

WINTER TRAINING



**BRITISH
CYCLING**

WELCOME

Welcome to the British Cycling Winter Training e-Mag where you'll find loads of advice, links and tips that'll get you through the winter months and through to spring in the best cycling shape possible.

You'll find information on all aspects of winter cycling including how to plan and get the most out of your training, fuelling your rides, staying healthy, clothing and kit and maintenance.

Winter was always a time that many cyclists used to dread; being sentenced to seemingly endless miles in often atrocious conditions or staring at a wall on your turbo while time stood still. However, with a more enlightened approach to coaching and conditioning, massively improved foul weather clothing and platforms such as Zwift making indoor training infinitely more interesting and enjoyable, getting your winter training in no longer has to be an exercise in suffering.

Winter doesn't just have to be about training either. I might be slightly biased but, if you haven't tried cyclo-cross, put it on the top of your winter must-do list. It's incredibly friendly, great fun and a guaranteed way to improve your fitness and bike handling skills. If I can't persuade you to go and have fun in the mud and snow, how about giving the track a go?

Having a successful winter on the bike really comes down to consistency and, unless you enjoy your riding and it fits in with your life, you're not going to achieve that. A really common mistake a lot of riders make is to set an unrealistic plan in the autumn, burn out before Christmas and end up frustrated, demotivated, maybe ill and only training sporadically. Find a training plan that suits your ability, life and goals, and be honest with yourself about your desire to ride whatever the weather; there's no shame in hitting the gym or riding on your turbo, and take steps to stay healthy.

Finally, my number one winter tip is to find some friends or club-mates to ride with. It's always easier to overcome the inertia of the duvet on a cold morning when you know you've arranged to meet up – and those miles are definitely more enjoyable with others.

Evie Richards



TRAINING ON THE BIKE

The often quoted saying is “winter miles mean summer smiles”. Although consistent training through the winter is important for a successful season, to achieve this, stay motivated, keep healthy and make maximal gains it’s more about training smart rather than just churning out the miles.

Not just long and steady

Strict long and steady winter base training can be effective for professional riders, who can log 30-hour plus weeks. The sheer volume provides the training schedule and gives them the deep base of endurance fitness they require for the heavy racing load they have to contend with in-season. However, even for pros, the concept of just doing steady work over the winter has largely fallen out of favour.

For non-pros who are having to juggle work, family and other commitments and can only probably manage 5-15 hours weekly on the bike, sticking purely to low intensity is not an efficient use of your precious training time. With this relatively low volume of training, just riding steady is not going to generate the training load to stimulate physiological change and a rise in fitness.

Although trying to get out at the weekend for a longer and steadier endurance-focussed ride is important, don’t be afraid of throwing in some higher intensity efforts during those rides. Similarly, for shorter mid-week rides, ramp up the intensity. This is the structure we use for the majority of our training plans.



Find the plan for you

One of the key steps to having a successful and productive winter on the bike, is following a structured training plan. Our new 2019/20 training plans on TrainingPeaks offer a number of winter training options.

British Cycling 12-week ‘Real Life’ Winter Training Plan

The British Cycling 12-week ‘Real Life’ Winter Training Plan is a departure away from the traditional, outdated and, for most riders, ineffective winter fare of trying to grind out slow miles under the misconception of ‘base training’. This plan is time effective, takes potential poor weather into consideration but will still lay the perfect foundations for a successful season.

British Cycling 12-week Sportive/ Gran Fondo Plan

The British Cycling 12-week Sportive/Gran Fondo Plan is designed to progressively build your cycling fitness with an end goal of a 80-120km (50-75 miles) sportive or Gran Fondo.

British Cycling 12-week Century Ride and Advanced Sportive Plan

The British Cycling 12-week Century Ride and Advanced Sportive Plan is designed to progressively build your cycling fitness with an end goal of a Century Ride or a strong performance in a challenging sportive or Gran Fondo.

Top winter tip:

Look back at last winter and see what training you consistently managed through the winter. Use this as a guide when planning your training and, although you can schedule in a bit more, don’t be unrealistic or overly ambitious as, if you end up missing sessions, this can be really demotivating.

INDOOR TRAINING

Using an indoor trainer isn't a soft option for riders who don't like the cold, wet and dark. It's way of getting unbeatable, time effective, controlled and focussed workouts. Without the distraction of other road users, having to pause for junctions and varying gradients, you can do exactly the intensity you're targeting for precisely the right duration. We're not suggesting that you do all of your winter riding indoors; try to get out for your longer rides if the conditions allow, but, for those quality midweek sessions, an indoor trainer is hard to beat.

Go virtual

Riding the virtual worlds of Zwift can transform your indoor training experience. Whether you just explore, join group rides, do structured workouts or race, it'll elevate your indoor training to the next level. Zwift is British Cycling's Official Training Community. [Claim your free exclusive kit and 7-day trial.](#)

Get smart

With a smart trainer, your trainer will automatically change its resistance based on the workout you're doing or, if you're on Zwift, to the virtual terrain. All of the workouts on our TrainingPeaks training plans are fully smart trainer compatible.

Top 10 Indoor training tips

You can find out everything you need to know about indoor training by downloading our free [Ultimate Guide to Indoor Training e-Book](#) but here are our Top 10 tips.

Stay hydrated

You're going to sweat a lot so it's important you're well hydrated before the session; keep sipping on an electrolyte drink during it and drink well afterwards. In a hard hour session on an indoor trainer don't be surprised if you easily get through 750ml - 1 litre of fluid.

Roll with it

Turbos and indoor bikes are great for the bulk of your indoor training but will do nothing for your bike handling or balance. Learning to ride rollers over the winter and using them for recovery spins and leg-speed is a really good idea if your time out on the roads is likely to be limited.

Keep cool

Overheating can limit how hard you can push yourself on an indoor trainer, so try to locate your trainer somewhere cool and well ventilated. Invest in at least one decent fan as they make a huge difference.



