

TRICKS TO GET YOU BIKE FIT... FAST!

➔ Riding uphill and down dale isn't easy, but improve your fitness, strength and endurance and you'll be tackling tough stuff with ease

If you're new to mountain biking, the main thing to remember is *don't panic!* You might feel like you're trailing behind, making everyone else wait for you, but in reality everyone has to start somewhere, and your riding mates are probably loving the opportunity to show off how good they are. It doesn't take long to increase your fitness though. Here are a few improvements you can make over the next 4 weeks to give your riding mates a fright.

Getting bike fit

The first tip to make sure you don't get left behind is to up your endurance by making two rides a week twice as long as usual. There are loads of ways to make your pedal stroke faster, but to start with focus on just lifting up your knees faster and being able to get out of the saddle more on the climbs. Take in at least four hills which last longer than three minutes on every ride. On flat sections try to up your pedal revolutions by ten per cent to help you drain lactic acid. If you can ride the same gear with ten per cent more pedal revs you're laughing.

After that, practice a good technical off-road loop near you which lasts about 20 minutes. Get to know every nook and cranny of that loop so that next time you ride with others you will feel more confident and be able to show others how to do it. Set yourself targets on the 20 minute loop and monitor your times so that you know if you're getting quicker. If you know you are getting faster and faster this will motivate yourself to try even harder. Best of luck.



Follow our advice and next time you're on the trails you'll be flying

Ready to race

Want to enter an event? Here's how to prepare those legs. The best way to feel like you are in a race is to lead from the front on a ride and try to take control of the pace or at least be able to stay with the pace from the start. The next task is to try and hold your position. Try some of these tricks to make all the difference:

After a 20 minute warm-up find a quiet stretch of trail and practice doing starts from standing still, blast it for 90 seconds and then take your time to return to the start and repeat. Build up to doing ten reps once a week to give you more power, improve your start speed and get your body used to the initial shock of race starts.

Never just 'do a ride', always add in some speed efforts (two gears harder) lasting 20-30 seconds every five minutes, this helps keep leg speed and get you used to changing your speed in a race to stay with someone going on the attack or when you want to attack and create a winning gap. Once a week do an rpm session where you ride for at least ten minutes at a go with your pedal revs above 100rpm (count revolutions as you pedal) to improve leg speed.

Do hill interval rides by blasting up at least four hills lasting over four minutes to simulate the kind of effort you will have to put out in a race. On the big day, just try to enjoy it.

LOVE YOUR BODY!

Everyone's body shape will improve by simply putting in more time on the bike, as you will be burning more fat. But to burn fat faster include some interval training during rides. Ride hard for up to four minutes at a time and then have five-to-six minutes taking it easy, you'll soon feel and notice the difference.

If you can ride to work and back or just simply get in two exercise sessions in a day you will make your metabolism climb high twice a day instead of just once and fat will drop off you. Here's some easy exercises you can do at home to tone up and improve your shape.

1 Lie on your back and put one leg straight up in the air at 90 degrees and then try to raise your hips off the ground using your other leg. This will strengthen and tone your glutes (bottom). - Do 3 x 10 each leg.

2 Kick backs: Get on all fours and kick one leg back behind you keeping your stomach muscles tight as you do it so your lower back doesn't arch. Another great bottom exercise. - Do 3 x 10 on each leg.

3 One legged squats: You have to keep your stomach muscles tight all the time to keep your balance and take the strain off the lower back. Try 3 x 10 on each leg, the slower the better, and as you get better try and do it with your eyes shut. All your upper leg and glute muscles will be worked.

4 Side leg raise: Lie on your side and raise one leg up in the air to 45 degrees taking three seconds to raise up and three seconds back down. Try 3 x 20 on each leg, these will burn in the hip and outer thigh region.

5 Abdominal crunches with your feet on the floor, then legs up at 90 degrees to get a proper firm stomach. Nothing beats them. Build up to doing 3 x 20 of each type of crunch.

6 Tricep dips: With your legs out in front of you, hands at your side on a bench or the edge of the bed, lower your body weight in front of you until you are hovering with arms at 90 degrees, and then push back up to straighten your arms. These are the tricep burners, or more commonly known as bingo wing fighters! Build up to doing 3 x 20.