



ILLUSTRATIONS BY FUZZYTOWN

I STRUGGLE WITH FIXING FLATS, AND I'VE WORKED AT NOT ONE BUT TWO BIKE MAGAZINES.

—Matt Bevilacqua, associate editor

50%*

of you aren't fully confident changing a flat in front of others

3 TIPS TO MAKE FLAT-FIXING EASIER

1 You'll need two sturdy levers with a wide, thin "spoon" (the portion you slip under the bead) and a solid hook for the spokes. We like Pedro's (\$5 per pair).

2 Remove one side of tire from rim by placing levers six inches apart and prying bead over edge of rim. Hook one lever to a spoke and run other around loosened bead to completely pop it off rim. Drop other bead to center of rim channel.

3 To reinstall: Insert slightly inflated tube. Start at valve and work loose bead back over

sidewall of rim with your fingers, in both directions away from valve.

Once you get 10 to 14 inches of bead on, push valve up and into tire, then pop last few inches of tire back onto rim.

—Mike Yozell, gear editor and former pro mechanic



I've encouraged people to drink the night before a long group ride—then left the party early to sleep so I'm not tired or hungover.—Daniel Sapp, gear nomad

5 TIPS FOR RIDING THROUGH A HANGOVER

1. Eat a mix of complex and simple carbs (like whole wheat toast with jam) to help bring your blood sugar back up to pre-alcohol levels.

2. Rehydrate with a full bottle (or two) of water before you ride, and drink extra water with electrolytes throughout.

3. Wear your darkest sunglasses and rock a stylish cycling cap so you don't feel like sunlight is burning your skull.

4. Keep your pace easy and cadence high for 10 to 15 minutes to help flush out metabolic waste and any concrete-leg feeling, since alcohol can slow recovery.

5. Skip the intervals. Your body is working hard enough just to recover, and intense efforts could compromise your immune system.

—Molly Hurford, contributing writer

Source: Michael Ross, MD, director of the Rothman Institute's Performance Lab in Philadelphia.



TRAIL SEX IS ACTUALLY WAY LESS AWESOME THAN IT SOUNDS.

—Matt Phillips, test director

*In November 2017, more than 1,000 readers spilled their secrets in our online survey on cycling confessions.

I HAVE ZERO INTEREST IN THE TOUR DE FRANCE.

—Jennifer Sherry, managing editor

I RACED ILLEGALLY. A friend crashed and broke his elbow before the Leadville 100 one year. There were no refunds or transfers, but he gave me his entry. So, coming from sea level, with minimal fitness, I lined up as Expert class racer Paul Dopp. It went about as you'd expect.

—Joe Lindsey, contributing writer



I've been racing for 22 years, and I still have stress dreams where the race is about to begin and I can't find my bike anywhere. When I finally find it, it either has no wheels or square wheels (not kidding), or it's in pieces. Before. Every. Damn. Race.—Selene Yeager, The Fit Chick

I rode a mountain bike through clay mud, and then I didn't wash it [or even look at it] until spring.

—Lydia Tanner, associate digital editor

44%
of you wash your bike less often than you'd like
18%
almost never do it

5 SIGNS IT'S TIME TO QUIT BINGE-WATCHING OUTLANDER AND CLEAN YOUR BIKE

1. The chain (or drivetrain) is caked in grime.
2. You hear loud or "crunchy" noises when you shift or pedal.
3. The brakes squeal or howl (and not from being wet).
4. The shifting is slow or requires excessive force at the lever. (Often this is caused by spilled drink mix or other filth coating the bottom bracket area where the cables pass.)
5. You can't stand looking at it anymore.—M.Y.

I avoid trails in entire regions of the country—especially the South-east, in summer—because of my fear of snakes.

—D.S.

I KIND OF WANT TO DO A TRIATHLON. IT SOUNDS FUN! I DON'T GET WHY CYCLISTS HATE ON TRIATHLETES SO MUCH.

—Taylor Rojek, senior associate editor

I eyeball my cleat placement and only change it when my knees start to hurt.

—L.T.



When people start talking about cycling's past, I feel like I know nothing about cycling. Then I remember it doesn't matter: I ride bikes to have fun, exercise, and see places with good friends.

—Colin McSherry, senior art director

I LIED TO MY MECHANIC

about having absolutely no idea why the ceramic pistons on my front disc-brake caliper were cracked. I know damn well they cracked because I desperately tried to reset them using a metal object. I rationalized it by blaming him for them not being set up right in the first place.

