

Do I really have to train?

Yes! Cycling Challenges are designed for people of average fitness as long as you are prepared to train. You should start training several months before the event, and the attached programmes will help you to do this.

How you start training for a long distance bike ride depends largely on your present fitness level, age and the amount of cycling you have done in the past. There are various ways to train for your challenge, below and in tabulated form are various training regimes that can be adapted to fit into your personal lifestyle.

Non-Cyclists/Moderately Fit

People who have not ridden a bike for several years or indeed at all will have to start their training regime at least 4 months in advance of their trip. Mileage should be built up gradually to avoid injury and over-exercise, and to establish a good base fitness on which to build the stamina levels you will need on a cycle challenge.

A cycle ride every other day should be attempted for the first 4 weeks and the mileage should be between 5 and 10 miles, there is no need to over stretch the ride by pushing a gear that is too difficult, or riding as fast as you can, this can come later.

From the outset you should attempt to develop your cadence, which is the speed at which your legs rotate (RPM), this will improve your aerobic capacity meaning your heart and lungs will grow stronger and be less stressed when cycling or exercising.

To develop your cadence you should select the gear that feels most comfortable when you are cycling on whatever gradient. If you can keep a steady RPM of around 60 - 70 most of the time this would greatly aid the speed at which you become cycling fit, and will increase your strength and stamina which you can then build on.

Before you know it you will find yourself being able to push harder gears while maintaining the same RPM. After you have become comfortable with your cadence and riding position, it will be time to start stepping up the mileage. For the next 4 weeks you should attempt to ride 15 - 20 miles 3 times a week, with a Sunday ride every other weekend of about 25 miles.

By now you should be feeling really confident and starting to enjoy the sport of cycling. In the next 2 weeks it would be worth maintaining the same schedule but now starting to ride 20 - 25 miles three times a week with an alternate Sunday ride of 30 miles.

The following 2 weeks should see the introduction of an extra day's cycling into your training, this day's mileage may only be around 10 - 15 miles but it will help you get a feel for cycling day after day. It would now be a good idea to step up the Sunday rides to three a month with a mileage of 40 miles.

In the final three weeks your daily mileage should be around 30 miles on each outing and any Sunday rides should break 50 miles. A week before you leave for the trip you should wind down and perhaps attempt 3 short 10 - 15 mile rides.

Cyclists/Moderately Fit

This category might include anyone who has been cycling intermittently over the years, perhaps by cycling to work in the summer or regular Sunday rides with the family. As you will have a degree of basic fitness and confidence built up from previous cycling, 3 months or so of training should prepare you for the ride.

The first 4 weeks should be spent introducing a regular programme into your training and concentrating on your cadence (as above), which will help develop your strength for the sustained ride. A mileage of 15 miles three times a week combined with alternate Sunday rides of 30 miles should be attempted for the first month.

The second lot of 4 weeks should see you feeling stronger and confident to increase the mileage; your cadence should be fluent and comfortable, and the three rides a week should be covering about 25 miles each and the Sunday rides up to 40 miles.

The penultimate 3 weeks should see the introduction of a fourth training ride every week, these four rides should be around 30 miles in length with three Sunday rides a month of 50 miles or more. You should by now be feeling comfortable with all these distances as long as you don't push yourself too hard.

The final week should be spent winding down with three 10 - 15 mile rides and the confidence that you know you can complete and enjoy the 10-day ride ahead of you.

Cyclists/Fit

This category would include people who cycle regularly throughout the year whether it be commuting 20 miles or more to work a day or training seriously with weekend races and time trials. People within this category should already have a good training schedule and be amply fit to tackle a cycle challenge, though they should probably step up the training for long days riding.

People included within the commuting bracket may find it a good idea to step their weekly mileage up by cycling a longer route to work, or doing a brief morning or evening ride and by also doing regular weekend rides of around 50 miles or more.

Fitting training into your busy life

The programmes attached are a rough training guide. Obviously with work, family and fundraising commitments you may not always be able to achieve what we have set out for you. However in order to get close to achieving the training it is very important to organise your time properly. There are plenty of ways to ensure that you maximise your training, even if you feel you have no time outside work.

- You must organise your week to **make** time to get out to do some training.
- Get up an hour earlier and go out for a quick cycle with some stretching in the morning before work while it is still light.
- If you can cycle to work, do so. If you can't cycle the whole distance between work and home, why not cycle to a station / bus stop in between home and work and then continue your journey on public transport. You will obviously need to be happy that you are able to leave your bike in a safe and secure place.
- Use your lunchtimes to take regular brisk walks or cycle around your work area.
- Find a steep set of stairs i.e. five floors of a department store/office block and climb them five times, at least three times per week.
- Swimming, squash, badminton, fast walking and any other sport will also help get you prepared.

