British Heart Foundation

Sofa to Saddle

Beginners guide

Contents

Top tips

1. Remember how incredible you are

It's amazing people like you who help power lifesaving research. Every mile you ride and every pound you raise makes a difference.

2. Have a routine

Life is busy, so make sure your training fits around your family, friends and social life. Each week, plan when you're going to get your training sessions in and do your best to stick to it. If you miss a session, simply try to fit it in later in the week.

3. Use the training plan

Your training plan has been created by experts to make sure you get the most out of each session and enjoy taking on the ride! Why not print out your training calendar (pages 19-20), stick it on your fridge and cross off each session you complete?

4. Check out some apps

Grab your smartphone and head to the app store to find a world of helpful training tools, from weather forecasts to cycle maps. We recommend using Strava to track your activity and Map My Ride for sharing your route with others.

5. Mix it up

Cycling is our main passion, but including different types of exercise in your training will help with your strength and recovery. Add in some conditioning work and ease off with some stretching, using the exercises at the back of this guide.

Top tips

6. Remember why you're doing it!

Cycling any distance is an incredible challenge, so when your training gets tough remember why you're doing it. Whether it's for yourself, a loved one, or to help power lifesaving research, reminding yourself of your why will help you to tick off those miles.

7. Eat well

Good nutrition can make a huge difference to your training and will give your body what it needs. You can find more info about nutrition on page 24.

8. Plan your route

Use your morning coffee time or lunch break to plot out your routes – it will save you time when you're ready to ride. Make sure to charge your phone, take a bank card, pack snacks and water and let someone know where you're going.

9. Keep it social

Get your friends and family involved. Take them out with you on your easy rides and make a day out of it. We also recommend joining our Facebook group, to chat to your fellow riders about your training and share tips.

10. Listen to your body

If you're sore you might be about to get injured so rest, stretch more, get a massage or go for an easy walk or swim instead of a cycle. Make sure that you're getting as much sleep as possible – seven to eight hours is ideal.

The right kit for the job

Having some good quality, essential bike kit will make your bike rides safer and more enjoyable. There are a few essentials but, if you buy quality, it will work and it will last.

Cycling helmet

This is the most important part of your kit because it could save your life, so take it seriously. It should be of good quality, fit your head well, and have correctly positioned chin straps. A helmet should feel snug without creating pressure points and should not wobble when you shake your head.

