

BIKE TRAINING

It's very unlikely that you've joined the club without some form of bike experience or the basic skills to stay upright on two wheels. However, racing, group riding, and the daunting range of bike kit options may still take some getting used to.

Ful-on Tri rides take place on Saturday mornings. Various ride distances are available but will always include an easy pace option between 50 – 70km with a café stop mid-way. You can find all the information for Saturday Rides on the Club website under '[Train](#)'.

Turbo sessions and Saturday Rides with the club will help you:

- Develop confidence riding with others in a group (useful for training and any draft-legal races you enter)
- Improve your pedalling technique and ability to deliver power for more of the pedal stroke
- Build ride endurance and the power you can hold over a given time

SAFETY

Five essential pre-ride bike checks

1. Check tyre pressure. In addition to checking how much air is in your tyres (it's a personal preference, but best to not let tyres get lower than 80–90 psi), you should also examine the shape and condition of the rubber and tread. If the tyre looks squared off or if you see any cracks or gashes, it may be time for some new tyres.
2. Test wheels and brakes. Give your wheels a spin and make sure the rims don't rub on the brake pads or frame. Also check the rim to see if the wheel wobbles, which indicates that the wheel is out of true and the spoke tension needs adjusting. Make sure your brakes are working properly by grabbing them to stop the spinning wheel. Check that there's enough rubber on the brake pads too, and replace when they're getting thin.
3. Clean and lube the chain. The single most important step to maintaining your drivetrain is to clean and lube your chain every few rides. A dirty and dry chain will cause your chainrings and cassette cogs to wear out faster, which will result in poor shifting (and the squeal of a dry chain will also greatly annoy your riding buddies).
4. Tighten stem and headset bolt (on the handlebars). There's a simple test to determine if you need to tighten your headset: Stand over the top tube of your bike and grab the front brake. Rock your handlebars forward and back. If you feel any play, you'll need to tighten your headset. A torque wrench is an excellent investment to make sure you're tightening the bolts to specification.
5. Wipe down the frame. Take pride in your two-wheeled steed and keep it clean – a clean bike is a fast bike! Give your bike a lovely shine with a product like Finish Line's 'Showroom Polish & Protectant', which is safe to use on all surfaces of your bike.

'M' Check

You can also use the 'M' Check, this is an easy to remember routine to double-check your bike before you head out on a ride. Please see 'More info' links at the top of the page.

Advice from BTF

See also link on Safety tips from BTF about using tri bars, overtaking and drafting, and riding in groups in 'More Info' below.

TECHNIQUE

Choosing the right gear

Here we don't mean matching jersey, shoes and sock colour with your bike. We mean choosing which of your gears on the front chainring and the back cassette will help you maintain a comfortable pedalling speed (or cadence) regardless of the gradient or terrain.

For flat, fast bike courses, you'll be spending a lot of time in the largest chainring at the front and the smaller cogs or sprockets on the rear cassette. This 'big gear' or 'high gear' is optimal when riding fast on the flats or when descending. Conversely, riding up steep gradients, you will need an 'easier gear' to keep the pedals spinning, therefore selecting the smaller chainring at the front and a sprocket towards the larger end of the cassette will help here.

Most road bikes these days will have 20 to 22 gears: two chainrings on the front and 10 or 11 sprockets on the rear cassette. On the front, the standard (racing) setup would typically be a 53t (tooth) ring and a 39t ring. You will also find 'compact' systems, with slightly smaller chainrings, 50t and 34t, which offer lower gearing for more hilly sportives or races. Increasingly common are semi-compact (or 'faux-pro') chainrings, with 52t and 36t, which offer a balance to meet the needs of the racer and sportive rider alike.

On the rear you will typically have a small 12t sprocket and a larger 25t or bigger sprocket. The larger the rear cog, the 'easier' it will be to spin the legs.

Ok so you know which gears you have, but understanding when to change gears will really help your efficiency. You need to generate power as smoothly and efficiently as possible and effective shifting uses your momentum to help to do this. Wait too long to shift gears and you slow yourself down as the legs get heavy and you lose speed as your cadence drops. Anticipation is key!

Watts vs. cadence

That age old question about which cadence should I ride for my event, vs. how much power should I be pushing? Well, the first thing to mention is that there is no such thing as perfect cadence! Just spinning faster won't get you too far if force cannot be applied all the way around the pedal stroke!