- Joining a leisure centre is a good idea as the local fitness instructors may well be able to design a programme specifically for you. Most good gyms have exercise bikes, or even better spinning classes, where you can clock up mileage more safely and comfortably. But do try to cycle as much as possible in 'real' conditions. The more you can train in similar conditions to your challenge, both in terms of terrain and weather, the better.
- It is important at weekends to get into some hilly areas to experience cycling on different surfaces and to experience the hills and of course the weather.
- You should make the time to cycle on some consecutive long days: an isolated Sunday ride does not have the same effect as two consecutive days. Nothing will prepare you for the trip better than actually cycling.

You may not stick to the training guide exactly but you need to keep it in mind and to do regular exercise every week according to the guide. **You will enjoy this experience far more if you are physically fit**, indeed, without training you may not be able complete this challenge.

Training Tips

- 1 hour of **QUALITY** workout in the gym is worth 2 hours out on the road, but the interior gym experience does not prepare you to physically ride a bike through the air in the outdoors.
- It is important to warm up for at least 10 minutes before undertaking any exercise – see the attached basic stretch programme for guidance.
- A good idea is a circuit of machines giving aerobic workout e.g. rowing, cross-country skiing, stepper / climber, exercise bike.
- Try the attached exercise circuit sheet to help build specific muscle groups.
- Spinning classes are excellent, leg weight training is also recommended.
- Turbo trainers are very good, especially during the winter months as they enable you to train indoors on a "real" bike. It will keep you fit and get you used to the shape of your bike. Fluid turbo trainers are quieter if noise is a problem in your household.
- Make sure you plan adequate rest/recovery days as part of the training.

Note: Before using any gym equipment, please ensure that you are properly instructed by the staff at your gym / leisure centre.

20-week training guide for Beginners/Social Cyclists!

Week 1

2 x 15 – 20 mins
Sat or Sun: 1 hour

Week 2

Mon or Tues: 20 - 25 mins
Thurs or Fri: 20 - 25 mins
Sat or Sun: 1½ hrs

Week 3

2 x 25 – 30 mins
Sat or Sun: 1½ - 2 hrs

Week 4, 5, 6 & 7

3 x 30 – 40 mins (8-10 miles)
Sat or Sun: 2 hrs (25 - 30 miles)

Week 8

Tues: 10 – 15 miles
Thurs: 10 – 15 miles
Fri: 5 miles
Sat: 30 – 40 miles (2 - 2½ hrs)

Week 9 & 10

Mon or Tues: 10+ miles
Thurs or Fri: 10+ miles
Sat or Sun: 20 – 25 miles

Week 11

Mon: 8 – 10 miles
Tues: 10 – 15 miles
Thurs: 10 – 15 miles
Sun: 40 – 50 miles

Week 12, 13 & 14

Mon: 10 miles easy cycling
Tues: 15 – 20 miles
Thurs: 15 – 20 miles
Sun: 45 – 55 miles

Week 15

Mon: 10 miles easy cycling
Weds: 10 miles
Fri: 15 – 20 miles
Sun: 50 – 60 miles

Week 16 & 17

Tues: 20 – 25 miles
Thurs: 20 – 25 miles
Sun: 50 – 60 miles

Week 18

Mon: 10 miles easy spinning
Weds: 15 miles

Sat: 20 – 25 miles
Sun: 55 – 65 miles

Week 19

Tues: 15 miles
Thurs: 25 miles
Sat: 25 miles
Sun: 60 - 70 miles

Week 20

Tues: 25 miles
Weds: 15 miles
Thurs: 25 miles
Sat: 25 – 30 miles
Sun: 70 – 75 miles

THE WEEK BEFORE YOU GO!