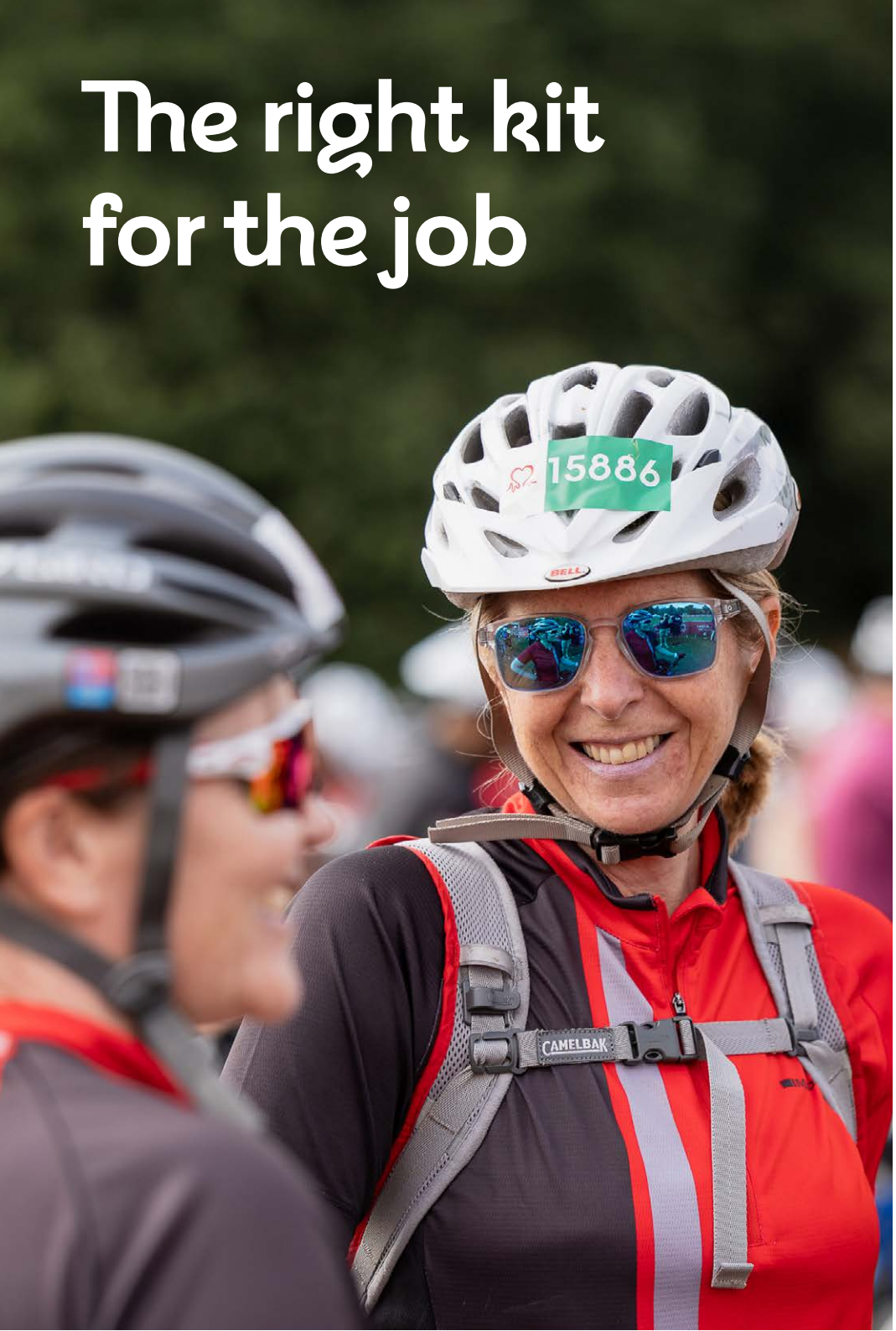
Cycling shorts

The second most important piece of kit is for your comfort. A padded seat built into cycling shorts will make your ride much more comfortable. They may not look very flattering, but they really do the job. They should have good stretch waist and panels for freedom of movement, longer legs, and leg grippers – to prevent chaffing and keep the shorts in place. A lightweight wicking fabric will allow your body to breathe and wick away moisture.

Cycling base layer and jersey

Layering your clothing can keep your core body temperature consistent as you ride. Being too warm can be just as bad as being too cold. Having both layers made of a technical fabric will help keep you dry by 'wicking' away the sweat from your body. A cycling jersey will have several handy pockets at the back to carry all your essentials, including snacks, gels, mobile phone etc. It's also valuable to have a top for riding in cooler weather with long sleeves for more warmth, which is made of a denser, heavier fabric with a good lining to add insulation.

The right kit for the job



Cycling jacket

A quality cycling jacket will keep you both warm and dry. It will also protect you against the wind and offer some insulation, mostly in the front and arms. Look for a waterproof/breathable or water-resistant fabric. Some cycling jackets can be converted into a gilet by zipping off the sleeves, so they are suitable for year-round use.

Cycling gloves

Gloves are a must to protect your hands from rubbing and blisters, but they will also save you several layers of skin if you come off your bike. For colder rides, consider wearing full finger gloves, as they will keep your hands warmer and in summer, gloves with short-cut fingers are the popular choice.

Cycling shoes and socks

When you start cycling you can wear trainers with a stiffer sole and fit toe cages to your pedals for a more secure connection. Ultimately, a cycling shoe with a stiffer sole will enable you to transfer more power with each pedal stroke and be more effective. Fit-wise, you want them to be snug around your heel, so that they don't slip – the middle of your foot should be held snug in place, but not be too tight. This allows you to connect your shoes into the cleats, if you opt to have cleats on your pedals, and improves your pedaling efficiency, power transfer and control. If you have cleats then try your shoes on with the cleats you want to use on your own bike or a static indoor trainer at a specialist cycling shop.