Be ready to go

The ideal is to have your indoor trainer permanently set-up and ready to go. Whether before or after work, if you have to go through the faff of setting it up before your session, the duvet or the sofa can often prove too alluring.

Don't get sore

You move less in and out of the saddle on an indoor trainer and sweat more, making you more prone to saddle soreness. Make sure you wear decent shorts and liberally apply chamois cream before your session.

Look after your bike

Follow the instructions carefully when mounting your bike on a trainer, use a specific skewer if required and check it's tight before each session. Sweat is very corrosive so protect your bike with a sweat thong and give it a good wipe down after your session.

Pick your sessions

Indoor trainers suit relatively short and intense sessions best. Sometimes injury, the weather or limited time might force you to do an endurance ride indoors and that's where virtual platforms such as Zwift can really help.

Test

If you're training using heart rate or power zones, it's not unusual to see a difference between how those zones feel indoors relative to riding outside. There are a number of psychological and physiological reasons for this so it's worth testing for your indoor FTP/FTHR, setting zones to it and not trying to hit your outdoor values.

[British Cycling 8-week Indoor Time Efficient Training Plan on TrainingPeaks](#)

The plan is designed for intermediate and advanced riders who, due to work, family, the weather or other reasons, are time poor and are limited to indoor training. There is a real emphasis on workout quality and recovery.

Top winter tip:

Your TrainingPeaks session will automatically synch into your Zwift structured workouts on the day it's scheduled in.



OFF THE BIKE TRAINING

The winter can be an ideal time to put in some focussed off the bike training and, in all of our TrainingPeaks Training Plans, cross-training sessions are scheduled to allow for this. [The 12-week "Real Life" Winter Training Plan](#) especially puts a real emphasis on off the bike conditioning.

Why is the winter a good time to do it?

For a start, a warm and dry gym can be quite appealing during the winter! However, unless you're a cyclo-cross or track rider who is racing during the winter, the main reason is that the commonly experienced short term drop in cycling performance that the novel and additional load of strength work can cause will have little impact during the winter when peak performance isn't really an issue.

Why should I do off the bike training?

Off the bike conditioning work has been shown to make you faster on the bike but it will also deliver a host of other benefits. It will slow and even reverse the loss of muscle mass associated with ageing, improving strength, health and facilitating weight control. It will improve bone health, specifically bone density, which is an issue even for Grand Tour riders. Finally, by being more robust and resilient, you will be less likely to injure yourself lifting the kids out of the car, carrying shopping or working in the garden. Less time laid up with an injury means more time out on your bike.

What should I do?

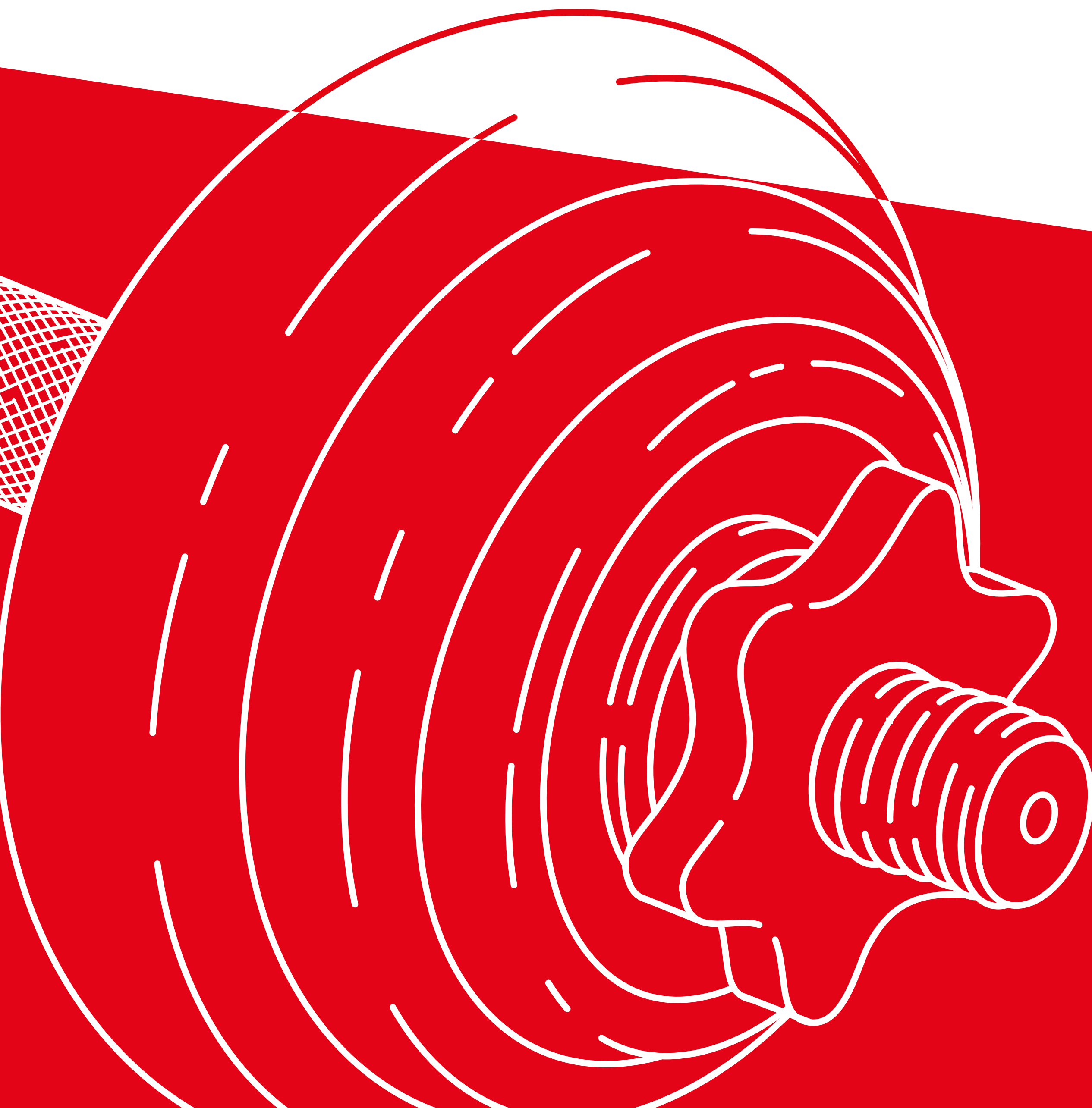
Every rider is an individual, with their own specific strengths and limitations, so you should be wary of generic strength routines. Many cyclists, despite having strong legs, are relatively weak in the trunk and have poor flexibility. This means that an exercise such as a barbell back squat, which is often thought of as being a good movement for a cyclist, might not be suitable. Unless you already have strength training experience, it'd be a good idea to consult with a fitness professional for advice on a routine specific to your needs and some technique instruction.

