

Jen's story

Jen was eager to find a quicker and more active way of getting to work. Here she shares her experience of changing her commute by swapping four wheels for two.

Last year I moved to Winchester, after several months of long commutes it was great to no longer rely on a car and live nearer to the office. I began using the bus but soon realised that during peak times I could probably get to work just as quickly (or sometimes faster) by cycling.

My bike was collecting dust in the garage so I thought I would try cycling to work. Initially I was a little nervous, as I wasn't very experienced with cycling on the road.

I had a lot of question such as where I could store my bike, what route should I use, what should I wear? I also questioned my fitness and whether I would be able to tackle the big hill I near my house.

Before I cycled in, I made sure all my questions were answered. I sussed out the journey beforehand and checked the cycle route on 'My Journey'. This website can give you a really detailed route, from directions, to your journey time. It even tells you how busy the roads will be and how many hills you can expect.

I found out that there was a lockable store at work, bought some cycle shorts (a very good investment) and as for the hills, there was no harm in trying!

On the first day when I managed to climb the steep hill without getting off, I felt really proud (I was going very slowly, but at least I was going!) In the first few weeks of cycling, my legs felt like jelly but they soon got used to it and I loved how easy it was to get from A to B.

At first I promised myself I would cycle in for at least three days a week but I was soon managing four.



The benefits...

- I love that it gets my active minutes in for the day. If I have a day where I can't fit in a workout, knowing that I've been cycling makes me feel better.
- I recently counted up how much I had saved in the seven months I had been cycling to work. Spending £4 at a time doesn't seem like a lot, but when I added it up, it was over £300. Which I soon decided was going towards a holiday.
- No more waiting for the bus. Using my bike means I have more flexibility to leave when I want. During busy times I can sometimes get to work earlier and get home quicker.
- Although it might be on a very small level, I am helping to reduce congestion in the city. If I can encourage even more people to cycle to work, then even better!

- I've noticed an improvement in my fitness. I cycled the South Downs way with my partner in September. Climbing that hill every day paid off, he may not like me saying this... but I left him for dust on some of those hills!
- The views across the fields especially when the sun is out.
- Going uphill means you get to come down (fast!)

Top tips

- Before you start, find the best route for you on My Journey and test it out the weekend before. This means you won't take a wrong turn on the Monday and get stressed out by being late.
- Make sure you can be seen, wear a high visibility jacket even when it's light outside. Don't forget the lights too.
- Listen to your body, if you're feeling exhausted just hop on the bus! It's better to feel fresh that day than to burn out.
- Check the weather the night before and get your kit ready for the morning.
- Ask your work about cycling to work schemes, this can help towards a new bike or kit and accessories.

I will be completely honest and say there are some days when I wake up and cycling is the last thing I want to do. When I feel like this, I try to think about how good I will feel once I arrive at work, fully awake and ready for the day. Of course, reminding myself about the extra holiday money helps to.

Let's dust off those bikes and take to two wheels!