

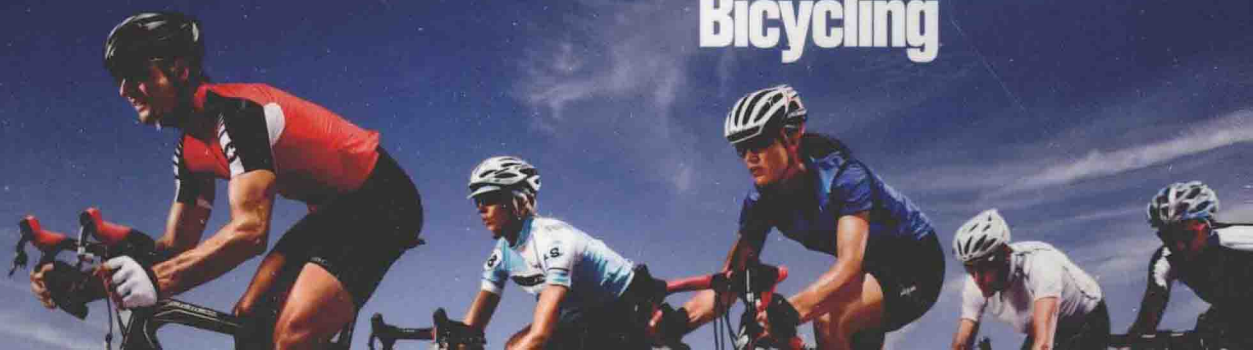
Everything you need to know, from buying
your first bike to riding your best

THE
BIG
BOOK
OF
Bicycling[®]

EMILY FURIA


and the Editors of

Bicycling



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your first bike to riding your best**

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Bicycling**



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The information in this book is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The editors and publisher advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the exercises in this book, be sure that your equipment is well-maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and fitness. The exercise and dietary programs in this book are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or dietary regimen that may have been prescribed by your doctor. As with all exercise and dietary programs, you should get your doctor's approval before beginning.

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We inspire and enable people to improve their lives and the world around them.

Introduction

LET'S RIDE

You know the old saying: “It’s as easy as riding a bike.” And the crazy thing is, it’s true. Bicycling is a supremely accessible activity—just ask any 7-year-old. Grab a bike and a helmet, and start pedaling. No matter your age or fitness level, you too will feel that childlike joy of being out there, free, legs spinning, the wind on your face. That feeling that you’re going somewhere. It’s one of the simple joys of the sport.

At the same time, cycling is full of beautiful complexity. As you learn more about the sport, you realize how much more is waiting to be discovered. It doesn’t matter why you ride—whether it’s for fitness, fun, competition, transportation, or weight loss—the sport just keeps getting more interesting and more rewarding. The best part? Sometimes getting the right nugget of information at the right moment can literally transform a ride. I did not know how to fix a flat (not quickly, at least) or ride in a paceline or what the heck to do with chamois cream until other, more experienced cyclists showed me the ropes. Eventually, I knew enough to truly join the pack.

The *Big Book of Bicycling* can make that process a little bit simpler. Here, we invite you to ride with us and learn from the best. For the first time, all of our top advice is in one handy place, with our trusted experts (you’ll meet them on page ix), staff editors and writers sharing the basic concepts, tips, and tricks that will just plain make biking more enjoyable and also help you reach your goals, whatever they may be. Before you know it, you’ll be cruising.

See you out on the road.

Peter Flax
Editor-in-Chief
Bicycling magazine

Meet the Experts

Some of *Bicycling* magazine's expert columnists and contributors appear regularly in these pages.

Former Olympic and Tour de France cyclist **Chris Carmichael** is Lance Armstrong's personal coach and the founder of Carmichael Training Systems (trainright.com). He writes the Coach column for *Bicycling* and is also the author of *The Time-Crunched Cyclist: Fit, Fast, and Powerful in 6 Hours a Week*.

Bicycling's Road Rights columnist **Bob Mionske** is a former Olympic and professional cyclist, and a lawyer who specializes in cyclists' rights. His book *Bicycling and the Law* was published in 2007.

Alex Stieda was the first North American to wear the yellow jersey in the Tour de France in 1986. Today he leads tours and skills camps, and he recently released *The Smooth Ride*, an instructional road cycling DVD (stiedacycling.com).