Off the bike training doesn't have to mean lifting weights in the gym though. Yoga, Pilates or at [home mobility work](#) can all be beneficial for cyclists.

How often should I do off the bike training?

For strength training through the winter the ideal would be to do 2-3 sessions a week with 48 hours of recovery between workouts. As you move into the season, you can drop this down to two sessions or even just one for maintenance.

For more restorative off the bike training, such as Yoga, Pilates or mobility work, there's no reason why you can't do a little every day.



Will there be any negative effects on my cycling?

As previously mentioned, strength work can leave your legs feeling a bit heavy, sore and can have a small short-term detrimental effect on your cycling performance. However, this is far outweighed by the long-term gains you'll have from a solid winter strength block. Your cycling can also have a limiting impact on the strength gains from gym work but there are some steps you can take to minimise the interference that the two types of training have on each other.

Try to allow at least eight hours between strength and cycling workouts. If doing a split day, doing both in one day, this should still be possible without too early a start or late a finish. On split days, try to do your strength work in the morning and cycling in the evening. Prioritise protein after your strength session consuming 20-40g as quickly as possible.

Some cyclists worry about gaining unnecessary bulk through gym work but, especially if you're continuing to ride, any weight gains will be very small.

Finally, don't make the mistake of lifting low weights for high reps to mimic the endurance requirements of cycling. This is a complete fallacy as, even if you perform three sets of 50 reps, this is still nowhere near the thousands of pedal strokes you'll make during a typical ride. To build strength you need to keep the weights fairly heavy and the reps relatively low. Take the advice of a fitness professional but you should be aiming for sets of 6-12 reps.

Top winter tip:

Don't worry about muscle soreness, especially after your first few visits to the gym. It's perfectly normal and will ease as your muscles get conditioned to lifting.



WARM WEATHER TRAINING

Insurance

No matter where you're riding, you should take out full travel insurance that covers the type of riding you'll be doing. If you're planning on hiring a mountain bike and hitting the trails one day or maybe taking part in a local sportive or even a race, you might have to change your level of cover. Check what level of cover is provided in the event of loss or damage to your bike or equipment during transit.

[British Cycling Members can discounted rates for travel insurance by Bikmo](#)

Race Gold membership of British Cycling also gives you personal accident insurance that covers overseas events. Should you be the cause of an accident, third party liability insurance up to £15 million is available for Race Gold, Race Silver and Ride Members.



Fitting it into your training plan

As you're likely to be increasing your regular training volume while abroad, you should try to schedule in an easier recovery week before you head out. This will ensure you arrive fresh and are able to get the most out of your warm weather training. If you follow one of our plans in the lead up to your camp, the easier final week will do this perfectly.

While there, don't be tempted to ramp up your training too much. Yes, you probably won't have the stress and tiredness associated with work and family life to factor in but it can be very easy to overdo it.

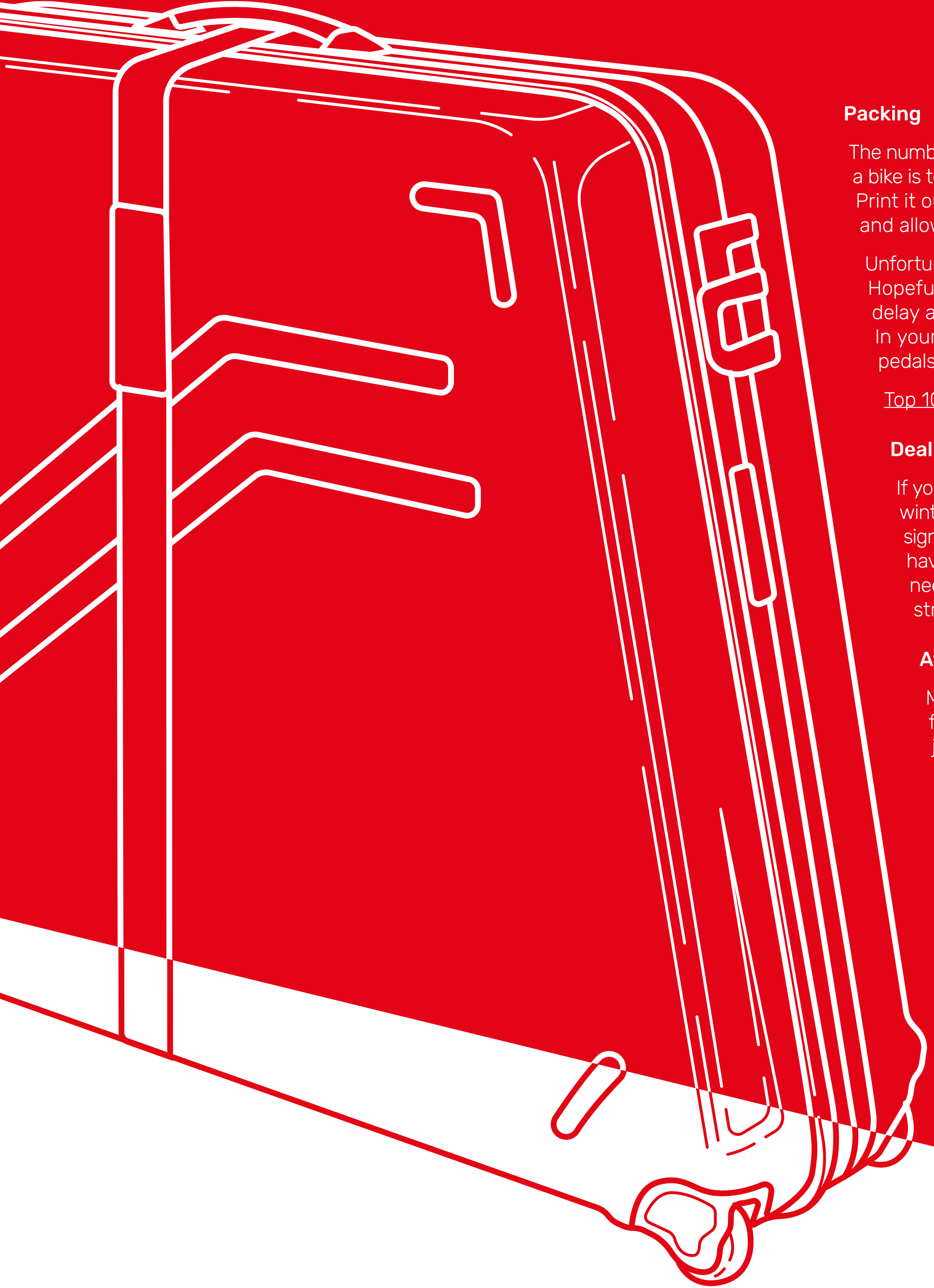
If you're following one of our training plans on TrainingPeaks or use the platform to track and plan your training, you'll be very familiar with the Training Stress Score (TSS) metric. You can use your average TSS over the previous four weeks of training to plan your rides on your camp. A good structure for a week long camp, is to do three day blocks, with a rest day in between, and, based on that four week TSS average, to do:

Day 1: 25% of 4 week average TSS

Day 2: 35% of 4 week average TSS

Day 3: 40% of 4 week average TSS

You should be aiming to finish your camp with a good sensation of fatigue but not feeling completely broken. On your return you should factor in another easier recovery week and then, after that, begin to reap the rewards of the camp and increase your training.



Packing

The number one piece of advice for stress free travel with a bike is to check and double check your airlines policy. Print it out, have hard copies of your booking receipts and allow yourself plenty of time at check-in.

Unfortunately, luggage including your bike, can go missing. Hopefully, if this did happen it would just be a 24-hour delay and you could hire a bike until yours arrived. In your hand luggage carry your cycling shoes, with pedals stashed inside, and one set of cycling clothing.

[Top 10 Tips for Flying with your Bike](#)

Dealing with the heat

If you're travelling abroad, especially during the British winter, it's likely that you'll be riding in temperatures significantly higher than your body's used to. This can have a definite impact on your performance and needs to be factored into your pacing and hydration strategies, especially during early rides.

Avoiding tummy trouble

Many riders when travelling to train abroad often suffer from stomach upsets. More often than not though it's just a change in environment upsetting their bodies and will resolve itself in 24 hours.

Don't reach immediately for the Imodium as you'll just be blocking in what is causing the problem. Let the body deal with it naturally and flush it out. If you're still suffering after 2-3 days, see a doctor.

The most effective way to avoid picking up bugs is basic hygiene awareness. Always wash your hands thoroughly using an anti-bacterial gel. Carry a small handheld gel in your hand luggage to use on the journey.

Follow these guideline:

Unless you are sure of the purity of the water supply, don't drink it. This also applies to water used for ice-cubes and for cleaning teeth.

Sealed bottled water is usually safe as are drinks made from boiled water, fizzy drinks, beer and wine.

Avoid local cheese and ice cream, especially if unpasteurised.

Make sure any meat is cooked thoroughly.

Fish and shellfish, even if well cooked, can still be hazardous and should be avoided until post-event.

Eat only cooked vegetables and avoid salads.

Peel all fruit, including tomatoes.

It's always worth taking a broad spectrum multi-vitamin and mineral when travelling or training hard to help provide additional support for your body during periods of stress.

[British Cycling Members receive a 30% discount off the full SiS range.](#)

If you haven't got your training camp booked yet, remember British Cycling Members get a [10% discount with Love Velo Cycling Holidays](#).



NUTRITION

Although the basics of fuelling a ride don't especially change during the winter, on a cold and wet winter's ride, you'll be expending extra energy staying warm and, if you don't get your fuelling right, a blood sugar crash is more unpleasant than on a summer's day.

For in-depth advice on all aspects of cycling nutrition, download our free [Cycling Nutrition Guide e-Book](#).

Before your long ride

Try to have your breakfast 2-4 hours before you start riding. However, along with your individual preference and tolerance, this can vary.

Carbohydrates are the priority and you should be looking to consume 1-2 g/kg of body-weight. For a typical sportive, you'd probably be looking at the middle of that range.

For an 80kg rider that would translate to 80-160g. A large serving of porridge with a large banana would get them into that range.



Top winter tip:

For extra warmth on your ride, get some insulated bottles and fill them with green tea sweetened with honey.

During your long ride

For rides up to around the 3-5 hour mark, you should be looking to consume 30-60g of carbohydrates per hour. Below are some examples of how you could hit that requirement:

Two SiS GO Energy + Electrolyte gels
(22g of carbohydrates each) = 44g

Five fig rolls (12g of carbohydrates each) = 60g

Three mini pitta breads with peanut butter
(18g of carbohydrates each) = 54g

Two brioche rolls with jam
(28g of carbohydrates each) = 56g

Two British Cycling rice cakes
(17g of carbohydrates each) = 34g

Don't wait until you start to feel hungry or flat to start eating. It's important to eat every 30 minutes right from the start of the ride. If you tend to forget, set an alarm. For rides over 5 hours, you should also be

looking to take on some protein. This will help to prevent muscle breakdown and help you to feel fuller. An SiS Whey20 protein gel, delivering 20g of protein, at the mid-point of the ride is probably easiest.

