



Cycling Workout Descriptions

There are ten standard types of cycling workouts that have been proven effective through decades of collective practice:

1. Recovery Rides
2. Foundation Rides
3. Long Rides
4. Power Intervals
5. Short Hill Climbs
6. Long Hill Climbs
7. Threshold Rides
8. Lactate Intervals
9. Speed Intervals
10. Steady-State Rides

Recovery Ride

A recovery ride is a relatively short ride performed at recovery intensity. Recovery rides are appropriate cycling workouts to do between other harder cycling workouts during the week. They are easy enough that they don't set back your recovery from the previous hard workout or sabotage your performance in the next hard ride, yet they still serve to increase your overall cycling training volume and cycling fitness.

Foundation Ride

A foundation ride is roughly the equivalent of base intervals in swimming. These workouts are performed at moderate aerobic intensity to develop aerobic capacity, endurance, and cycling efficiency.

Long Ride

Like foundation rides, long rides are steady rides at moderate aerobic intensity. The difference is that they are longer, although long is a relative term. An experienced long-distance triathlete will do some foundation rides that are longer than an inexperienced short-course triathlete's long rides. The main purpose of long rides is to build endurance.

Power Intervals

Power intervals are like lifting weights on the bike. To do a power interval, shift to a high gear and pedal at maximum intensity on a flat stretch of road for 20 seconds. In a power intervals workout, a set of power intervals is performed in the middle of an otherwise recovery- to moderate aerobic-intensity ride. As the name suggests, power intervals develop pedaling power.

Warm up thoroughly before doing a set of power intervals and cool down thoroughly afterward so the total ride time matches what is prescribed in your workout description. *Warm-ups and cool-downs in all cycling and running workouts should always be performed at recovery intensity.*

Short Hill Climbs

Hills are a fact of life in cycling. Since you will almost certainly have to race on them, it is a good idea to practice on them. Also, since hills vastly increase the effort required to move at a given speed, they are a great venue for high-intensity intervals. Short hill climbs are short climbing intervals performed at VO_2 max to speed intensity. They enhance your ability to climb hills fast and efficiently and to recovery quickly afterward.

Choose a hill with a moderate grade and select the most efficient gear for climbing the hill quickly. Recover between intervals by coasting back down the hill and pedaling easily for two minutes.

Long Hill Climbs

These workouts are performed like short hill climbs except that the climbs are of longer duration and a slightly lower intensity, specifically threshold to VO_2 max. Long hill climbs improve your ability to sustain a high effort level on any terrain, but on climbs especially.

Threshold Ride

Threshold rides serve to increase the duration you can sustain a relatively high speed on the bike. They also increase the speed you can sustain for a relatively long duration. These workouts consist of one or two blocks of threshold-intensity riding within a ride that is otherwise done at moderate aerobic intensity. In threshold rides containing two blocks of threshold-intensity effort, ride for ten minutes at moderate aerobic intensity between the blocks.

Lactate Intervals

Lactate intervals are 3- to 5-minute intervals performed at VO_2 max intensity, separated by 3-minute active recoveries. They boost aerobic capacity and resistance to neuromuscular fatigue. Do a set of lactate intervals as part of a longer ride in which the rest of the workout is performed at a low- to moderate-intensity.

Speed Intervals

Speed intervals are short, fast intervals that develop efficiency at high speeds. Do them at the fastest pace you can sustain through the end of the last prescribed interval without slowing down. Always perform speed intervals on flat terrain or on an indoor trainer. The remainder of the workout, outside of the speed intervals, should be performed at a low- to moderate-intensity.

Steady-State Ride

A steady-state ride is a ride of moderately long duration performed at high aerobic intensity. There are two good uses for steady-state rides. When performed in the latter portion of the base phase, they build on gains in aerobic capacity and endurance resulting from the recent foundation rides and long rides. Steady-state rides are also useful in the latter part of the peak phase in half-Ironman and Ironman training, because steady-state intensity is close to race intensity at these longer distances.