



Cycling Training Plan

Congratulations on signing up for this fun and very rewarding challenge!

Following this training plan will ensure that you are physically prepared and able to complete the bike ride safely and relatively comfortably. Being fit and well-prepared will also really contribute to your enjoyment of the cycling experience!

Medical check-up

Before you start on a new training programme, it is always a good idea to consult with your doctor. You may wish to take our recommended training programme along with you so the doctor knows the level of training you are hoping to carry out.

NB all people have different levels of 'trainability' and natural potential. It is possible for complete beginners to make very rapid progress and move up through the targets, while others find initially that they can't achieve the early training levels.

Remember the two golden rules:

- build up very gradually
- you must rest and recover to enable the training to become beneficial

The aim of many bike riders is to cycle for long periods - and sometimes they want to ride fast as well. The limiting factor is the rider's endurance ability. The definition of a long ride depends on your current ability and experience; for a beginner this may be an hour whereas an experienced rider may be comfortable for over 100 miles. However, to improve your endurance and ride comfortably for longer periods, the basics and the training principles are the same.

Aim

- To increase your body's endurance ability
- To increase your confidence
- To prepare for a particular endurance ride, event or race

Basics

Your ability to ride for long distances depends on a number of factors:

Training

To increase your endurance ability you'll need to spend longer periods on your bike than you are currently comfortable with. By pushing your body further, you will become more energy efficient; your muscles and body will adapt to the new effort and you will become more confident.

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Build up

As you get older, your endurance ability will naturally increase (although to some extent this is at the expense of your speed) and also over the years you cycle seriously. You can train your body and improve but there is a limit as to how quickly you can improve.

Pacing

As you increase the intensity at which you are riding then your energy consumption will increase and your endurance ability will decrease (just like driving a car hard, compared to cruising at a more sedate pace). Therefore it is important that you pace yourself sensibly (see also pacing technique). This is very important when you are riding with other riders, as it is easy to get 'carried away' and ride beyond your own abilities only to suffer later in the day.

Nutrition

Riding your bike requires energy, obviously the longer you ride the more energy you require. If you are increasing your ride time you will need to increase your pre-ride energy intake, if you are riding for longer than an hour then it is advisable to take some energy on board during the ride (see also Nutrition).

Stops

When you begin to increase your riding time you may encounter problems because of lack of energy or discomfort.

- Introduce a quick stop, or even a number of stops
- Have a stretch, maybe some food and then when you are ready, off you go again
- As your ability increases you can reduce the number and length of the stops, until you do not need to stop at all
- Keep the stops brief, usually no more than 15 minutes, with perhaps one longer break of 30-60 minutes at about half distance

Flat & hills

The more undulating the route, the greater the effort will be.

- In the first week of the training, keep to fairly easy roads or trails.
- In the second week, introduce some hills in the route.
- In the third week, make the route much more hilly
- Keep the duration of the ride the same, but by adding hills you will be increasing the intensity, increasing your endurance ability.
- If your aim is an event that is hilly, then this is a good technique to use, as you are building up your endurance and your specific climbing ability.

Destination

By having a destination you will have a purpose for your riding. This is a great motivation tool and will help you to tackle the task.

- Pick a destination, this could be a place to visit, stop and then ride back home. Or you could even ride 'point to point' and stay overnight, or get a lift or a train back home.
- Decide on a route and work out the distance. Bear in mind hills, wind and how far you have ridden before. It is not advisable to make a huge increase from your current long rides.

If you are aiming for a particular event, then make this a slightly shorter practise distance and if possible, choose similar terrain.

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When training for endurance you must be patient and take your time. Your body can adapt very quickly but there is a limit, if you ride too far, too frequently, you can make yourself very tired. As the training will increase the stress on your body, it is important that you only concentrate on increasing endurance at a time when your lifestyle is not adding increased stress on your body (for example, meeting work deadlines, exams or moving house).

Whether you are a novice or a competitive racer you can still use the same weekly guidelines. This is because you are adding percentages and time onto your personal level of endurance. The more often you ride, the greater increase you will be making. Even if you only ride three times a week, you can still improve your endurance but the benefits you will gain in three weeks will be smaller.

