0" Vee speedster tyres rolled well and fast. There's plenty of room to grow on the bike, thanks to the height-adjustable stem and an additional longer seatpost. Seat height with the smaller post ranges from 350-460mm. The almost comical grips promise to protect wee paws as your child grows with the bike. It comes in eight colour options.

A heavier, wallet-friendly steed with growing room. Built to last