

# GET FIT IN 40 MINUTES!

No time to train? Then you might be surprised to learn you only really need 40 minutes to get back in shape for summer...

Words: Andy Wadsworth Photos: Jonny Gawler

For many of us it's hard to find the time to get fit because of work commitments, family time, or simply because we fancy a pint rather than a pedal. And what little time there is left, we use for one-on-one action with the sofa. The only problem is, it's all too easy to lose your fitness, which in turn makes it harder to get back in that saddle again.

The less exercise you do, the lower your energy levels are, and the fitness you once had in your youth is replaced by hangovers and responsibilities. The longer you leave it, the less likely you are to do it again, too. Frustration kicks in, and before you know it you're struggling to do up the top button of your favourite jeans. Sound familiar? Well, it doesn't have to be that way.

First you need to start being realistic. You've got limited time, so you need to start using it better. With this in mind we've devised a simple fitness plan, and the beauty of it is you only need to spare 40 minutes, a couple of times a week to regain your pedal power.

Thanks to our nine-point plan you just need a spare 40 minutes for each session, plus you can pick and choose a session to suit your

schedule. The main thing is to make it fun, though. Nothing has to be exactly to the plan, and the key is to enjoy it.

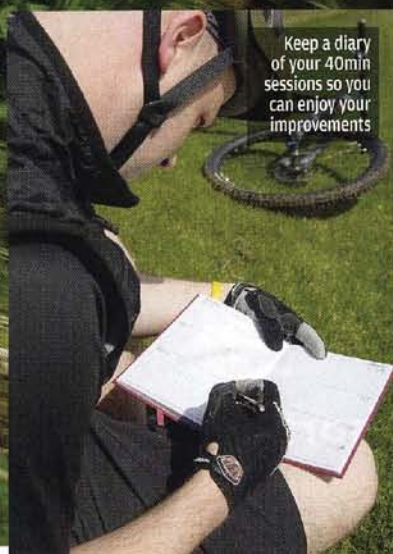
## 1. Speeders

This ride should take you 40 minutes to an hour and its purpose is to make you faster. Rather than just hitting the trails or road for 40 minutes, add in little accelerations or 'speeders' to make your legs work harder. Apart from anything else, these speed bursts will stop the boredom creeping in.

You should try and do a speeder every 3-4 minutes. These involve accelerating up to 'almost' race pace for 10-20 seconds. They are not sprints, but more relaxed, and as you get fitter they can become more aggressive. Imagine you're about to overtake someone in the car. You usually change from 5th to 3rd gear to build up the revs and then you accelerate past them. This is exactly what speeders are. In a 40-minute ride you should aim to do at least 10 speeders. And trust us, you'll soon be leaving your mates behind with the extra speed in your legs.

## 2. Hill reps

Again, this only has to be a ride that lasts 40 minutes to an hour. Have a gradual warm up for five minutes, then find a hill near you that lasts between three and four minutes. Go up the hill as fast as possible, as if you're pedalling for your life. When you get to the top make



Keep a diary of your 40min sessions so you can enjoy your improvements



## One-minute efforts

These will help your body get used to going at a higher speed, and just as importantly, will increase the speed of your recovery

note of the time, then add 10%. If, for example, it took you four minutes, add 24 seconds.

This means that four minutes 24 is the time you have to beat when you go up the hill a further four to five times. And believe us, you'll be climbing like an animal next time you ride with your mates.

This session is ideal if you want to win races, as the majority of cross-country race venues rarely use hills that last more than three to four minutes. It will also make your body more powerful, it will buffer the effect of lactic acid, and make you more confident on hills.

### 3. Two gears too hard

To get faster you need more muscle power to turn the pedals. Here's how to get it. In your next 40min ride, change to a harder gear every five minutes. We suggest making it two gears harder than the gear you'd usually use on that stretch of road or track. These 'two gears too hard' sections should last about two minutes to start, and in two months' time, up to four minutes. This effort will have the effect of weight training on the legs and will also enable you to concentrate on good pedal technique. You should focus on pedalling in circles, pushing and pulling the pedal to the outside of the circle, using all the power in the legs all the way

round the pedal stroke. Keep your upper body still to completely focus the energy on the legs. The ideal place to do these is on slight uphill drags.