Key points

- **Set yourself a goal**
- **Be realistic and not over ambitious at first**
- **Ride at a pace that's comfortable. If you're feeling stressed, slow down**
- **Remember to eat and have something to drink on your ride**
- **Make sure that your position and riding equipment is suitable**
- **Have incremental increases to your distances, but remember to include 'easy rides'**
- **Allow yourself a rest stop during the ride - but not too many or for too long.**
- **Ride in varied terrain**

Important Note! Listen to your body. As you start and continue your training you will expect to feel slightly fatigued and your muscles may ache after training. Gentle stretching is important after exercise. If any tenderness or discomfort does not go away after rest, consult medical advice. If you experience any sudden pain, tightness in the chest or breathlessness consult medical advice immediately.

Kit Selection

It is really important to get your bike set up correctly. Not only will this make for a safer ride but it will add to your overall comfort and offset fatigue. A crash helmet is essential, make sure it meets the minimum safety standards. You can make riding long distances much easier on yourself by using the suitable kit. In particular, a good quality, well fitting pair of padded cycling shorts and cycling specific footwear will help - and a saddle that suits your shape!

You will be spending a long period of time on your bike and therefore it is important that you are in the correct position (see Getting the right size bike). If you are uncomfortable you will soon have to stop. Ask a coach, good bike shop or experienced rider to help you with your position if you are not comfortable.

Always take a spare inner, wheel tyre, pump, a full water bottle, fully charged mobile phone and spare change with you every time you go out. Wear bright, reflective clothing, especially in poor visibility.

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The Nutrition Plan

'Healthy eating' needn't be 'fun free', we need fat in our diet to remain healthy; we need carbohydrate in our diet and we need fibre too. At the end of the day it's a question of balance.

Leading up to your bike challenge you should try to follow a healthy balanced diet. The training is very physically demanding, so you will need to increase your calorie intake. Food choices are important when training for any fitness challenge and whether you are looking at your bike challenge as a fun day out or a race against the clock, subtle changes to what you eat and drink will help to improve your performance and help keep you healthy so you can train regularly and also recover afterwards.

Fluid intake is especially important during training. It is vital to drink plenty of water before and after exercise sessions – aim to drink two litres of water per day. Try to reduce your intake of tea, coffee, sugary drinks and alcohol.

Increase your intake of fruit and vegetables high in vitamins A, C and E as they contain anti-oxidants, which help to reduce toxin build up in the body. Eat lots of the following:

- Non citrus fruits such as strawberries, cherries and pears
- Brightly coloured vegetables such as peppers, carrots and aubergines
- Green vegetables, especially broccoli, courgettes and spinach

As always try and stick to the daily recommended intake of at least five fruit and vegetable portions per day. Everybody should try and do this as part of a healthy diet. 80g makes up a portion e.g. one apple, two plums, a glass of fruit juice, two heaped tablespoons of peas or one bowl of salad.

It is important to get enough protein, but you don't need to overdo it. Try and incorporate one or two servings of fish per week. White fish is a great low fat option and oily fish, like sardines or salmon gives us a good supply of unsaturated omega-3 fats.

Try and get around 60% of your calories from carbohydrates – at least one rice, pasta or potato portion per day should cover this. Think of these foods as fuel – these will give your muscles the energy you need to train.

You will have depleted your energy stores during your training sessions, so try to consume some carbohydrates as soon as possible. This will speed up your recovery and enable your body to rebuild, restock and be ready for your next exercise session. During the 15-minute period following your exercise session, your muscles are very receptive to loading on fuel and can restock at a much faster rate than usual. By refuelling correctly after exercise you will experience less overall fatigue for the remainder of the day. Even if you are not feeling very hungry try a piece of fruit and yoghurt. Within two hours of exercise you should try to eat a balanced meal of complex carbohydrates and low fat protein, for instance chicken with pasta. Go for wholegrain varieties where possible.