Also remember your socks. A good sock will wick moisture away from your feet, keeping them cool and reducing the amount of rubbing that can occur. It will also keep your feet dry and warm in winter and also allow them to breath in summer. When you find a pair that works for you, buy several pairs so you always have a few pairs to use.

Bike set-up for safe and enjoyable cycling

How to pick the right bike

When you're getting into cycling as a beginner, and to get the most enjoyment out of your cycling, it's important to have a good and reliable bike that is well maintained and comfortable.

If you are buying your first bike or upgrading your current one, then you should start by considering the type of riding you're looking to do and consider these categories:

Road bike

Usually lightweight with drop-style handlebars, narrower, smooth tyres, which makes them efficient on paved surfaces

Mountain bike

Generally a heavier bike frame with flat handlebars, wider, more rugged tyres, which makes them more stable but slower on the road, but can cope well on trails

Hybrid bike

A good all-rounder with a blend of the hybrid and mountain bikes, versatile for road and light trails

Making sure your bike fits

Getting a ‘bike fit’ by an expert is well worthwhile to ensure you get the most out of your cycling. The bike’s components are adjusted to your body to not only help enhance the comfort, but also importantly help prevent pain and injuries, as well as increase your efficiency on the bike.

If you skip this step, you increase your chances of developing problems when you start cycling, the most common of which are lower back ache, saddle discomfort and neck pain. Contact a specialist bike shop if you decide to look for a professional bike fit.

Saddle height and angle

When pedalling, your knee should have a slight bend at the bottom of the stroke. Start with the saddle level to the ground and make small adjustments as needed for comfort

Frame size

When standing over the bike, there should be about 1-2 inches of clearance from the top tube of your bike frame to the top of your inner leg when straddling the bike with both feet flat on the ground. However, for more accurate bike sizing, there are many measurement charts online. There are also many custom bike fit services if you decide to have this done professionally

Cleat position

For clipless pedals, the ball of your foot should be directly over the pedal axle. You can make small adjustments to the cleat position for personalised comfort

Handlebar reach and height

When seated, your hands should just reach the centre of the handlebars with a slight bend in your elbow, not a locked position. Adjust the handlebar height for comfort, depending on how upright you sit. If your neck or shoulders hurt, the bars may be too low. Your handlebars should be approximately the same as your shoulder width

Checking your bike

If you're digging your old bike out of the garage or shed for the first time in a while, then it's important to check your bike is in good condition. Perhaps it's due for a health check!

Apply both brakes firmly

Your bicycle brakes are working correctly if the levers feel firm and stop before touching the handlebars, and the brakes effectively stop the wheels. To check, squeeze the brake lever while pushing the bike forward: the wheel should lock up.

Check that the brake blocks line up

Check that the brake blocks line up correctly with the rim, not the tyre – are they excessively worn? If in any doubt, replace them.