Even in cold conditions, it's important to keep well hydrated. How much you need to drink will vary significantly based on individual physiology, conditions and riding intensity. As a rough guide, most riders will typically drink between 500ml-750ml per hour.

Don't forget that your bottles can also be a source of carbohydrates. A 500ml bottle of SiS GO Electrolyte will provide 36g of carbohydrate and key electrolytes.



After your long ride

If you've paced and fuelled your ride well, you should be hungry but not ravenous when you get home.

You should try to consume approximately 20g of quality protein and 20g of fast absorbed carbohydrate.

If you're able to have a meal soon after getting back from your ride, a tuna sandwich, jacket potato and cheese or some rice and mixed beans would all be good options.

However, at the end of a sportive, especially if you have a journey home, or if you just don't fancy food for a while after a ride, that's when a recovery drink such as SiS REGO Rapid Recovery, can be ideal.

[British Cycling Members](#) get a 30% discount off the entire SiS range.



STAYING WELL THROUGH THE WINTER

Probably one of the key factors to a solid winter on the bike is staying well, avoiding the various colds and flu that go round and not losing training time. Great Britain Cycling Team Head of Medical Services Dr Nigel Jones has some advice for beating the bugs this winter.



Dr Nigel Jones
Head of Medical Services

Structure your training

Up to a certain point, training will boost your immune system but, once you go beyond that point, it will compromise it. Knowing that tipping point is key but it is a highly individual thing. If you are repeatedly pushing your body and not factoring in enough recovery, it's likely it will have a negative effect on your immune system. Following a well designed structured training plan that's realistic to your fitness level is the best way to guarantee this.

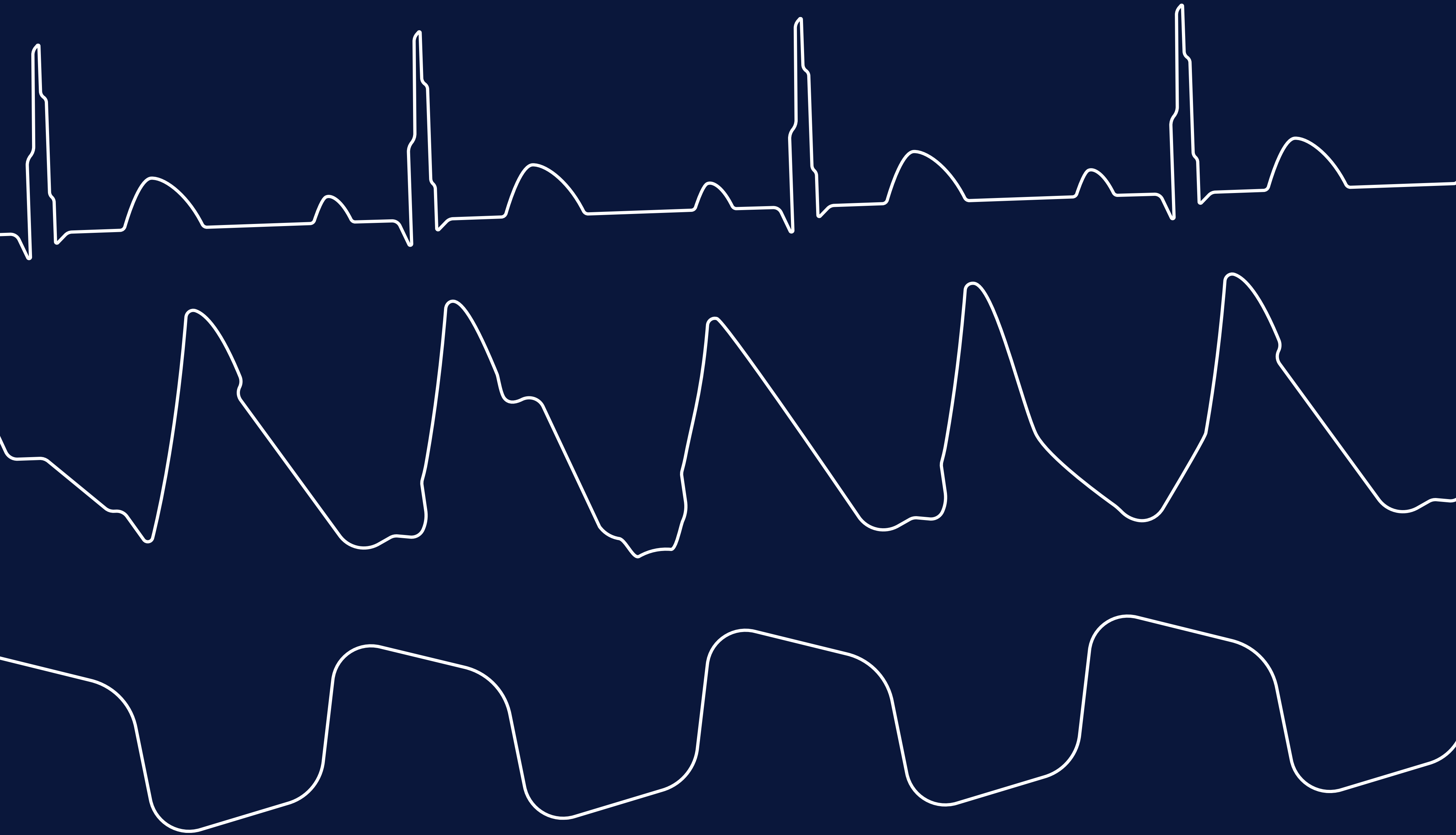
Hygiene

Basics like not sneezing into the open air. Use a tissue, bin it and then use an alcohol gel to disinfect your hands. Always be diligent with your hand washing after using the toilet and don't assume, if you are using a public toilet, that everyone else will do the same. Flushes, door handles and taps can all carry germs so again, carrying some alcohol gel is the best way to go. It is an unpleasant thought but one of the most common sources of gastric infection is via the ingestion of faecal matter so always wash and disinfect your hands before you eat.