Selene Yeager is a USA Cycling certified coach, elite mountain bike racer for Team CF (teamcf.org), and the author of *Every Woman's Guide to Cycling* and *Ride Your Way Lean: The Ultimate Plan for Burning Fat and Getting Fit on a Bike*. In 2008, she competed in her first Ironman triathlon, winning her age group and earning a spot at the world championships in Hawaii. Read her blog at bicycling.com/fitchick.

You'll also be hearing from some people we call our **BikeTowners**.

In 2003, *Bicycling* conducted an experiment to find out how the gift of a bicycle could change someone's life, by giving away 50 bikes to residents of Portland, Maine. Since then, nearly 3,000 people have received bicycles through *Bicycling's* BikeTown program. Many BikeTowners have gone on to become seasoned cyclists; nearly all report that riding has had a positive impact on their lives.

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PART

I

Getting Started and Motivated

THE LIST OF ALL THE WONDERFUL BENEFITS A BIKE CAN give you (more sleep! better sex!) is almost endless. We give you a multitude of reasons to get in the saddle. Already got the cycling bug? Congratulations: You'll find plenty of tips to keep you pedaling.

The Greatest Sport in the World

You've probably heard that cycling is good for your body—it burns tons of calories, strengthens your heart and lungs, goes easy on your joints, and so on. But that's not all. Read on to find out about some lesser-known perks.

IT KEEPS YOU SHARP

Forget the dumb jock stereotype—aerobic exercise is exactly what your brain needs. Here are some of the cognitive benefits associated with cycling.

CONCENTRATION. Activities that require balance, quick reactions and decision-making skills—like martial arts, gymnastics and cycling—best control Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children, says psychiatrist David Conant-Norville, MD. A Vanderbilt University study shows that these activities may help adults with focus and concentration, too. Participants who performed a short but complex exercise were 40 percent more likely to solve a puzzle than idle participants. The takeaway: If you're stuck on a problem, go for a ride.

MEMORY. For the hippocampus—a region of the brain that controls long-term and spatial memory—bigger is better. And as with the rest of your body's muscles, exercise makes the hippocampus grow. A University of Illinois and University of Pittsburgh joint study found that

physically fit participants had larger hippocampi and performed 40 percent better on memory tests. Other reports show that exercise helps older adults retain cognitive function and avoid disorders like Alzheimer's and dementia.

IT REDUCES STRESS

Research has shown that vigorous exercise is so effective at quelling anxiety and depression that some patients have been able to reduce or eliminate the use of medications such as Prozac and Zoloft. In a study at the University of Southern Mississippi, participants who suffered from generalized anxiety disorder and exercised at 60 to 90 percent of their maximum heart rates for three 20-minute sessions per week saw significant decreases in anxiety, sensitivity and fear after just two workouts. Further research has shown that people who get regular vigorous exercise are less likely to develop anxiety disorders and depression.

Why I Ride

“I love to ride on a quiet road in the trees, climbing hills and coming down the other side. Cycling’s not just a sport; it’s who I am.”—AMERICAN PRO CYCLIST LEVI LEIPHEIMER

IT MAKES YOU HAPPIER

LESS ANGER. Exposure to plants and the outdoors has been linked to reduced aggression in inner-city residents. Choose the right terrain and riding buddies, and you can comfortably spend all day in nature on two wheels—good luck lasting that long in running shorts.

MORE AMOUR. A German study discovered something that cyclists have known for a long time: Cycling gets us high. Exercise increases your body’s production of endorphins—and sends them to the same parts of the brain that are activated when we fall in love.

IT BOOSTS SELF-ESTEEM—SERIOUSLY

According to psychology types, mastering a task that we find difficult—upgrading to clipless pedals, scoring a point in the Tuesday-night crit, truing a wheel for the first time—makes us feel better about ourselves. Of course, negative experiences reverse the process—all the more reason to get back in the saddle as soon as possible after a bad day. The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports concurs: “Aerobic exercise seems to be beneficial in enhancing self-esteem.”

IT HELPS YOU HAVE MORE (AND BETTER) SEX

It’s true: Here are five ways that time in the saddle helps you in the sack.