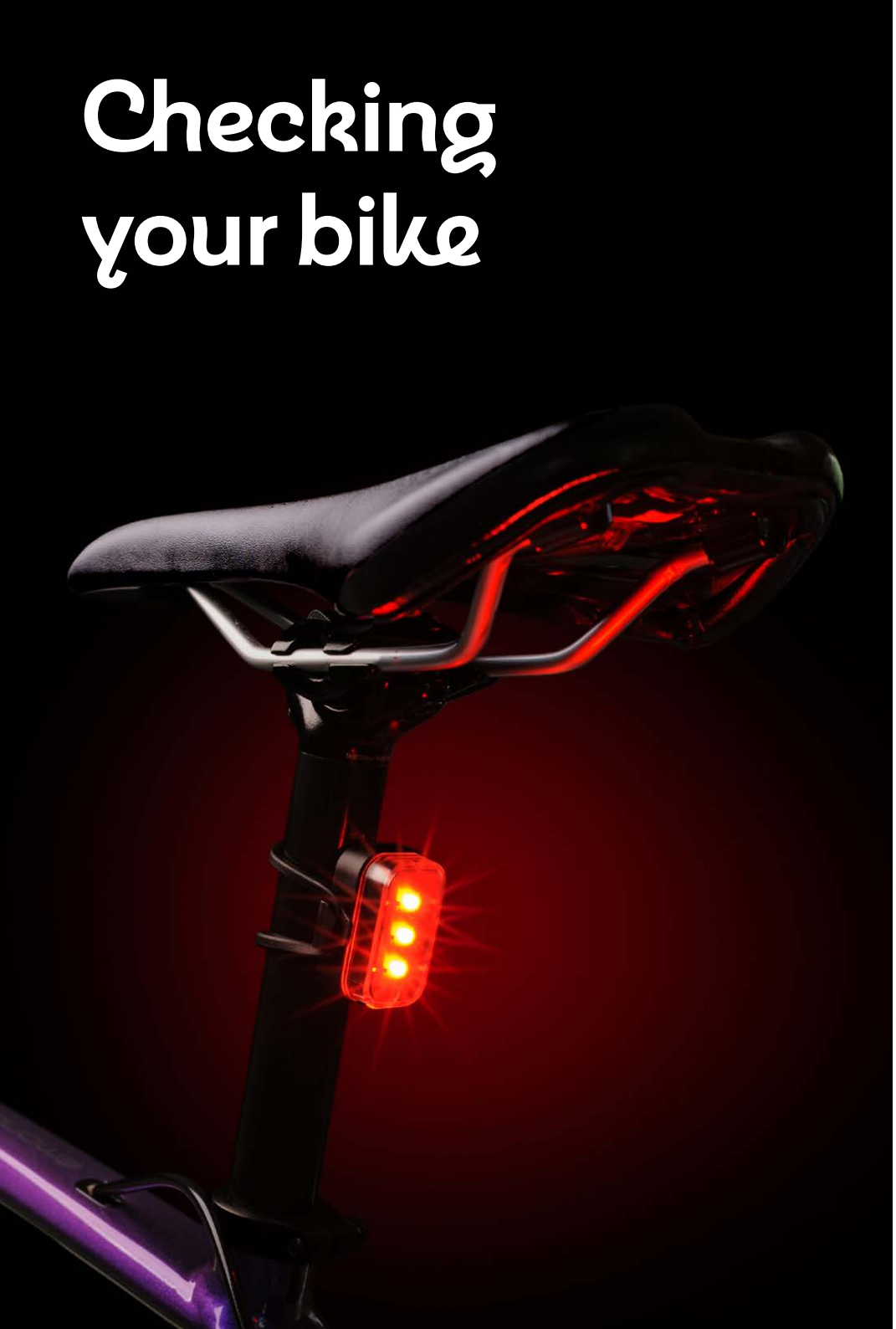
Make sure your brake cables are tightly secured at the brakes and are not frayed

Make sure your brake cables are tightly secured at the brakes and are not frayed. Again, if in doubt, take them to an experienced bike mechanic. While you're applying the brakes, rock the bike back and forth. If you feel movement or looseness, then your brakes or headset are loose.

Check that your handlebars are secure

Check that your handlebars are secure in the stem and that the stem is secure in the front forks. Try to rotate the bars forward, backward and side-to-side. If there's any movement, tighten the bolts securing the handlebars or stem, but don't overtighten the bolts!

Checking your bike



Check that both wheels are firmly attached to the frame

Check that both wheels are firmly attached to the frame by rocking them from side to side. Looseness or movement in the wheels can mean one of two things; either the wheel is loose or there is wear in the bearing. The former is more serious, but both will require attention. Make sure that the wheel nuts or quick-release is securely fastened. If the movement persists, take it to a bike mechanic so they can adjust your wheel bearings.

Check the gear change

On smooth, flat ground at a safe traffic free location, check that you can easily change from one gear to another and that the chain doesn't skip off the cogs. If the chain slips, get your bike to a mechanic to be checked over.

Be seen

If you're going out at night or in poor visibility, make sure that your lights are correctly attached and working properly.

If you're unsure about any aspect of your bike, then the best thing is to always take it to an experienced bike mechanic for a service. Alternatively attend a bike maintenance course that will teach you invaluable skills so you can look after your bike.

Feeling confident riding your bike

Having a reliable well well-maintained bike that fits you correctly is going to help you be more efficient and feel more confident. Spending time on your bike and feeling comfortable changing gear and steering will build your experience and competence.