Take Vitamin D

There is no doubt, over the winter months, that a high proportion of the UK population has a Vitamin D level below the ideal. Along with supporting your immune system, Vitamin D also plays an important role in musculoskeletal health and could also be involved with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Although you should always look to optimise your diet before considering supplementation, Vitamin D can be difficult to obtain in sufficient amounts from food. Therefore, I would recommend, during the winter, that people consider taking a Vitamin D supplement.





Listen to your body

Track your resting heart rate in the morning. If it is normally in the mid '60s but you wake up not feeling 100% and it's 80 bpm - that would suggest that your immune system is under stress. Similarly, use an in-ear thermometer to check your temperature. Normal body temperature is 37°C, but does vary slightly. Your temperature may be 0.6°C above or below this and can vary throughout the day. Find what your typical healthy normal temperature is in the morning and, like heart rate, if you wake up not feeling right and it is up by 0.5°C or more, that is a strong sign not to train.

Don't rush back

Although people are really keen to minimise lost training time, by getting back on your bike too early you will probably just prolong the illness. A good rule of thumb is 24 hours free of any symptoms and then 24 hours of having a normal temperature and resting heart rate, so effectively, two days clear. How much fitness you will lose depends on a number of factors including how fit you were before you became ill and genetics. Anything less than 2-3 weeks is not going to be hugely significant though.

Top winter tip:

Your priorities when you get back from a ride should be to get clean, dry and warm, eat and then do some mobility work. Checking out your ride on Strava can wait!

STAYING WARM AND DRY

With modern kit and clothing and by following some simple tips, you can stay warm and dry on the bike even in the worst winter weather.

Legs

Full length bib-tights should be your winter riding go-to. The bib provides an extra layer around your core and prevents your lower back being exposed to the cold when down on your drops. Look for fleece lining, windproof panels on the front and ankle zips.

Feet

Start with some knee-length merino socks which will continue to insulate even when damp. Then either regular cycling shoes with overshoes or dedicated winter booties. You might need to size your shoes up to accommodate thicker socks or risk reducing circulation. Check your shoes for vents on the sole and tape them up.

Face and neck

Glasses will protect your eyes from drying cold air and road debris. Look for clear or light enhancing lenses. A tube-style scarf is super versatile, keeping your neck warm, and, if it's really cold you can pull it up over your face.

Body

Layering is the key to winter comfort. Start with a quality wicking baselayer; you might also want to consider one with wind-proofing on the front. Next should be an insulating mid-layer; this can be a fleece-lined long sleeved cycling jersey. Finally, finish off with a shell layer. On those rare dry winter days this could be a softshell or windproof but a full waterproof will definitely get plenty of use.

Head

An insulated and wind/waterproof cap, skull-cap or beanie under your helmet plays a huge role in keeping you warm. Consider a helmet with fewer vents or a helmet cover.

Hands

Winter gloves need to provide insulation and be wind/waterproof. Make sure that they're not too tight as this can reduce circulation and make your hands feel cold. They can't be too bulky either as this can affect your ability to brake and change gear. Finally, have your glove cuffs inside the sleeves of your jacket as this will seal warm air in and help keep water and cold air out.



Top winter tip:

Probably the best thing you can do for winter cycling comfort is to fit full length mudguards. They'll keep your feet and backside much drier and your ride mates will thank you too.

SEEING AND BEING SEEN

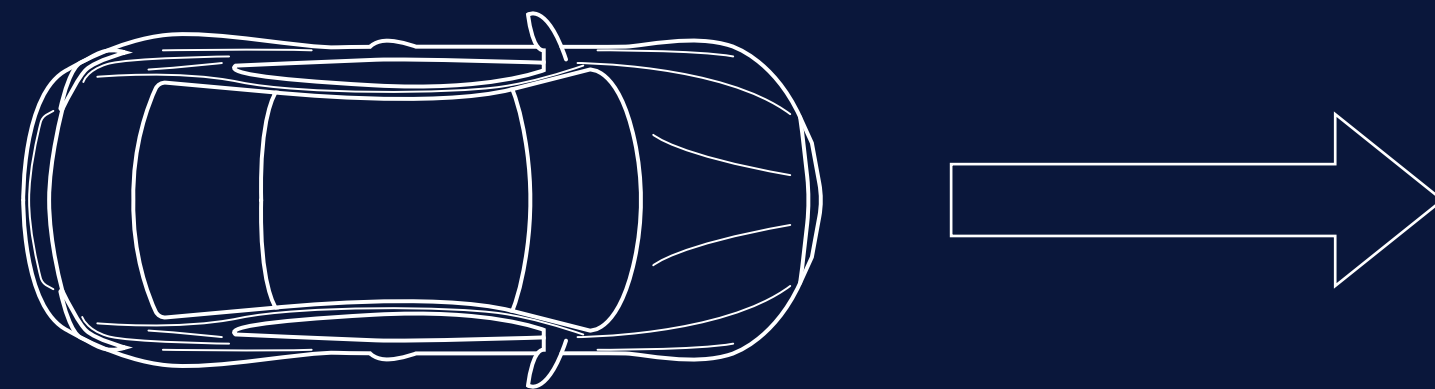
Good road positioning and making sure you meet the legal requirements for lights is essential knowledge for winter cyclists.

Road positioning

Many newer riders perceive they are safest when riding as close to the curb or side of the road as possible. Aside from the gutter often being full of puncture-causing debris and potential hazards such as drainage grates, riding in it will make you far less visible to other road users and can lead to them trying to squeeze pass you.

