



## **TIP OF THE WEEK # 6**

### **🚲 Basic Biking Skills (1 of 2)**

#### **Hanging On**

Because your hands do a lot of the work while you're riding, they're prone to fatigue, even damage. **Most problems can be prevented by frequently changing hand positions.** One of the great advantages of the drop-style handlebar that's found on many road and touring bicycles is that it provides many different grips. It's possible to grab on the drops, on the tops, on the brake lever hoods and elsewhere. Every ten minutes in fact, you should take another hand position. This will alleviate pressure on the nerves in the palms that can cause numbness and tingling, while helping to keep your upper body relaxed.

There are fewer options on mountain-style handlebars and other upright designs. If you have bar ends, use them. And don't rule out gripping portions of the bar just because they're bare metal. If there's a place to rest your hands safely (always maintain a secure grip), by all means move them there occasionally for a change.

#### **Pedaling**

Ideally, you should relax and let your feet and ankles assume a natural position while pedaling. But there is one tip that may help smooth your pedal stroke and provide a power boost on climbs: If you can learn to pull straight back on the pedals when each reaches the 3 o'clock point on the stroke, you'll discover with practice that you can generate more power.

Most people focus on the downstroke. But this part of the stroke is natural. Even if you didn't think about it, you'd manage fine. **The key to smoothing the stroke and making it as round as possible is training yourself to pull back.** The motion is similar to what's used to scrape mud from the bottom of your shoes. If you want to immediately feel what it can do for you, try it the next time you're riding uphill. With enough practice, you won't have to think about it and your pedal stroke will become rounder and more efficient. An effective way to develop the ability to pedal for 360 degrees of the pedal action is to pedal with one leg at a time; this action instinctively teaches you to pedal on the upstroke.

#### **Climbing**

Speaking of hills and hand positions: usually it's best to stay off the drops on climbs. When you're bent over that low, the diaphragm is compressed making it difficult to breathe deeply. **Placing your hands on the brake lever hoods will open your chest allowing your lungs to expand more.** This works nicely when seated and standing. If you want even more air when seated, place your hands right next to the stem a position that will raise your torso and open your lungs fully.

When you stand to climb, relax! There's no need to choke the handlebars, bar ends or brake hoods with a vise-like grip. Doing so will only tense the upper body, make it more difficult for you to react to surprises and tire you out faster. Instead, use a loose grip and let your legs and body weight do the work as you rock the bike slightly side to side.

#### **Descending**

Being that it's most efficient machine in the world, it should be no surprise that a bicycle pointed downhill can accelerate frighteningly fast. You could hit the brakes every time to get things back under control. But that might lead to skidding, wears the brake pads and could surprise following ride partners. A sensible alternative is changing body position to slow down. **By sitting taller or moving from gripping the drops to the tops and spreading your legs a bit, your body will catch much more air, which will slow you down parachute style.** Of course, this trick only scrubs off some speed. If you really need to slow hard, use the brakes.