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There is some sense in 'loading up' on carbohydrates the night before your bike challenge as they are slow energy releasers, but try healthier options such as brown rice, wholemeal or wheat free pasta with a light non dairy sauce. Don't eat anything too high in fat or heavy protein or you'll find it sitting on your stomach in the morning. Drink plenty of water the night before the event. On the morning of the trek get up nice and early and have a light breakfast. Porridge made with water and a little honey would be a good option.

You will also need to experiment with forms of energy to take on board during the ride.. There are many different options ranging from pre mixed sports drinks to powdered energy gels and bars.. Use a variety on your training sessions and find the one that suits you, and your stomach, the best.. You need to also get used to drinking and snacking while riding - most people 'hit the wall' because they are simply dehydrated. Work on a steady intake of one litre per hour of cycling

The Training Plan

Try and follow the following plan as closely as possible. If it looks a little daunting, don't worry - one of the best things about bike training is that it's so adaptable.

Cold, dark or icy outside? Beg, borrow or buy a turbo trainer, or set of rollers. You can set up your bike indoors, using the gears to increase and decrease intensity. You can also introduce a block under the front wheel to mimic hill climbs. And you don't miss out on your favourite tv shows!

More of a gym bunny? No problem - all gyms have bike machines, make sure you get advice to set it for the right intensity. Once you are further into your training introduce hill repeats. Sign up for a spin class too, a great way to train in a fun atmosphere

Worried about your training interfering with normal life at the weekend? The long rides at the weekend are ideal to take friends, family, partners out to enjoy the countryside, and get them involved in your challenge too!

So, now's the time to get started

NB The Willow Foundation does not accept responsibility for any injury, loss or damage to you or your property incurred during participation in this event. Any participant who has concerns about his or her physical condition is advised to consult his/her own doctor before taking part in the event or any training leading up to the event.

Cycling Training Plan

Month One

This month's training objective is about getting your body used to regular exercise and developing your cadence - the rate which your legs rotate. Select the gear you feel most comfortable cycling on whatever the terrain. Aim for a cadence of 60 - 70 rpm. Most cycle computers will be able to show this.

| The Programme - Beginners (aiming at 30 miles) | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 |
| ONE | 15 - 20 minutes | 15 - 20 minutes | 30 minutes |
| TWO | 20 - 25 minutes | 20 - 25 minutes | 45 minutes |
| THREE | 25 - 30 minutes | 25 - 30 minutes | Easy 60 minutes |
| FOUR | 40 minutes | 40 minutes | Easy 60 minutes |

| The Programme - Keen, fit cyclists (aiming at 60 miles) | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 |
| ONE | 20 minutes | 20 minutes | 45 minutes |
| TWO | 30 minutes | 30 minutes | 60 minutes |
| THREE | 10 miles | 10 miles | 20 miles |
| FOUR | 10 - 15 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 30 miles |

| The Programme - Very experienced (aiming at 100 miles) | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 |
| ONE | 15 miles | 15 miles | 30 miles |
| TWO | 15 miles | 20 miles | 35 miles |
| THREE | 20 miles | 20 miles | 35 miles |
| FOUR | 25 miles | 25 miles | 40 miles |

Notes

Sessions 1 & 2 are for the working week, session 3 for a day off. No sessions should be on consecutive days. Always eat a small portion of carbohydrate within 15 minutes of finishing and include a portion of lean protein such as chicken, fish or cottage cheese at least two hours afterwards

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Month Two

This month's training objective is to supplement your cycling with other types of training - running or walking, swimming, dancing. These will improve your cardiovascular fitness without overtaxing muscles used while cycling. It will also add strength, not just to your legs but to core back and shoulder muscles, improving posture and decreasing the risk of fatigue or injury in the lower back.