Riding in primary position, also known as taking the lane, is riding in the middle of a lane in the position normally taken by a motorist. In this position you will be most visible and prevent other road users from attempting dangerous overtakes.

If the road is wide enough to allow safe overtaking and you don't feel as though your safety or visibility is compromised, you can ride in secondary position. This is roughly 1m to the left of the traffic flow and not less than 0.5m from the edge of the road. The secondary position can be especially useful on many minor roads.



Lighting

According to the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations (RVLR) to cycle on the roads between the hours of sunset and sunrise you must have:

- a white front light which may be flashing.
- a red rear light which may be flashing.
- a red reflector on the rear.
- two amber reflectors, one on the leading edge and one on the trailing edge, of each pedal.

It is still the law to have amber pedal reflectors fitted, yet no provision has been made for clipless pedals in the Highway Regulations. As such, it would be best to have some reflective details on your overshoes and/or shoes. It is also debatable whether a rear light attached to a rucksack strictly counts, as The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations also states they must be attached to the bike. This also rules out a helmet mounted front light.

These, admittedly confusing regulations, are the minimum requirements so you can obviously add more lights if you wish as long as rear facing are red and front facing are white.

Many high powered lights can easily dazzle other road users so ensure they are angled down correctly and, if necessary, dip them.

Daytime running lights

Whether you should have lights on during the day is a contentious issue amongst cyclists with one camp singing their praises for increasing visibility and the other decrying that, like helmets and hi-viz clothing, they put an unfair onus of responsibility on cyclists. However, in winter conditions, especially as it's easy to be caught out by the short day length, carrying lights at the very least is a good idea.

Get in a group

A group of cyclists are always more visible than a solo rider and, with good group skills and etiquette, a well-disciplined group can benefit all road users. Knowing when to pair up, when to single out and being considerate of other road users can make the roads better for all.

What to wear

In the sort of mixed light conditions that you can typically encounter during a winter ride in the UK, there's no one type of clothing that will get you seen at all times. Fully reflective garments can easily be washed out in flat daytime light when there are no headlights to bounce off them. Even hi-viz, in certain light conditions, isn't a guarantee of being seen. The key is to be sensible and reactive to the conditions.

Top winter tip:

Extra red LEDs on your wrists and ankles and/or bright/reflective gloves and over-shoes can really improve your visibility.

British Cycling uses the insights detected from See.Sense's intelligent bike lights to help improve cycling conditions across the UK. [British Cycling Members can receive a 30% discount on a set.](#)



WINTER MAINTENANCE

Although cold and wet winter rides can be hard on your body, they're arguably harder on your bike. However, a good maintenance routine will ensure your trusty steed sees you through to the spring.

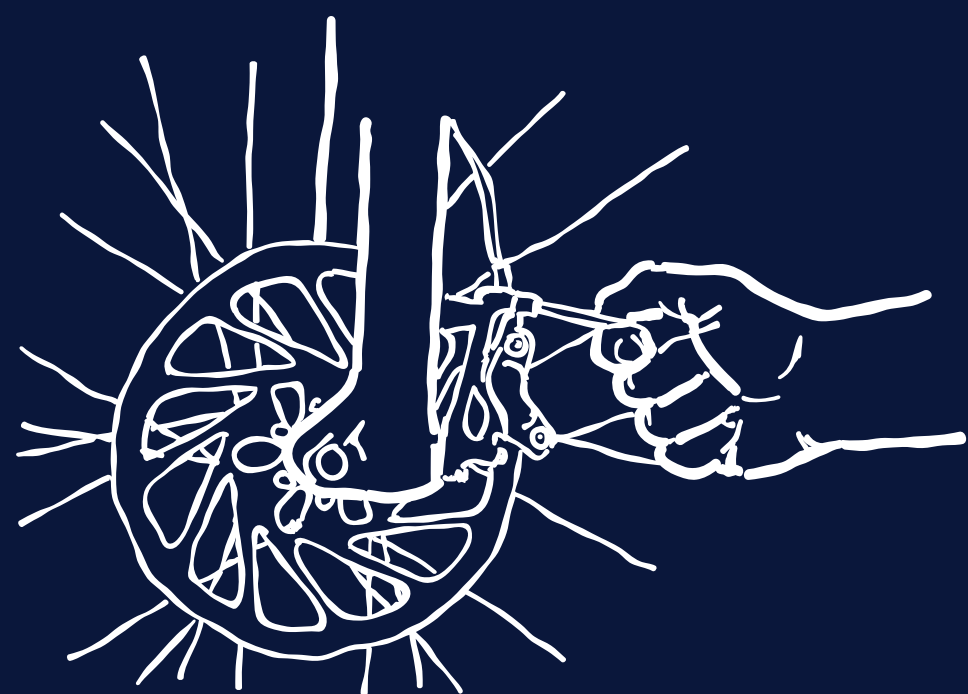
Service your summer bike

If you have a summer and winter bike, give your summer bike a full service before packing it away so that it's ready to go in the spring.

Check your pads and rims

If you're running disc brakes, check your pads regularly and replace if necessary. Use a dedicated disc brake cleaner for your rotors. For rim brakes, check your pads for embedded flints and stones as these can easily scour and damage your rims. Make sure you regularly clean and degrease your rims and pads or the accumulated muck effectively starts acting like sandpaper on your rim.

[How to change disc brake pads video](#)



Check your tyres

Running the correct tyre pressure can make a big difference in how your bike handles and your likelihood of getting a puncture. Check your tyres regularly for embedded road debris. By doing this and removing the object you can often prevent a puncture waiting to happen.

Change your pads

If you're running rim brakes and changing from carbon to alloy rims, don't forget to change your brake pads.

[How to replace and adjust brake pads](#)



5-minute bike wash

Salt on the road can start corroding your drivetrain overnight, so even if it's just a rinse and dry of the chain, try to wash your bike as often as possible.