—Jesse Southerland, creative director



I NEVER REMEMBER WHICH IS HIGH AND WHICH IS LOW GEARING.

—C.M.

I CAN'T RIDE A ROAD BIKE WITH HAIRY LEGS OR A POSITIVE-RISE STEM.

—M.P.

I live and die by what the Race Predictor website says. Before I sign up for a race I look up my estimated placement based on the pre-registered riders. Then I click on each person's profile and stalk their entire bike racing career.

—Elspeth Huyett, social media editor

IS IT ACTUALLY BAD TO TURN YOUR BIKE UPSIDE DOWN?

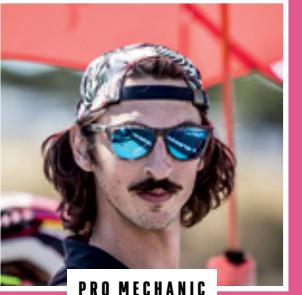
There's no immediate harm in it unless you have a GPS device on your handlebar that might get scratched. But here's why I don't personally do it: The bike may topple over and damage the derailleur hanger if it falls to that side. Or, leaking water bottles could dump a sugary mix all over your bike. I say it's better to lay the bike on its nondrive side after removing your wheel. No need to compound what can already be a frustrating fix.—M.Y.

SHIFTING DOWN OR UP, HIGH OR LOW—What's the deal?

- 1 "H" is for "higher" and "harder" gear
- 2 You shift "up" to a higher gear
- 3 High = fly, low = slow
- 4 Think of a car's shifting system: first gear [the lowest] makes it easier to climb hills

41%
of you turn your bikes upside down to change a flat

CONFessions of a ...



PRO MECHANIC

"I usually don't know who wins the races if it isn't one of my athletes. I'm not proud of it."

—Brad Copeland, mechanic for Specialized Racing



PRO RACER

"I LOVE DECAF COFFEE."

—ELLEN NOBLE, TEAM ASPIRE RACING



SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER

"I once faked a flat to get out of a casual group ride because the pace was ridiculously fast for no good reason."

—@WattageCottage

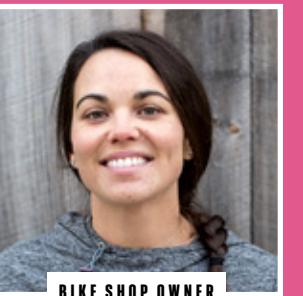


CELEB RIDER

"HARDEST PART OF CYCLING?"

Being brave/crazy/stupid enough 2 wear spandex. The hills R the 2nd hardest part. Me & our awesome pilot Jeff."

—Ralph Dale Earnhardt, Jr. on Twitter, March 11, 2017



BIKE SHOP OWNER

"We once installed a kickstand on a \$5,000 carbon full-suspension mountain bike for a customer to make a sale."

—Jordan Salman, The Hub and Pisgah Tavern in Brevard, North Carolina



CELEB RIDER

"I commute to the Live with Kelly and Ryan studio most days on a Citi Bike because it's convenient—and so my own bike doesn't get stolen! My fat tire Fezzari Kings Peak is usually parked in our living room. When people come over, I hide it in the bedroom, where it becomes an expensive clothing rack."

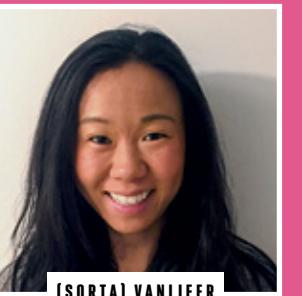
—Michael Gelman, executive producer



PRO RACER

"I lost a Junior 15/16 Super D national championship because I didn't know where the finish line was and stopped about 10 feet before it. But the girl who passed me and ended up winning is now my best friend."

—Kate Courtney, Specialized Factory Team



(SORTA) VANLIFER

"I LIVE IN AN RV BECAUSE I DEFINITELY COULD NEVER HACK IT AT REAL VAN LIFE OR CAMPING. I NEED A WARM SHOWER AND A KITCHEN. I DON'T LIKE ROUGHING IT, WHICH FEELS LIKE A SIN AS A MOUNTAIN BIKER."

—Amy Shenton, pro racer and RVer currently in North Carolina

I HAVE SHOWN UP TO GROUP RIDES WITHOUT TOOLS AND TUBES, HOPING SOMEONE ELSE BROUGHT SUPPLIES.