Start by using a gym bike as part of your training. You can try different bike set-ups to find what feels comfortable and efficient for you. Using the resistance settings on the gym bike can simulate cycling on the flat, cycling at speed and cycling hill climbs of varying length and gradient to mimic both the cardiovascular effort and the muscular demands needed.

Check your gym bike set-up

To use a gym bike effectively in your training, adjust the seat height so your knee is slightly bent at the bottom of the pedal stroke and adjust the handlebar height so that you feel comfortable both in the level of your hands and also the reach of your arms.

Use different intensities of training

It's important to incorporate different intensity levels by varying the resistance and cadence (pedalling speed) in your workouts, including shorter intervals of high intensity, hill climbs and longer, low-intensity sessions. This will all help to improve the different fitness areas for the challenge.

Using your gears correctly

When you start using your bike outdoors, you need to start thinking about the gears on your bike. Bike gearing refers to the system on your bike that allows you to change gears to make pedalling harder or easier, and this is particularly important when tackling any undulations or hills.

There are generally three parts to the traditional gear system:

Chainrings are the front rings on the bike – the more teeth a chainring has, the harder it is to pedal.

Cogs are the rear sprockets or cogs on the bike – the more teeth a cog has, the easier it is to pedal.

Derailleurs are mechanisms that move the chain between the chainrings and cogs.

Using your gears correctly

It's important when climbing hills to have the 'right' gear selection. This is essentially a combination of a small front chainring and a large rear cassette cog. Having the 'climbers gearing' will reduce the strain on your legs when pedalling uphill, and in turn, this will lessen your leg fatigue. Less strain means you're not 'fighting' the pedals and this allows more control and balance. It also means less strain through your body and more controlled breathing.

Using your gear shifters (the levers under the handlebar) you can move the chain onto different chainrings at the front and gears (cogs) at the rear – keep in mind:

Lower gears are when you can turn the pedals easily. It helps you start from a stop more easily or climb a steep hill.

Higher gears are when it feels harder to turn the pedals. It helps you increase your speed.

Typically you can choose between two chainring options:

Compact has two chainrings on the front, with one being a large ring for faster riding and a smaller chainring for climbing. This set-up is popular for riding hilly routes, but still allows you to ride reasonably fast on the flatter parts of a route.

Triple has three chainrings on the front. This is popular with beginners because it provides a wider range of gear options, compared to the Compact, and because of the option of lower gears, it makes for easier climbing when tackling hilly routes.

However when you're climbing a hill, you have to remember to adjust your gears correctly – this helps to maintain a good pedalling cadence with minimal strain on your chain.

You need to remember to change into the easier gear before you need to, as this helps avoid the grinding of the gears or the chain coming off, so selecting the small chainring on the front and the largest sprocket on the rear in good time.

Challenges to expect when riding alone

When you're riding on your own, you have more flexibility on your ride and you can relax more than when you're in a group. However, you still have to consider the following:

Ride sensibly

Obey all traffic laws, use clear hand signals, and stay vigilant. **Do not assume motorists can see you.**

Stay alert

Be very aware of the condition of the road surface and surroundings so you can avoid any pedestrians, potholes or road furniture. Avoid wearing headphones so you can hear traffic and other sounds.

Carry a charged phone

A fully charged phone is crucial for navigation and emergencies if needed.

Stay fuelled and hydrated

Bring enough water and snacks, especially for longer rides. Make a habit of eating and drinking regularly to avoid running out of energy.

Have identification

In case of an emergency, carry a card or similar with your name, emergency contacts, and any important medical information.

Challenges to expect when riding in a group

When cycling in a group it's important to understand and follow the etiquette and safe practice so everyone can enjoy a positive experience.

Communication

Effective communication is paramount in group cycling. Use verbal calls and hand signals to alert other riders to changes in direction, and any road hazards.

Ride smoothly and predictably

Maintain a consistent line and avoid sudden swerving or braking. This allows other riders to anticipate your movements and react safely.

Be aware and prepared

Make sure you scan the road for obstacles. If you see a pothole, point it out before you go around it so the rider behind you knows what you are about to do and can avoid the hole too. Carry essential items like spare tubes, a pump, food and water.

