



# Just One Wheel

by Kelly Dix

Who is your number one sporting hero? Ask students at Bombay School that question, and they probably won't name an All Black or a Silver Fern. They're more likely to say Chris Huriwai or Sam La Hood. Chris and Sam are not very well known in the rest of New Zealand, but they are world champions in their sport – unicycling. And the students at Bombay School love their unicycles. Some days, you can see fifty unicycles at the school.



The cycles belong to the school, to the students – and to Mr Rob, the school's caretaker. Mr Rob bought some unicycles for the school after seeing how much his grandchildren loved them. They were an instant hit – as soon as the students saw the cycles, they wanted to ride them.







Mr Rob explains that the best way to learn how to ride a unicycle is to move backwards and forwards on it while holding onto a fence. “And the two most important things are to keep your back straight and try not to look at the ground,” adds Katie, a year 4 student.

The students all agree that riding a unicycle was difficult to begin with. “When I saw one,” says Ashton, “I thought, how do you ride a bike with just one wheel?”

“I kept falling off,” says Miles. “I got lots of grazes, and I had to go to the sick bay a few times. I felt like giving up. But then I took a unicycle home for the weekend so that I could do some more practice. It took a while, but all of a sudden, I could ride it. I was so happy!”



The students at Bombay School practise at morning tea and lunchtime and before and after school. The extra-keen ones can even book a unicycle to take home in the weekends.

But staying on the unicycle is just the start. Once you can do that, there are the tricks to master. “I love that you can do heaps of tricks,” Jack says. “I can **idle**, and I can **bunny-hop** onto a thick plank.”

“I want to learn to idle,” says Andres, “and I want to do a **360**.”

*I want to learn to idle, and I want to do a 360.*







The students know which tricks they want to learn because they saw the experts in action. Sam La Hood and Chris Huriwai visited the school and taught the students more about unicycling. “The world champions came to visit us,” Ashton says. “Chris **free mounted** on the **giraffe!**”



## World Champions

At the Unicycle World Championships, there are many different events. They include freestyle, high jump, and cross-country. There is even a 100-kilometre race. Chris Huriwai and Sam La Hood compete in the street division. In this event, riders do tricks using ledges, handrails, and stairs.

### Chris Huriwai

Chris lives in Kaikohe, Northland. He bought a unicycle in 2006, when he was fourteen years old, and taught himself a few tricks. Then one day, he saw some videos on the Internet of what other riders were doing. This fired his imagination – he was inspired to try what they were doing. Four years later, Chris was the world champion!

Chris has won the world championships twice more since then – in 2012 (in Italy) and in 2014 (in Canada). When he’s not doing cool tricks on his unicycle, Chris works for Te Hau Ora O Kaikohe, a local health organisation. His work takes him into schools all over the Kaikohe area.



### Sam La Hood

Sam was at a circus festival when she rode a unicycle for the first time. She found that it was harder than it looked, so she talked to Chris Huriwai to learn more about the sport. Sam won the world female championship in 2012 when she was only sixteen years old! She won the world title again in 2014.





At Bombay School, the students' interest in unicycling continues to grow. Mr Rob has raised funds to buy more unicycles for the school. The students are so keen on the sport that Mr Rob and his wife took nearly thirty of them to the Manukau Unicycle Club. "We invaded it!" Mr Rob says proudly. "The students had a great time, and they were able to show the club members a few new tricks too."

The students say that they really enjoyed the visit. "Mr Rob is my hero," says Abbey. "Yeah ... Chris, Sam, AND Mr Rob!"



## Types of Unicycles

**Giraffe unicycles** have a chain like a two-wheeled bike, so they can be much taller than other unicycles. (Most unicycles don't have a chain, which means the seat can only be as high as the length of the rider's legs. The seat on a giraffe unicycle can be up to 3 metres high!)

**Trials or street unicycles** are made very strong so that they can handle long jumps and big drops. Many of the tricks unicyclists do on them are like the moves that riders do on BMX bikes and skateboards.

**Mountain unicycles** (or MUnis) have larger wheels so that the rider can go over obstacles, such as tree roots and rocks. They usually have a comfortable seat and brakes.

**Freestyle unicycles** are made for flat surfaces. Their riders (called freestylers) put together a series of tricks - a bit like skateboarders do. These unicycles are also good for team sports, such as unicycle hockey.

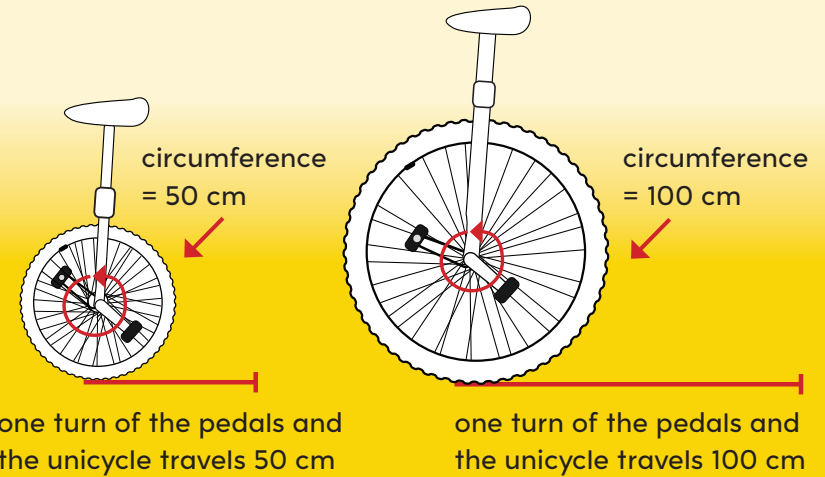


## Parts of a Unicycle



## Unicycle Maths Fact

The distance travelled on one revolution of the pedals is related to the size of the wheel. The bigger the **circumference** of the wheel, the farther you travel.



## Glossary

- bunny-hop** – to jump up and forwards from a standing still position (the way that a rabbit jumps)
- circumference** – the distance around something, usually a circle
- free mounted** – got onto the unicycle without using any support (such as a wall or a pole)
- giraffe** – a type of unicycle (see page 9)
- idle** – to stay in one spot by making small forwards and backwards movements
- 360** – jumping up in the air and turning around in a complete circle (there are 360 degrees in a circle)

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