

# Chainsets: explained

Chainsets have become a lot more flexible over the past 10 years with a lot of options now being available. A Chainset includes a crankarm and chainrings and are described by the number of teeth each ring has. A 52/36 for example has 52 teeth on the outer ring and 36 teeth on the inner ring. Most rings will have the number of teeth written in small numbers somewhere on their outer face.

A standard chainset for a racing bike is a 53/39 and this is still the set up of choice for most pro riders and pro triathletes, though is starting to change. With the advent of more people riding bikes compact chainsets were introduced, these opened up cycling

audience by keeping the standard look of a racing bike but offering easier or lower gears. Compacts have traditionally been either 50/36 or 50/34. More recently mid-compact chainsets have been introduced which are 52/36, they have the combined benefits of a larger standard outer ring, with a smaller compact inner ring, they currently are the most popular chainset fitted on new bikes.



**46/36 Cyclo-cross  
Shimano Mid-Compact  
set up for Youth limits**



Cyclo-cross chainsets fit into the compact and/or mid-compact categories. These are a 46/36 and are produced by most of the leading brands, Shimano, SRAM, FSA. They are an excellent choice for T2\*/T3 and Youth gear limits.

Finally there is '1x' (pronounced '1 by'). Chainsets in road cycling are still predominately all double ring set ups or what is becoming known as '2x' (2 by). However, 1x is becoming more and more common. Popularised by mountain biking and now cyclo-cross and gravel riding too 1x does have some relevance for young athletes as riders are generally not changing between front chainrings in races. However, our preference is that given double chainrings are still the most popular choice at senior level that young athletes learn to use a double chainring while they are developing.

Thankfully whatever set up you have can be adjusted to fit restricted gears. Please see [What are my Options?](#)

\*you should be aware this right on the limit for this age group on the gear tables (2cm under)