Respect the group ability

Adjust your speed to match the group's pace, especially when everyone is expected to stay together.

Follow the Highway Code

Group rides take place on public roads, and cyclists must adhere to traffic laws, including stopping at stop signs and red lights.

Your training plan and how it works

Our main aim is to develop your cycle fitness so that you can ride at an easy/steady effort for 20.5 miles. This will form the base and experience for any future cycling that you choose to do.

Your plan is written in terms of effort levels rather than instructing a particular pre-determined pace. If we were to ask you to ride at a particular pace in your training sessions, the chances are that you will cycle too hard, especially when you take into consideration other external influences, e.g., the weather might be terrible with a strong wind, you might be cycling over a hilly or undulating route, you might not have slept well the night before or be feeling stressed through work, or you may not be properly hydrated or have eaten properly.

Therefore, by cycling to a perceived effort level (and within the correct heart rate zone if you're using a heart rate monitor), then you will always be working at the right effort level.

Training is like building a wall, one brick at a time. If you complete the training sessions at the correct effort level, you'll gradually build more and more of your wall until you have the complete wall ready to tackle 20.5 miles.

Your training plan

It might seem like we're stating the obvious, but to improve as a cyclist, you do need to ride often! The amount you can do generally depends on a number of things; your age, your training age (how many years you've been cycling), your job/family commitments and your current fitness level. All these things will play a part in how much cycling and training you can do.

Measuring your effort

It's important that you cycle at the right effort level and intensity to ensure you're training to reach your full potential. Lots of riders think that cycling "harder is better" so they end up cycling too quickly too often. This can result in overtraining, feeling tired, picking up an illness or getting injured. Understanding what each ride is trying to achieve and how it should feel is the way to train smart. Our guide to the training sessions that you'll find in your training plan should help you to understand how each session should feel and how it should be executed.

Understanding key sessions in your training plan

To train effectively, it's important that you train smart, and this means understanding your training sessions. Below is some key information. about the training sessions that you'll see throughout the guide. It'll explain to you what each session means and what you need to do.

Easy ride (zone 1)

The pace for these is not important. You should be breathing easily and be able to hold a conversation at the same time. Your effort level should be at around 6 to 6.5 out of 10, this allows your body to adapt to the training and improve too.

The long ride (zones 1 to 2)

The long ride will be an important element of your training. At first, your aim should simply be to concentrate on increasing the time you spend cycling rather than worrying about the pace or distance.

The key is to work at a conversational pace, aiming for an effort level of 6.5 to 7 out of 10. These rides improve your muscular endurance, cycling efficiency and your ability to burn fat as a primary fuel source.

Steady effort rides (zone 3)

These rides should be at a pace where you're starting to experience some discomfort and there is a pause midsentence if you're trying to speak. Aim for an effort level of 7 to 8 out of 10.

Hills

Becoming more proficient at riding hills is going to help build good leg strength. Try to find a hill that is approx. 5% gradient. This makes the hill 'rideable and not a grind' but it also makes your hill work as safe as possible too. It's helpful if you can vary the hills that you ride, so that some are long steady climbs and some are shorter and sharper climbs. Aside from helping to improve your strength endurance, power and pedal speed, hill sessions will also help you build descending confidence and technique. So, learn to love those hills!

Cross-training

Cross training refers to the action of training in activities that is not the main one that you're training for, so this could be working on the cross trainer, rower or spending time in the pool.

The goal of cross training is to improve your overall body condition. If you're able to spread the cumulative level of stress over your muscles and joints, you will be able to exercise more frequently and for longer durations cumulatively during each week.

Strength and conditioning

Cycling requires whole body conditioning. The strength work that you do doesn't have to take a lot of time, but the principle here is that you start to condition your body so that it can handle all the miles that you'll be cycling during training and on event day.

Each week you should aim to do one to two sessions of cross training or strength and conditioning work, ideally up to 60 minutes, however if you only have time for 20 minutes, that will still help you get stronger.

Our muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments are all moving as we ride so it's important to choose dynamic exercises (ones that move) rather than static ones. We need to train our muscles to be stronger for longer during movement.