Power is force (or torque) x rotational speed, so the same force through the pedals at a faster speed, will give you more power. But many of us aren't fit enough to be able to do this. Overall, you should be practicing both high cadence and higher power. For higher cadence, practice will teach your legs to spin at higher speeds without bouncing in the saddle, just as strengthening your core will help to reduce the upper body movement. For power, using over-gearing (bigger or heavier gear) training can help to develop your leg strength. Put both of them together and you'll deliver more force and cadence which means higher power and a faster bike split!

EQUIPMENT

Which bike?

Now there's a difficult question! Ask the members on the Facebook and you'll get a huge array of answers!

Road bikes balance lightness, stiffness, handling and comfort, with a varying amount of aerodynamics depending on the brand, your riding style and position, and your flexibility.

A time trial (or triathlon-specific bike) comprises a frame that is streamlined in an aerodynamic shape, usually with large flat or oval tubes to reduce the frontal area and cut through the air. Generally, they have steeper tube angles, and the more upright seat tube can bring the rider forward over the bottom bracket. This may help the rider reduce some of the impact on what would be the stretched-out quads, in preparation for the run phase. They will also have a set of aerobars and bar end shifters, thus providing the rider with easy to reach gear shifters and brake callipers, meaning little to no movement when in the racing position.

The advice would be, do your research and ask for advice. Consider the type and duration of training and racing you will be doing. We would recommend borrowing a bike or bikes from friends to test what feels comfortable for you. A proper 'bike fit' for any bike is essential.

Helmets

Always wear one!! You must wear a helmet to join our rides, and you will always be required to wear one while racing.

Good helmets provide a balance of protection, ventilation and comfort. It should be tough, secure and fit well. Above all it should be an approved helmet. Replace any helmet which is old and worn; or if it has taken a significant impact, as it may have damage which is not immediately obvious to the naked eye.

BENCHMARKING

Have a look at the Ful-on Tri website and the 'Benchmarking' section under 'Train' (or see 'More Info' below) to see how to calculate your Functional Threshold Power (FTP) which can be used to gauge improvement and design effective training sessions to improve your fitness.

LOCATIONS

Check out some of our favourite routes on the Ful-on Tri 'Cycling Routes' page under the 'Train' menu section (or see 'More Info').

ON MY OWN SESSIONS

The club has several turbo and open road sessions that can be used on your own, see 'More Info' to download these sets.

FAQs

If I puncture on a group ride, what should I do?

First of all, don't panic! Make the rider leader aware that you have a puncture and need to stop, then assess the situation. You should know how to change an inner tube (if not, please ask a coach beforehand!), but if you are having trouble, do not feel embarrassed to ask for help from the ride leader or group members. You should be carrying spare inner tubes, tyre levers and either a mini-pump or compressed gas pump. See 'More Info' below for repair advice.

If I puncture in a race, do I fix the puncture myself?

Yes, you are not allowed outside assistance. Some people give up if they puncture, but you can replace an inner tube within a couple of minutes with practice, so make sure you know how! To do this you need to carry a spare inner tube, tyre levers and either a mini-pump or compressed gas

pump. If in doubt as to whether to quit or fix it, try and assess how disappointed you will feel if you don't finish the race, versus a time delay of a few minutes.

Should I buy a portable (hand-held) bicycle pump or a larger floor pump?

Both. You need a hand-held pump to take with you on rides in case you get a puncture. In addition, you should invest in a floor pump (track pump) because you'll need to pump up your tyres to the correct pressure every time you go out on a ride or race and it's difficult to get them fully inflated with a hand-held pump.

More Info:

SAFETY

ICE – Stands for **In Case of Emergency**. Add your emergency contact details to your phone using this common feature. This ensures your emergency contact can be reached without needing to unlock your mobile.

How to ride in a group

Safety Tips from BTF (British Triathlon Federation) – Group riding, overtaking, tri bars etc

TECHNIQUE / ADVICE

British Cycling – How, where and when to race

Bike Mechanics – advice on puncture repair, setting up turbo, indexing gears, fixing brakes

EQUIPMENT

Five common mechanical issues

How to pack a bike box

BENCHMARKING

Ful-on Tri Benchmarking

British Cycling – Threshold Test

LOCATIONS

Ful-on Tri Cycling Routes – some of our favourite routes with downloadable GPX files

READING:

* 'The Time-Crunched Cyclist' and 'The Time-Crunched Triathlete' by Chris Carmichael

* 'Triathletes Training Bible' by Joe Friel