—D.S.

I NEVER WEAR A HELMET

WHEN I RIDE IN MY REGULAR CLOTHES.

—Jennifer S.

I CAN'T BLOW A SNOT ROCKET.

—C.M.

Once a driver flicked a lit cigarette out the window and it landed near where I was stopped at a light. I reached down and grabbed it. Then I tossed it back into his open-top convertible, right on the leather seat, with the words, "Hey, you dropped this." He was not pleased.—J.L.

READER CONFESSIONS



"I used to ride by my son's house on nearly every bike ride. Now he has moved, but I still ride by because I miss him and his family so much. I hope the new family doesn't think I'm creepy."

—Lee Ann G., Spokane, Washington

"I've fallen over many times while clipped in."
—Greg H., Austin, Texas

66 I STAND ON MY TIP-TOES

in the grocery store check-out line—not to work my calves, but so others can see them!"

—James R., Gifford, Pennsylvania

"I OFTEN RIDE JUST SO I CAN STOP HALFWAY FOR LUNCH."

—DAVE N., BROOKFIELD, WISCONSIN

79%

of you have fallen over clipped in

"On my first big group ride 15 years ago, I could see right away that I would never be able to keep up with the speedsters in our bicycling club. So I took a 10-mile shortcut, stopped for a donut, and waited for the group to roll by. Then I snuck in the back of the pack and happily finished the ride."

—Keley S., Yankton, South Dakota



I've been on an embarrassing number of podiums only because there were three or fewer women in the race.—T.R.

I was about to cross the finish line for the win in a crit, but hesitated for a half-second because I didn't know how to ride with no hands and I wasn't sure how to celebrate. I got nabbed at the line. I was so mad.

—Riley Missel, editorial assistant

Look, Ma, No Hands!

Even if you aren't tossing up a victory salute, no-handed riding is a good skill to have: You can more easily remove layers or refuel, and it will improve your bike control in every position since it requires maneuvering the bike from your hips. To learn it, find a flat and open area of pavement or grass. Then follow these steps from skills instructor Harlan Price of TakeAim Cycling in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

1. Start pedaling and choose a gear that allows you to maintain pressure on the pedals at a comfortable cadence. Scoot your sit bones to the back of the saddle.

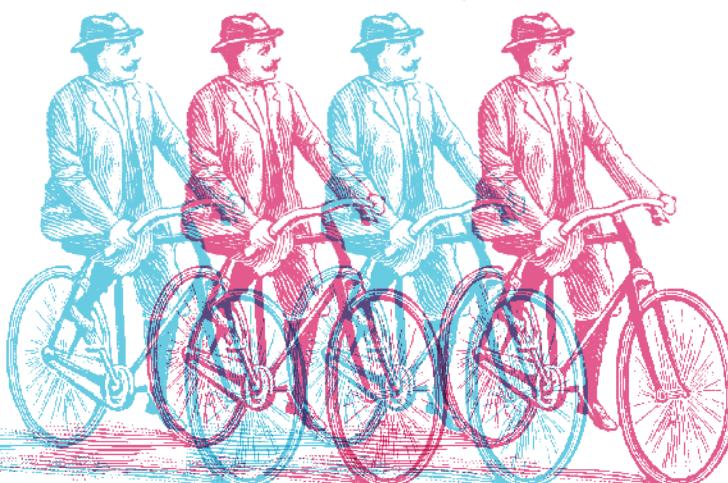
2. "Maintain a steady, running speed so the gyroscopic effect of the wheels helps you stay balanced," says Price. "If you're going too slow, your body is doing all the balancing." As you continue to pedal, start to take pressure off your hands by unhinging from your hips with a straight spine, gradually sitting into an upright position. Experiment with less

pressure on the bar, moving from your palms to your fingertips to hovering your hands as you get more comfortable.

3. Remember to sit up and back throughout the move. "You want to have a really snooty, upright posture," says Price. "If you stay hinged forward and just pull your hands off the bar, you're not really balanced—you're just holding yourself up with your core."

4. Keep your eyes forward to maintain a smooth line of travel, and steer by gently pivoting your hips in the direction you want to go.

5. I crashed on a cold winter ride because I was trying to stuff my gloves down the front of my bibshorts to help warm a certain body part that I definitely didn't want to get frostbite. I told the nice family that drove me home that I hit a walnut in the road—then got myself bibs with a windproof front panel soon after.—Jesse S.