[How to wash your bike video](#)



Indoor trainer

If you're using a bike regularly on an indoor trainer don't forget that sweat can be extremely corrosive. At the very least, give it a good wipe down at the end of a workout but ideally try to wash it regularly. Don't forget to lube the chain.

Sealed cables

Although more expensive, sealed cables are more durable in winter conditions. If they are out of your budget, thoroughly lube your cables with wet lube when you install them as this will make them last longer and perform better.

Lube

Having degreased, rinsed and dried your chain, it's important to lube it. During the winter you should use a wet lube.

[How to degrease your chain video](#)



Fit mudguards

As well as making life more pleasant for you and your ride mates, full length mudguards protect your bike from corrosive road spray too.



Service your winter bike

At the end of the winter, don't just consign the bike that has been your faithful servant to the shed to rust away. Give it a good service, replace any worn components and it'll be waiting and ready to go next year.

Top winter tip:

Using a silicon spray after washing and drying your bike will give an additional layer of protection and will help to prevent dirt from sticking to it.

[British Cycling Members](#) received a 20% discount across the Muc-Off range.

GET INTO: CYCLO-CROSS

Cyclo-cross is one of the most accessible forms of cycle sport, with racing for all levels and the whole family taking part during the course of a typical morning's racing. Throughout the autumn and winter, it's probably taking place in a park near you and is known for its inclusive and welcoming attitude.

What is cyclo-cross?

Cyclo-cross takes place in off-road venues such as public parks and other open spaces. Surfaces can include grass, mud, gravel and sand. Courses are short and winding, enabling multiple laps to be completed within a set distance. Courses often feature obstacles such as hurdles and sand pits, forcing riders to dismount and carry or run with their bikes. Some courses are more 'technical' than others, featuring tight single-track trails, tree roots and other obstacles.

To get a feel for what cyclo-cross involves, watch our [A day in the life of: a cyclo-cross racer video](#).

Am I fit enough?

With cyclo-cross races typically lasting 30–60 minutes depending on age and level, you don't need huge amounts of fitness. If you've ridden fairly regularly throughout the summer, maybe taken part in a few sportives, you'll be fine.

If you want to be a bit more competitive, following our [8-Week Cyclo-cross Training Plan](#) would be an ideal way to prepare for the cyclo-cross season. To follow this plan, you should be capable of completing a 60-mile (100 km) ride or regularly ride three times a week, including a ride of two hours or more.

You can also watch our [How to train for a cyclo-cross race](#) video.

What skills do I need?

Possibly even more so than fitness, technique and skill are the hallmarks of good cyclo-cross riders. In our 8-Week Cyclo-cross Training Plan there are regular sessions dedicated to key skills but, even if you're not following the plan, heading down to your local park and practicing some skills is a good idea.

Check out our videos of cyclo-cross skills:

[How to carry and shoulder your cyclo-cross bike](#)

[How to ride different cyclo-cross terrains](#)

[How to dismount and remount your cyclo-cross bike](#)

[How to bunny hop your cyclo-cross bike](#)

Do I need a cyclo-cross bike?

Most local events will allow you to race on a mountain bike but, if you get bitten by the cyclo-cross bug, you'll soon be upgrading to a dedicated cyclo-cross bike. A gravel bike can provide a versatile alternative.

Top winter tip:

Especially in muddy conditions, stay calm, relaxed and don't take things too seriously. Sliding about and having the odd tumble is all part of the fun. If you get frustrated, you'll only make things worse.



GET INTO: TRACK

For fitness, pedalling technique, group riding skills and genuine thrills, riding the track through the autumn and winter is hard to beat; it's definitely more fun than pounding away on your turbo in the garage! With six indoor velodromes in the UK, you're unlikely to be far from one and, if you're a track novice, they offer hire bikes and progressive instruction to get you up on the boards and riding.

How do I get started?

Most tracks offer public taster sessions where you can usually hire a bike and, with instruction from a coach, take your first few laps around the track. To progress you then have to work through an accreditation system. On passing this you'll be qualified to take part in more advanced structured training sessions and to race.

With the introduction of a UK-wide accreditation scheme for indoor velodromes, each venue will be providing data of accredited riders on existing customer databases to British Cycling membership services.

Therefore if you are a current British Cycling member, and have a current indoor track accreditation then you will get an endorsement on your British Cycling membership card (UKIVA). If you are accredited at the [National Cycling Centre in Manchester](#), [Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome Glasgow](#), [Lee Valley VeloPark London](#), [Derby Arena](#) or the [Geraint Thomas National Velodrome of Wales](#), and you have a 'UKIVA' endorsement on your current British Cycling membership card, you can apply for Probationary Accreditation at other main UK indoor velodromes.

The exact accreditation process will differ from venue to venue but the end result of making you a safe and competent rider will be the same.

Once you have gained your accreditation, you will be ready to progress to SQT (Structured Quality Training) sessions to further develop your track fitness and skills and progress to racing if you wish.

What skills do I need?

As you work through your accreditation, onto SQTs and hopefully racing track league, you'll constantly be developing your track riding skills, techniques and tactical awareness.

The most important skills though are the ones you learned during your first taster session; to always look before changing your line and listen to the coach and follow instruction.

Off the track, work on your [group riding skills](#) to become more comfortable riding in close proximity to others. [Learning to ride rollers](#) is also really worthwhile for balance and developing a smooth pedalling technique.

Am I fit enough?

If you've ridden sportives though the summer or have just got out on your bike regularly, you'll be fit enough to ride a taster session and begin your track journey.

However, if you want to sharpen up your track-specific fitness, either for SQTs or track league, and have a decent base, take a look at our [8-Week Track Cycling Training Plan](#).

Top winter tip:

Get a group of mates together for a taster session and then, work through the accreditation process together. You'll find it more fun and always know that there will be a group of riders on the sessions you attend at the same level and who you can demonstrate your skills to the coach with.