KEEPS YOU LEAN. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overweight people are at increased risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and more—any of which can ruin your sex life faster than seeing your grandparents in the altogether. The National Institutes of Health confirms what we all know: Exercise, such as spinning pedals, is inversely related to body weight and the rate of weight gain with age. Another tidbit to spur along male slackers: Abdominal fat can add up around the base of the penis, making it appear smaller. You can “lose” an inch of penis for every extra 35 pounds you carry.

IMPROVES ENDURANCE. The aerobic conditioning gained from regular riding translates to greater stamina in other activities, including sweet romance, says Steve Owens, exercise physiologist and a coach with Colorado Premier Training. A study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health showed that men over 50 who kept physically active were 30 percent less likely to suffer from erectile dysfunction than men who were inactive. In fact, according to the researchers, the most physically active

Why I Ride

“It seems like cycling has become cool in the U.S. When I started, it was an outsider thing. Growing up in Queens, New York, I was the only person riding my bike, and everyone else was playing normal sports. Nobody knew what cycling was. But now everywhere you go people know what’s going on, and they watch the Tour.”—GEORGE HINCAPIE, WHO’S RIDDEN IN MORE TOURS DE FRANCE

THAN ANY OTHER AMERICAN

men seemed to have the sexual ability of men two to five years younger. Schwing!

GETS YOU IN THE MOOD. A University of Texas at Austin researcher found that vigorous exercise—specifically, cycling—helped increase sexual arousal in women, both subjectively (the women reported being more aroused from an X-rated movie after a brief ride than they were without the ride) and objectively (blood flow to the genitals was significantly increased).

AMPS YOUR SEX DRIVE. Testosterone is directly related to sex drive in both men and women, making us want to have sex, pursue sex, initiate sex, and perhaps dominate the lovemaking. A 2002 study at Britain’s University of Newcastle upon Tyne found that older men who exercise regularly produce more growth hormone and

testosterone than those who lead an inactive life. Regular exercise can boost testosterone levels in women, as well—proof that regular rides will make you want to ride regularly.

HELPS YOU GET MORE. Riding on a regular basis increases the frequency of coupling. In an *Archives of Sexual Behavior* study, 78 sedentary but healthy men (average age 48 years) participated in a moderate aerobic exercise program—mainly cycling and jogging—three to four days a week for nine months. At the end of the study, the men reported a significant increase in their sexual arousal, activity, function and satisfaction. One inspiring example: Their frequency of intercourse went up by 30 percent.

OKAY, YOU’VE CONVINCED ME . . . BUT WHERE DO I FIND THE TIME?

Funny you should ask—that’s one of the most common questions *Bicycling* gets from readers. The truth is, riders of all levels struggle to fit

Fun Fact

Seven percent of readers polled by *Bicycling* admitted to wearing a heart rate monitor during sex.

riding into a busy schedule. Here's how to make it happen.

- If you think ride time will simply appear during your day, you might as well put your bike on Craigslist. Schedule it on the family calendar, in your datebook, on your work schedule—wherever you can to be sure others will know you're busy.
- Log every ride. It could be a total data dump or just the date and route in a notebook. There are multiple training benefits to this, but also the thought of a blank space on the calendar often strengthens the urge to squeeze in a ride.
- When ride time rolls around, go for the ride; postponing it sets a negative precedent. Cycling is a sport of momentum: The more you ride, the more you'll ride.
- Boldly suggest to colleagues or clients that your next meeting should take place on a ride.

Or buy a couple of cruisers for your office—they'll be easier on your expense report than a month of greens fees, and even noncyclists can experience the beauty of doing business on the roll.

- When all else fails, pay someone so you can ride. Hire a babysitter, a cleaning service, a lawn-care company. It's an investment in your health. It's worth the money.
- Look at your daily routine in terms of how much riding time you lose, and you'll find ways to prune. If cooking dinner takes 45 minutes each night, that's more than four hours over the workweek. Spend an hour or two on Sunday cooking a chicken, prepping salad greens and stocking the fridge with a few nights' healthy meals. Things like watching television and posting on web forums will feel even more expendable.

But Don't Just Take Our Word for It . . .

See what some of our BikeTowners have to say about taking up cycling.

