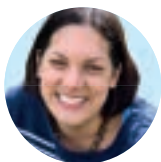




Group test

Junior jackets

For children who ride year round, a waterproof jacket is essential. **Victoria Hazael** reviews four



VICTORIA HAZAEL

Website Editor

Victoria is a cycling mum whose children are aged nine and six

No one likes being cold and wet when they're cycling, especially children. But if they've got a decent jacket to keep them warm and dry, they're more likely to forget about the conditions and embrace their two-wheeled adventures.

It's easy to get a regular warm coat for your child, but most styles are padded and not very breathable. If your child will be cycling for more than 20 minutes or so, a cycling jacket will be more comfortable. Now that manufacturers are switching on to the children's cycling market, the options have greatly improved. The best examples offer extra reflective material for visibility, with narrower sleeves and cuffs that won't easily get caught on the handlebar, and a shorter cut at the back that won't catch on the back wheel.

Most importantly, a waterproof jacket should keep their top half dry and stop their body temperature from falling when the rain does.

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Fit Don't buy one to be grown into. A jacket that's too long may catch in the back wheel or on the saddle. Sleeves that cover the hands can restrict braking, gear shifting, or steering.

2 Waterproof rating

This is the height of a column of water that the fabric will support before it leaks through. To be designated waterproof, that must be at least 1,000mm. While a bigger number is better, rain resistance also depends on the seams, zips, and water-repellent coating (which you can refresh with NikWax and the like).

3 Pockets On cycling adventures, kids tend to pick up 'treasures' like feathers, stones and conkers, so pockets are vital. Zipped pockets are better for storing gloves or mitts, plus a snack in case energy levels drop.

4 Visibility Although hi-vis jackets use colours as bright as highlighter pens, it's reflectivity that helps a child be seen by drivers, especially in dim light.

5 Packability Even in the UK in winter it doesn't rain every day. Look for one that you can fold compactly and that's light, so that it can be carried just in case.



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Verdict

You'll keep your child dry in any of these jackets. All are comfortable to wear, not too heavy, and fairly packable. It was nice to see the design details and waterproofing technology from adult cycling jackets replicated in smaller sizes for children.

Ultimately, the best jacket for a child is the one they'll keep on. For those whose children cycle to school, bear in mind that they might not want to be conspicuous in the playground at lunchtime in the brightest jacket. Cycling jackets aren't the warmest for standing around in either. So I'd suggest keeping an alternative coat in their locker or on their peg at school.



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cyclinguk.org/cycling-advice

1 Madison Protec Youth

£44.99 madison.cc

This is a generously-sized jacket that easily fits over a school uniform. My daughter liked the soft collar and non-itchy label. It is waterproof and breathable, and was easy to rinse off when it got splattered with mud mountain biking. It's longer in the body and arms than the others but the cuffs are adjustable. There's no hood, which isn't essential for cycling. The waterproof zip is good quality. The only downside is that it doesn't pack particularly small. Sizes: ages 4-6 and 7-9. Colours: pink, orange, yellow. Waterproofness: not stated, but thought to be 3,000mm.

▼ **This is our top choice for keeping dry on a rainy day.**

2 Endura Kids' Luminite Jacket II Hi-Viz Pink

£49.99 endurasport.com

This was my daughter's favourite jacket as it was so comfy. The material, although waterproof, is softer. It is breathable, and has both a mesh lining and a back vent. There are two side pockets with zips, but no rear one. The hood neatly folds into the collar. This jacket has the most reflective strips, plus nicely designed arrows. It has elasticated, non-adjustable cuffs and it comes with a separate (thus easily lost) mesh bag to pack it smaller. It washed really well and didn't lose any colour. Sizes: ages 7-8, 8-9, 10-11. Waterproofness: 10,000mm.

▼ **Comfy material that's waterproof and breathable. Folds small.**

3 Decathlon B'Twin 500 Kids' Rain Jacket

£19.99 decathlon.co.uk

My son liked how roomy this jacket was, and how it easily zipped up over school uniform or bulky winter PE kit. For the price – just £19.99, which is less than half the price of the other jackets – this is good value. It's waterproof, although the rating is lower than the others on test. It has a hood that zips away and adjustable and reflective cuffs. The rear pocket is reflective too. It is lighter because it doesn't have mesh lining, though it has back vents to allow heat to escape. Sizes: Age 8, 10, 12, 14. Colours: Yellow. Waterproofness: 2,000mm.

▼ **Bargain lightweight waterproof that folds into its big rear pocket.**

4 Polaris Strata Kids' Pack Away

£59.99 polaris-bikewear.co.uk

The lightest of the four jackets, this packs down small into its chest pocket. Though breathable it has no vents, so an older child might get a bit sweaty. It's quite thin and not that windproof, so it's important to layer up underneath. Size-wise it comes up a bit short in the body but not in the arms. The cuffs and hem are elasticated, while the single-stitched seams are taped to make them waterproof. Sizes: ages 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12. Colours: pink or yellow. Waterproofness: 10,000mm.

▼ **Highly packable jacket that's ideal for just-in-case use.**