Be patient and build your training slowly

It takes time to achieve good body condition and improve your physiological performance. The training load must increase gradually, and remember there will have to be easier weeks to allow your body to recover and grow stronger. So be patient as you build your training load and give your body time to adapt and progress.

Listen to your body

It's easy to say don't overtrain, but we sometimes don't listen to our body even when it's screaming at us. So, if you're having trouble sleeping, your resting heart rate is slightly raised, you're feeling tired and irritable and your legs feel heavy, then you're overtraining and you need some good rest and recovery.

It takes time to achieve good body condition and improve your physiological performance. The training load has to increase gradually and remember there will have to be easier weeks to allow your body to recover and grow stronger.

Training Plan

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1	**30 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute long ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐
Week 2	**30-45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**60 minute long ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐
Week 3	**45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy/steady ride** Rolling course. Stay seated on the hills. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**75 minute long ride** Rolling course. Stay seated on the hills. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 30 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 4	Rest ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute long ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐
Week 5	**45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course. and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy/steady ride** Rolling course. Stay seated on the hills. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**90 minute long ride** Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 30 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 6	**45-60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**30-45 minute steady ride** Include a few short accelerations throughout the ride. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy/steady ride** Rolling course. Stay seated on the hills. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**90 minute long ride** Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 30 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 7	**60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**45 minute steady ride** Include a few short accelerations throughout the ride. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**90 minute long ride** Rolling course. Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 30 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 8	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course. and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course. and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**60 minute easy ride** Flat course. and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐

Training Plan

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 9	**60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**45 minute steady ride** Include a few short accelerations throughout the ride. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**2 hour long ride** Rolling course. Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 10	**60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest. ☐	**45 minute steady ride** Include a few short accelerations throughout the ride. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**2 hour long ride** Rolling course. Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 11	Rest ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**60 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**60 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐
Week 12	**60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**60 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐	**45 minute steady ride** Include a few short accelerations throughout the ride. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**2 hour 30 minute long ride** Rolling course. Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest or 45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 13	**60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**60 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐	**45 minute steady ride** Include a few short accelerations throughout the ride. Stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**2 hour 30 minute long ride** Rolling course. Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride. ☐	Rest or 45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 14	**60 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐	**60 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**2 hour long ride** Rolling course. Include some brief sessions in high effort zones. Stretch after ride. ☐	Rest or 45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort ☐
Week 15	**45 minute mixed cross training at a steady effort** ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐	**45 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**1 hour 30 minute long ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐
Week 16	Rest ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest and stretch ☐	**30 minute easy ride** Flat course and stretch after ride ☐	Rest ☐	**30 minute easy ride and pre-ride check** Make sure your bike is working smoothly, check tyres, brakes and gears ☐	**London to Brighton Bike Ride. Good Luck!**

Conditioning

Cycling requires whole body conditioning. The strength work that you do doesn't have to take a lot of time, but the principle here is that you start to condition your body so that it can handle all the miles that you will be cycling during training and on race day. Ideally, we suggest that you aim to do one or two Strength and Conditioning sessions for 45-60 minutes each week, but if you only have time for 20 minutes, that will still help you get stronger.

Split squats

Start with your feet hip-width apart. Place your right foot forward and the left foot behind your body on a bench that's about knee height. Keep your back straight and lower your left knee toward the floor. Press down and return to the starting position. Aim for three to four sets of six to eight repetitions on each leg. Rest for 45 seconds after each set.

Calf raises

Stand on the edge of a step with your heels over the edge, or just on the floor. Lift your heels until you're standing on your toes, hold for two seconds, then lower. Aim for ten repetitions.

Press ups

Start in a high plank. Slowly lower your chest towards the floor whilst ensuring your abs are tight and your spine is in a neutral position. Slowly push back up to the start position. Lower to your knees for an easier exercise. Aim for three to four sets of eight to ten repetitions. Rest for 45 seconds after each set.

Conditioning

Adding conditioning into your training will help to build up your overall fitness and strength. It'll also help to prevent you getting injured. Each week complete the exercises below. Do each exercise for the set number of reps and then continue to the next. Have a rest and then repeat if you feel able to.