"I tell my patients that cycling is 'sneaky exercise.' You don't realize how good it is for you."—*family practitioner Tom Del Giorno, BikeTown Philadelphia 2006*

"I've gotten rid of all my fat clothes. For the first time in my life, I feel like a woman."—*Lynda Thomas, BikeTown Denver 2005*

"It seems like the more you ride, the more energy you have—you don't want to come back in. Maybe next I'll train for . . . what's that bike race? The Tour de France? I know I'm exaggerating, but that's how confident I feel."—*Robert Dickerson, BikeTown Boston 2006*

"I want to be someone who people can look at and say, 'Look what he did. Look at the results he got—and it wasn't that hard.'"—*Michael Freeman, BikeTown Los Angeles 2006*

"It's like, wow—all of this comes from a bike?"—*Karen Phillips, BikeTown Boston 2006, who credits cycling with helping her quit smoking*

Why I Ride

“Now I spend my days thinking about my next adventure instead of my next meal.”—FORMER *BIGGEST LOSER* CONTESTANT JERRY LISENBY,

WHO NOW BIKES FOR CHARITY

- To give yourself a fighting chance in winter, invest in a quality light, such as the helmet-mounted Stella from Light & Motion (lightandmotion.com).
- The lunch ride rules. You’re not shortchanging work by skipping out for an hour; you’re improving your focus. In a U.K. study, 75 percent of workers credited flex time with helping them increase their ability to concentrate, and therefore boost their productivity.
- If you can carve out only 20 minutes, give your bike a loving caress and then go do squats, crunches, pull-ups and planks, which will make your time on the bike even more enjoyable.
- Make repairs or adjustments when you finish a ride so little fix-its don’t stall you when you want to leave for your next one.

Pro Tip

“I BELIEVE THAT BALANCE MAKES YOU SUCCESSFUL. IF ALL YOU DO IS WORK AND ANSWER HUNDREDS OF E-MAILS A DAY, YOU’RE GOING TO DRIVE YOURSELF INTO THE GROUND. SAME THING IF ALL YOU DO IS RIDE. YOU HAVE TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE THING IN YOUR LIFE.”—KRISTIN ARMSTRONG, 2008 OLYMPIC TIME TRIAL GOLD MEDALIST

- Next family outing, meet your loved ones by bike. You’ll get your day’s ride in on the way and have more time to spend with them when you get there.

BUT I’M SO TIRED . . .

Ride anyway—chances are you’ll end up with more energy, not less. But because that’s easier said than done, here are some tricks to get motivated.

- The number-one way to guarantee that butt meets saddle: Map out a 30-minute loop for those occasions when you’re short on time or can-do attitude. More often than not, you’ll ride longer than planned; the rest of the time, hey, you rode half an hour.
- Guilt is a strong motivator. Set up a riding group with one or two friends, at most, just small enough that your skipping the ride spoils it. Large groups go off whether you show up or not.
- Your stomach is a motivator, too. Pick a delicious destination at least as far away as half the total distance you want to ride. Maintain an honest pace there, enjoy your treat, and pedal back.

→A big ride, like having a mortgage or raising kids, can be overwhelming when considered in its entirety. Focus on small intermediate goals, or if that doesn't work, distract yourself: During the final, hallucinogenic miles of an epic, dedicate each mile to someone: your spouse, your neighbor with cancer, your pet, your secret celebrity crush, your other bike at home.

→Tension slows you down. Keep facial muscles relaxed, and the rest of your body will follow. The easiest way to do this? Smile.

→Volunteer at a junior race or clinic. Kids have an unbridled enthusiasm for riding bikes that is contagious, and the bad teenager haircuts will quickly dispel any notions you had about wanting to be 16 again.

RIDER RESOURCES

Pick the brains of riders of all levels on *Bicycling's* forums (forums.bicycling.com).

Find more time to ride with tips from organizing expert Julie Morgenstern, author of *Never Check E-mail in the Morning*, at juliemorgenstern.com/blog.

PART

III

Gearing Up

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT GEAR IS AN INTEGRAL part of bicycling. When faced with this truth, people generally fall into one of two camps—wildly excited or just plain scared. While it pays to acquire the basics, you can enjoy the sport without spending a fortune. That said, there are plenty of fancy cycling goodies to be had if you choose to indulge—and don't be surprised if you find your thirst for new technology growing along with your riding ability. Here's our guide to navigating the maze.