| The Programme - Beginners (aiming at 30 miles) | | | |
|---|------------|------------|-----------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 30 minutes | 30 minutes | 60 minutes |
| TWO | 30 minutes | 30 minutes | 75 minutes |
| THREE | 40 minutes | 40 minutes | 75 minutes |
| FOUR | 40 minutes | 40 minutes | Easy 90 minutes |

| The Programme - Keen, fit cyclists (aiming at 60 miles) | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 |
| ONE | 10 miles | 10 miles | 20 miles |
| TWO | 10 - 15 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 25 miles |
| THREE | 10 miles | 10 miles | 30 miles |
| FOUR | 10 - 15 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 30 - 40 miles |

| The Programme - Very experienced (aiming at 100 miles) | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 20 miles | 20 miles | 30 miles | 35 miles |
| TWO | 20 miles | 25 miles | 35 miles | 40 miles |
| THREE | 30 miles | 30 miles | 35 miles | 40 - 50 miles |
| FOUR | 25 miles | 25 miles | 40 miles | 50 - 60 miles |

Notes

Session 1 & 2 are for the working week, but not on consecutive days. Sessions 3 & 4 are for the weekend or days off, and should be consecutive with one another - but not with Session 1 or 2.

Month Three

This month's training objectives are to get used to hills and pushing a bigger (harder) gear when cycling on the flat.

| The Programme - Beginners (aiming at 30 miles) | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 10 miles | 10 miles | 5 miles | 15 miles |
| TWO | 10+ miles | 10+ miles | 10+ miles | 15 miles |
| THREE | 8 - 10 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 20 miles |
| FOUR | 10 miles | 15 - 20 miles | 15 - 20 miles | 25 miles |

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| The Programme - Keen, fit cyclists (aiming at 60 miles) | | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 10 miles | 15 miles | 20 - 25 miles | 40 miles |
| TWO | 10 miles | 20 - 25 miles | 25 - 30 miles | 40 miles |
| THREE | 15 miles | 25 miles | 45 - 55 miles | 45 miles |
| FOUR | 10 miles | 5 miles | Rest | 50 miles |

| The Programme - Very experienced (aiming at 100 miles) | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 20 miles | 20 miles | 30 miles | 55 miles |
| TWO | 20 miles | 25 miles | 35 miles | 60 miles |
| THREE | 30 miles | 30 miles | 35 miles | 60 miles |
| FOUR | 25 miles | 25 miles | 40 miles | 60 - 70 miles |

Notes

Session 1 & 2 are for the working week, but not on consecutive days. Session 3 & 4 are for the weekend or days off and can be consecutive with one another, but not with session 1 or 2.

Month Four

The training objective of this month is to consolidate your fitness and also to start tapering down (easing off) before the big day! Make sure you eating well, but take care in the last two weeks as your calorie demands will be less..

| The Programme - Beginners (aiming at 30 miles) | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 10 miles | 10 miles | 5 miles | 25 miles |
| TWO | 10+ miles | 10+ miles | 10+ miles | 25 miles |
| THREE | 8 - 10 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 10 - 15 miles | 30 miles |
| FOUR | 10 miles easy | 8 miles easy | Rest | Race Day! |

| The Programme - Keen, fit cyclists (aiming at 60 miles) | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 10 miles recovery | 15 miles | 20 - 25 miles | 55 - 60 miles |
| TWO | 10 miles recovery | 20 - 25 miles | 25 - 30 miles | 55 - 65 miles |
| THREE | 15 miles | 25 miles | 45 - 55 miles | 60 - 70 miles |
| FOUR | 10 miles | 5 miles easy | Rest | Race Day! |

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| The Programme - Very experienced (aiming at 100 miles) | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| WEEK | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 | SESSION 4 |
| ONE | 20 miles | 20 miles | 30 miles | 60 - 75 miles |
| TWO | 20 miles | 25 miles | 35 miles | 90 - 100 miles |
| THREE | 30 miles | 30 miles | 35 miles | 75 - 90 miles |
| FOUR | 25 miles | 25 miles | Rest | Race Day! |

Notes

In the last couple of weeks, read up on some of the exciting cycling autobiographies in your bookshop - or watch re-runs of the Tour de France for some inspiration!

Congratulations! You have finished your training and should now be fully prepared for your bike challenge. You should be feeling fit, ready to go and confident that the past weeks have put you in the best shape to climb those hills!

Good luck and thank you very much for taking on this challenge to raise funds for the Willow Foundation.