Russian twists

Sit down on the floor. Lean back, forming a right angle from your torso relative to your thigh. Lift your heels and raise your arms out in front of you. Rotate your torso from one side to the other, pausing for a beat in the middle position between each rep. Only work within your range of motion; once your hips and knees begin to shift, you've gone too far. Aim for ten repetitions on each side.

Plank

Lying on your front, place your hands underneath your shoulders and push up, making sure you keep your chest over your elbows. Keep a straight line from your neck, down through your legs to your ankles by engaging all your core. Hold this for 30 seconds to one minute and build it up gradually.

Side leg raise

Start lying directly on your side. With your bottom knee bent and your top leg straight, raise your ankle up towards the sky. Make sure your leg is extended behind your bottom and not in front of you. Slowly raise your leg to the top and then return to the start position. Aim for ten repetitions on each side.

Stretching

Stretching after a workout will help with muscle recovery and prevent you getting injured. We recommend completing the below stretching routine after each of your rides, holding each stretch for 15-20 seconds and repeating each exercise on both legs.

Hamstring stretch

Lay down on your back and bend your knees. Bring one leg up and place your hand behind your knee. Pull your leg in towards your chest and straighten your knee until you can feel the stretch.

Hip flexor stretch

Kneel on your right knee and place your left leg at a 90 degree angle in front of you. Place your hands on your left knee and gently lean forward, you should feel the stretch in your left hip flexor.

Glutes

Lying on your back, flex both knees and hips to 90 degrees. Take one ankle across to place it on the other knee, as shown above. Take your hands through to hug the back of the bottom leg and draw it in towards your chest.

Calf stretch

Place your hands on a wall and adopt a split stance (an upright lunge position). Lean your body towards the wall and you should feel the stretch down the calve of your back leg.

Quadriceps stretch

Stand with your feet together. Bring your right foot up behind you, hold your ankle with your right hand and draw your foot towards your bottom. For stability hold on to a steady surface or do this stretch laying down.

Nutrition

Nailing your nutrition is key to making the most of your training and enjoying the London to Brighton Bike Ride! Getting the basics right will mean that you have the energy you need to train and recover well. Here's our top tips for how to get your nutrition right.

Eat enough protein

Try to add protein into every meal if possible – this can be lean cuts of meat, fish, low fat dairy, beans, pulses and lentils. Extra protein is also useful after long training sessions (more than 90 minutes). It helps speed up muscle repair and leads to faster recovery.

Carbohydrates

Like protein, you should try to include carbohydrates in every meal, especially in the run up to your challenge – this will keep your muscle energy levels topped up.

Hydration

To make sure you're well hydrated, aim to have six to eight glasses of fluid a day whether you are training or not. This should be mostly water, low-fat milk, soy milk, no added sugar squash, or herbal teas. If you've been keeping hydrated in the weeks leading up to your challenge, there's no need to drink lots the night before or in the hours leading up to your event.

Listen to your body

If you're feeling tired, with little to no energy or motivation, then take a step back from your training and review your nutrition. You could be over trained and under recovered. Take a couple more rest days or shorten your training sessions, for example you could do half the distance or half the reps. It's ok to need to take a break, whether it's for a few days or a week.

Get enough sleep

It's also really important to get seven to eight hours of good sleep every night to allow your body to rest and recover. Get into a good bedtime routine, where you go to bed and wake up roughly at the same time every day. Reducing the amount of caffeine and alcohol you drink can help you to sleep better, as well as putting down your screens at least an hour before bed.

British Heart Foundation

Thanks so much again for choosing to take on this incredible challenge for us! Far too many of us have felt the pain of losing someone we love to cardiovascular disease, the world's biggest killer. With your support, British Heart Foundation (BHF) powers groundbreaking research to save and improve lives.

If you've got any questions at all, then please check out the FAQs on our website. If there's anything else we can help you with, give us a call on 0300 330 3322 or drop us an email to heretohelp@bhf.org.uk.

Best of luck with your training – we know you're going to smash it!

Live Chat on our website
WhatsApp us: 07581 016 513
Email: heretohelp@bhf.org.uk
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