Mon: 10 miles
Tues: 5 miles
Weds: 10 miles
Thurs: 5 miles
Fri: Rest

10-week training guide for Fit People/Cyclists

Week 1

2 x 20 – 25 mins
Sat or Sun: 1 ½ hours

Week 2

2 x 30 – 40 mins
Sat or Sun: 2 hours (25-35 miles)

Week 3

2 x 10 miles
Sun: 25 – 35 miles

Week 4

2 x 10 – 15 miles
Fri: 5 miles
Sat: 30 – 40 miles (2-2 ½ hours)

Week 5

Mon: 8 – 10 miles
Tues: 10-15 miles
Thurs: 10-15 miles
Sun: 40-50 miles

Week 6

Mon: 10 miles easy recovery
Tues: 15-20 miles
Thurs: 15-20 miles
Sun: 45-55 miles

Week 7

Tues: 20-25 miles
Thurs: 20-25 miles
Sun: 50-60 miles

Week 8

Mon: 10 miles easy recovery
Weds: 15 miles
Sat: 20-25 miles
Sun: 55-65 miles

Week 9

Tues: 15 miles
Thurs: 25 miles
Sat: 45 – 55 miles
Sun: 60 – 70 miles

THE WEEK BEFORE YOU GO!

Mon: 10 miles
Tues: 5 miles
Weds: 10 miles
Thurs: 5 miles
Fri: Rest

Basic Stretch Programme

1 – Calves:

Stand approximately 1 metre away from wall with legs straight and heels on floor. Step and lean forward and slowly push hips towards wall. Should feel a slow pull in the calf muscle behind. Hold for 10 secs, swap legs, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

2 – Hamstrings:

Stand with feet 1 metre apart. With legs straight and hands behind back slowly bend forward at the hips keeping back straight and head up. Should feel a slow pull in muscles at the back of legs. Hold for 10 secs, stand up and lean slightly backwards, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

3 – Quads:

Standing with feet together, bring left foot up and put left hand on lower shin by ankle and pull behind bottom. Keep back straight and head up. May need to balance with right hand on wall. Should feel slow pull down front of leg. Hold for 10 secs, swap legs, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

4 – Groin:

Stand with feet 1 metre apart and both feet pointing forward. Keeping back straight and head up slowly lunge down to right side feeling pull on inside of left leg. Hold for 10 secs, swap legs, repeat 3 times. Should feel pull but no pain.

5 – Hips:

Stand with feet shoulder width apart and hands on hips. Keeping head still rotate hips round clockwise 10 times and anti clockwise 10 times. Repeat three times.

6 – Torso:

Stand with feet shoulder width apart and hands on head. Keep feet pointing forward but twist body as far as is comfortable, hold for 1 second, face forward, twist body in other direction, hold for 1 second, face forward. Repeat 10 times.

7 – Shoulder:

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Start with hands by hips and keeping arms straight slowly swing arms round backwards 10 times, change direction swinging arms forwards 10 times. Repeat 3 times.

8 – Standing stretch:

Stand with feet together. Place hands together and reach as high as you can, hold for 10 secs, relax. Repeat 3 times.

N.B. You should only stretch warmed up muscles. Don't stretch too far, all you should feel is a slow pull, never any pain. Never bounce, always stretch slowly. People with old injuries or bad backs should be especially careful whilst exercising and stretching.

Exercise Circuit

The exercises are designed to strengthen specific muscle groups. It is important to just use your own body weight in the early weeks. In the latter weeks, small weights can be added to the ankles or putting on your rucksack can also help build strength. The idea of the circuit is to complete each exercise then move onto the next.

Once all exercises are completed, (i.e. one circuit), you then go round the circuit again 3, 4, or 5 times as shown in the programme. You can also increase the number of repetitions for each exercise from 20 to 30/40 or 50 depending on how strong you're feeling. It is essential you stretch before and after the session to keep the muscle loose and long, not tight and short.

1 – Calf Raises:

Stand with feet together, arm length away from wall. Have fingers just touching wall for balance. Raise yourself slowly onto tip toes and then slowly lower. Repeat 20 times.

2 – Squats:

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Hands on hips. Keep back straight and head up whilst you slowly lower yourself so knees are bent 90 degrees. Then stand up so knees are locked straight. Repeat 20 times.

3 – Step ups:

Using bottom step of staircase or low bench, start with left foot on step and right foot on floor. Stand up straight on left leg bringing right foot up to next step above and then lower back down to floor. Repeat 20 times. Change leg and repeat.

4 – Leg extensions:

Sit on high sofa/bed/bench with backs of knees just on the edge and feet hanging down. Lean back with hands behind you for support. Keeping back of knee on seat, slowly lift left foot up so leg becomes straight and lower down again. Repeat 20 times. Change leg and repeat.

5 – Leg Raises:

Lie front down on mat or soft floor with hands under chin. Keeping left leg straight slowly raise six inches off the floor and then slowly lower. Repeat 20 times. Change leg and repeat.