



More People Cycling More Often

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Basic and beginner training

Getting started with training can feel overwhelming when you don't know where to start. Bicycle Victoria offers some sound and simple starters.

What to expect from this guide

- Information about the right clothing and gear for training
- General information about nutrition and diets before, during and after rides
- Improved skills in general riding and increasing your fitness
- Better sense of your own capabilities
- Understanding of how to physically prepare for training rides
- A training schedule for basic and beginner training

The right clothing

- If you're starting training for an organised bike ride, such as a Bicycle Victoria event, wear the clothes you intend to take on the event. This will reveal if you feel comfortable over longer distances and during different weather conditions:
- Helmets are compulsory for all cyclists. For a bicycle helmet to be effective it must fit properly and be worn in the correct manner.
- Shoes with stiff soles or runners are sufficient. Special touring and cycling shoes can help to make the energy transfer through the pedals more efficient.
- Cycling shorts have a padded crotch to take up some of the road shock and help prevent chafing. They are worn without underpants for increased comfort, but do need to be washed regularly. A good chamois cream (such as Assos) not only lubricates the rubbing surface, but also neutralises the acid in sweat, thus minimising chaffing.
- Cycling gloves give comfort through padding and give a better grip on the handlebars – which adds to safety. They also protect your hands in the event of an accident.
- Wet weather gear – ideally in a bright colour should be carried at all times – just in case the weather turns. Look for something that breathes well and is easy to carry.
- Sunburn is a high risk for cyclists. Shirts with collars and long sleeves are good (loose shirts can be worn over t-shirts), as are lightweight scarves to protect the back of the neck and flap hats that can be worn under your helmet. Use a 30+ Sunscreen to cover all exposed areas and don't forget the back of your hands. Avoid putting sunscreen on your forehead; once you start sweating it will just run into your eyes.
- Good riding glasses will not only provide shade during daytime, but will also prevent dirt and other debris from getting in your eyes.

The right gear

- You should have a bike that you feel comfortable on, and one that is in reasonable working order. For hills, a bike with good working gears is essential.
- It is worth organising a mechanical check for your bike to ensure that it is in good running order. If you are planning on going on Bicycle Victoria multi-day ride, it is

inconvenient and often more costly to fix your bike on the ride as others will be trying to do the same thing and resources are limited.

- Carry a repair kit to do basic repairs: this should include a pump and puncture repair kit.
- Riders should have the correct sized frame and the saddle height should be correctly adjusted. Visit your local bike club or the local bike shop to help check your bike set up. A large number of knee problems are due to incorrect seat height.

The right skills

- If you're planning on going on long or touring rides – such as multi-day events – it's worth ensuring you have the skills to do basic bike maintenance and repairs. This should include fixing a puncture, tightening nuts and bolts, adjusting brakes and basic wheel truing.
- Bicycle Victoria can help you get in contact with local bike maintenance skills workshops.

The right food and water

- You should carry at least one water bottle. Two water bottles are ideal. Some people find a CamelBak (aka hydro pack) useful, as it holds more, keeps fluid cool and can be easier to use than a bottle.
- Dehydration is a common cause of fatigue and headaches. It can lead to more serious conditions such as heat stroke. It is easy to prevent dehydration if a few precautions are followed.
- Before you start riding, drink a glass or more of water.
- Sports drinks are designed to replace lost fluids and salts in the body. They can make you feel thirstier. We suggest you carry one sports mix and one fresh water bottle for long rides.
- As you cycle, drink regularly. Sip every 10 minutes, or more frequently in hot weather. Don't wait until you feel thirsty as it will be too late. Refill your bottles regularly.
- Cycling is energy consuming work so don't skip breakfast. It is important to start out with fuel such as complex carbohydrates. Porridge, bread and rice are good cycling food. Bananas, apples, bread with various fillings, fruitcake, boiled new potatoes, 'health' bars are a few suggestions for foods to carry with you. Let your breakfast digest for an hour or so before riding.
- Practice eating when you ride. Avoid over-eating: your riding position can cause discomfort if you eat too much.

Do an initial check

- Aside from checking your bike, gear, clothes and nutrition, if you are unsure about your general health we recommend you obtain medical advice before starting a training program.

Warm ups

- We encourage you to stretch gently for 5 minutes before and after rides. A 5-minute warm-up and cool down increases the blood circulation, delivers more oxygen and raises muscle temperature, which ensures muscles are able to lengthen (relax) and shorten more easily and faster.
- Stretching prevents the pulling of tendons, reducing the risk of injury and decreasing muscle tightness after exercise.
- The warm up/warm down could include: skipping, jogging games, aerobics and gentle stretching to music. Continue this until the body feels warm and sweaty and breathing is deep and regular. You should not feel short of breath.

Basic riding skills

- The basic riding skills are starting, stopping, straight line riding, slow riding and turning. You may benefit from practising changing gears or getting your water bottle out while riding.

Build up slowly and frequently

- Gradually increase the time you spend in the saddle. If you're working towards a long or multi-day ride, build up slowly over the months leading up to the event.
- One of the most important features of a successful preparation is to ride regularly. Consistent riding of short to medium distances is far more preferable than irregular longer rides.
- Contact a local Bicycle User Group

Training with others

- Training with others can have numerous advantages. Aside from being more fun and sociable, it can offer ways of learning things you couldn't possibly learn in a guide such as this!
- You're bound to pick up extra tips, as you watch the way others ride and they watch you – in turn offering lots of constructive feedback.
- It's also great for practising some group skills. Practise riding side by side and rotating the lead cyclists to the back of the group. This will serve useful if you're riding on a large group event.
- Riding with others will also assist in your riding communication skills. Practice singing out 'passing', 'pothole ahead', 'stopping', etc.

Training rides

- If you're going on a large or multi-day ride, we encourage you to do as much bike riding as possible, either by yourself or with friends or family. Every hour in the saddle will make the event that much easier.
- Start off with a number of training rides of about 30km along bike paths and trails in the local area. At first 30km may sound exhausting, but regular weekly rides will build stamina.
- Be sure to increase the amount of effort you put into your training rides. You won't increase your stamina or fitness if you are not forcing yourself to exercise more strenuously.
- You don't necessarily have to start on roads, but eventually ween yourself off quieter paths and trails – especially if you're working towards a tour or multi-day event.
- Add 5–10km each week after the training ride period to slowly increase your distance. Many back streets are ideal for group training as traffic is minimal.
- For the last ten minutes of the ride change into an easy gear and gently spin home. This will help prevent the 'dead leg' syndrome when you're finished – a problem caused by lactic acid pooling.
- Resting your muscles is just as important as the physical training itself. Listen to your body. You can seriously effect your progress if you over-train.

Suggested Training Program: 4-week 'Build-Up Programme'

Week	Longest Weekly Ride	Other weekly rides	Total distance
1	15km	5km, 10km	30km
2	20km	10km, 15km	45km

3	25km	15km, 20km	60km
4	30km	20km, 25km	75km