# Momentum Magazine

# [**How to Shop by Bike**](http://momentummag.com/features/bike-curious-how-to-shop-by-bike/)

by [Duncan Hurd](http://momentummag.com/topics/duncan_hurd/)

July 8, 2013

<http://momentummag.com/features/bike-curious-how-to-shop-by-bike/>

My partner and I picked up the habit of shopping by bike shortly after we first started riding together. On the way home from a ride, we’d stop in at a butcher shop or pick up some take-out for dinner. At first, we’d hang bags from our handlebars, but we knew this was putting our purchases at risk as they swayed and bounced off our front wheels. We soon had the urge to carry more with us – without having to take transit or resort to borrowing a car.

**Get the Right Gear**

When it comes to shopping by bicycle, you’ll have greater success with the right accessories. At a minimum, install a front basket, a rear rack, or both. While you can use a large backpack, letting your bike do the carrying is less cumbersome. Front baskets vary in size and are often large and sturdy enough for one or two bags of groceries or a medium- sized box. Rear racks provide a flat surface for strapping down larger items with rope or bungee cords. To really increase the capacity of a rack, get one or two panniers (bags designed to mount to a rack). If you need to pick up larger items, the increased hauling capacity of a detachable bike trailer may be right for you. Many trailers can fold down for storage and can also be used for carrying kids, pets, and more.

**Cut the Waste**

Once you have a basket or rack (or both) on your bicycle, it’s time to consider what kind of purchases you’ll be making. At the grocery store, I rarely buy anything individually packaged in a box or container. These take up too much space and end up in the trash anyway. Buying from the bulk aisle allows me to bag items that typically come boxed, taking up significantly less space on my bike. Often, I’ll decide not to buy an item if there’s too much packaging waste. If you’re buying delicate items like fresh fruit and vegetables,ask whether the shop has any medium-sized cardboard boxes. You can strap the box securely to your rack to prevent your groceries from squishing together.

**Buy Less, Shop More Often**

Shopping more often may sound time-consuming, but once you get used to it you’ll find that you can actually save time. Grocery runs are often much quicker when you’re shopping for just two or three meals in advance. You get to use the express checkout lane, and you don’t have to push a loaded cart around. When you’re buying less per visit, it’s also easier to combine a shopping trip with other trips. You can stop by the library on the way home from work or pick up a few items on your way to an event across town.

**Look for Businesses That Support Shopping by Bike**

It’s hard to shop by bike if a store lacks bike parking. While many business owners still value car parking over bicycle parking, some communities are starting to create bike- friendly business districts. If your favorite shop lacks bike parking, make a point of asking for it and encourage other shoppers to do the same.

**Three Quick Tips for Shopping by Bike**

1. Cords — Your local bike shop will have a selection of different bungee cords and tie downs. Pick up a few different sizes and try out a variety of materials to find the combination that works for you.
2. Racks — Most racks and baskets are attached to your bike at various points with screws. Occasionally check that these are secure to avoid problems while transporting heavier items.
3. Locks — Use a strong and versatile lock that works with your bike and can attach to an array of bike rack styles.