I RAN A GUY INTO A TREE ON PURPOSE in a mountain bike race, because he was being a danger to myself and other racers. Coincidentally, I sold him a bike a few weeks later at a shop where I worked. Luckily, he didn't recognize me. I was too ashamed to say anything, as we were both very much wrong in our actions.

—Joël Nankman, mechanic

HAVING TO MAKE CONVERSATION FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME IN A PACELINE IS ONE OF MY BIGGEST ROAD RIDING STRESSES.

—G.L.

When I first started riding bikes, I didn't know you shouldn't wear underwear under your shorts,

so there I was in my tighty-whities and a chamois wondering why I was so damn uncomfortable.

—J.L.

I crashed on a cold winter ride because I was trying to stuff my gloves down the front of my bibshorts to help warm a certain body part that I definitely didn't want to get frostbite. I told the nice family that drove me home that I hit a walnut in the road—then got myself bibs with a windproof front panel soon after.—Jesse S.

10 CONVO STARTERS

- 1 "Do this ride often? Where's the sprint?"
- 2 "How do you like that bike?"
- 3 "What's your bike's name?"
- 4 "What's the most epic ride you've ever done?"
- 5 "What's the funniest thing you've been yelled at by a driver?"
- 6 "If you could eat anything right now, what would it be?"
- 7 "What's your sign/spirit animal/Myers-Briggs personality type?"
- 8 "Show me your best trick."
- 9 "Got any jokes?"
- 10 "What's your go-to convo starter?"



Every time I catch a glimpse of myself in my bike shorts, I wish for someone else's waistline.

—Jennifer S.

50% of you sometimes feel self-conscious wearing spandex

THE FIRST PAIR OF RIDING SHORTS I BOUGHT WAS, UNWITTINGLY, FOR WOMEN.—J.L.



IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SHORTS?

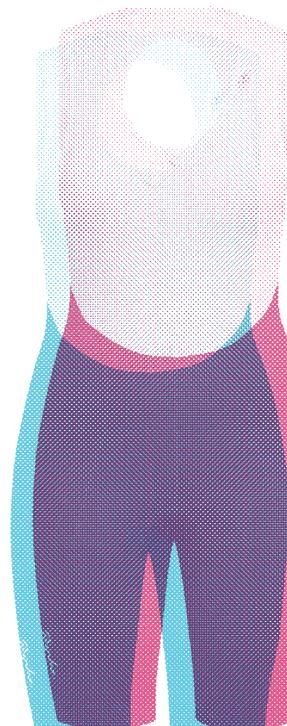
It's mostly subtle stuff (so my mistake was understandable!). "The needs of the rider are often very similar," notes Maria Olsson, Rapha's head designer. Where designs differ, it's due to anatomy (like the chamois pad) or aesthetics. While brands take varying approaches, here are some general differences.—J.L.

Bibs

M: Wide straps, fit straight up and down
W: Contoured to fit bust, may have mesh panel to work with sports bra, and/or be detachable for easy bathroom breaks

Chamois pad

M: Rises higher in front, with longitudinal channels for perineum
W: Shorter front-to-back, more uniform surface in center (no channeling) to reduce irritation



Seams

M: Typically straighter lines
W: May be slightly curved to accommodate the hips

Inseam length

M: Low on quad, almost to knee
W: Typically higher, around mid-thigh

Leg grippers

M: Snug to hold shorts and warmers in place
W: More forgiving, to minimize "sausage leg"

THE ULTIMATE CONFESSION

Sometimes, I don't want to ride. On rainy and cold days, of course I would rather sit in my comfy red lounge chair, drink coffee, and read the *New Yorker* while watching my kids do puzzles and play Hungry Hungry Hippos. Also (less frequently, but still) on bright sunny days when I'm supposed to meet friends who have been planning a particular ride for days or weeks, I will sometimes pass. On those days, I might play kung-fu with my kids, watch football, or, weirdly, mow the grass. This doesn't happen often, but it has happened enough that friends and colleagues coined a term for it: Mazzan-out.

Is unwavering allegiance to the ride required to call oneself a rider? Must each violation be paid for with cyclist cred? It sure feels that way when thumbing through the fire hose of stoke pouring from my Insta feed. But I don't feel much need for penitent reflection. I can chill today and ride tomorrow. Balance, right? It's okay to embrace the joy of missing a ride. I see your #FOMO and raise you a little #JOMO.

—Louis Mazzante, digital director