### 4. One-minute efforts

On your next 40 minute ride, put in a series of big efforts for one minute, going as fast as possible. You need to cycle as though you're trying to win a race or getting away from a big, hairy monster. This will help your body get used to going at a higher speed, and just as importantly, will increase the speed at which you recover. If you get used to recovering from a big effort quickly, you can destroy other riders. You can also keep attacking more often, safe in the knowledge that you'll make a quick recovery after each attack.

Aim to complete eight of these in a 40 minute ride, and make sure you really go for it on each one.

**"Hill reps make your body more powerful, buffer the effect of lactic acid, and make you more confident on hills"**

### WMB's plan of action...

→ You can do whichever session you feel like doing, but here's a suggested timetable to follow three times a week

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Mon	Speeders	One-min efforts	Race starts
Wed	Hill reps	Circuits	Time trial
Sat/Sun	Two gears too hard	Fast legs	Four-min efforts

Don't try to save energy for other efforts later on – really hammer it on each one. The rest of the ride should be easy in between those efforts, so you'll have enough time to fully recover before the next one.

### 5. Circuits

Again, this exercise is suitable for a 40-60 minute ride. Pick an off-road loop, which takes about 10-15 minutes, and do it three to four times. In laps one and three, go for it as fast as possible (as if you're racing), but on lap two concentrate on just going fast through the technical sections, and sprinting into and out of the singletrack. This will make you faster off-road and get you used to racing on →



a circuit. Try to repeat the same circuit every month and make a note of your times. If you're getting quicker, this exercise can be a great motivator.

## 6. Fast legs

On your next ride, don't just sit there cruising – use it to get fitter. In the middle of each 15 minutes, get your cadence up to 110+ rpm and keep it there for five minutes. Stay seated while you're doing it, keeping your upper body still and relaxed to get complete focus on the legs.

Leg speed is the key to making you go faster. Imagine you are riding in a race, and you start to turn the pedals 20 more times in a minute than anyone else. Lance Armstrong has a hill-climbing leg speed that looks 10% faster than anyone else, so it must work.

## 7. Race starts

If you're thinking of doing some races, you'll soon find out that the start of the race – usually the first two minutes – generally dictates the finishing positions. This is because, once in front, you never look back. Plus, it's easier to stay out in front than it is to catch up. Even if you're not racing, try the following exercise anyway, as it's a great way to increase power output and fitness. After a 10-minute warm up, find a stretch of quiet road or track and start with one foot on the ground in a gear which, at first, you might struggle to push. Then blast it as hard as you can for one minute, increasing this to two minutes as you get fitter. Return to the start after the effort and after a two-minute rest, go again. Try and do 10 race starts in a 40min ride, and before you know it, you'll feel far stronger and will have the confidence to blast away from the rest of the pack.

## 8. Time trial

Try and enter a local mid-week time trial, but if that's not possible, make up your own circuit lasting roughly 10 miles. After a 10-minute warm up, go balls out for the 10 miles and make a note of the time. Repeat this a couple of times a month.

As your time improves, you'll realise that your fitness has too, and this will in turn motivate you further. A time trial of 10 miles or more will also give you greater endurance, power and speed.



*Fast legs*

Get your cadence up to 110+ rpm and keep it there for five minutes to build up the power in your legs

## "Your body won't know what's hit it, but you'll get fit and have more energy"

More importantly, it makes you mentally tougher as you get used to taking the pain.

## 9. Four-minute efforts

During a longer ride, try to include a four-minute effort going as fast as possible every 20 minutes. Four minutes is a tough test: it's like running a mile. Your body has to respond to a higher demand for power and speed and then endure it for the four minute period. However, it's well worth trying this as it will make you so much more efficient and get you used to going at greater speed.

Some people believe they should hammer themselves from the start of a ride or race, and see how far they get before they collapse. Unfortunately, this means that they'll only have one effort, which may well last up to 10 minutes, but that's it. With these four-minute

efforts you get a chance to recover and do more of them. More importantly, your stamina will increase beyond recognition.

## Summary

If you pack all this in over the next three weeks you'll definitely see the benefits. Fair enough, your body won't know what's hit it, but by doing different rides with different intensities each time, it's only response will be to get fit, give you more energy and make you feel like you're really achieving something.

Try to keep a diary of what you're doing and what you've achieved as a source of motivation, enjoy yourself and go for it! ●

## Ask Andy...

Andy Wadsworth has competed in world class mountain bike races and was 2002 Xterra triathlon world champion.

