



# Training & Century Tips

Riding 100 miles in one day is a terrific challenge—and a landmark event in the career of any cyclist. Here are some tips to make your century event easier and more fun.



## CYCLE HANDOUT

### New Stuff

Don't try new, unfamiliar things during your event. Bike equipment, clothing, food, sports drinks: Test and make sure these work well in training.

### Get a Tune-Up

Have your bike working perfectly two weeks before your event, and check it out again the day before. A clean, lubed, efficient drive train makes you faster. Properly inflated tires are a must.

Don't get a tune up and plan to ride the century without a test ride first. Minor adjustments are often needed after shop servicing.

### Be Prepared

You need to take with you on your bike: a spare tube, tire irons, patch kit, pump, and Allen keys. Know how to use them.

Some toilet paper is a good idea too—you may find the distance to an aid station too far, or the porta potties may be out of paper.

Consider carrying a disposable camera.

### Get Padded

Protect your rear end and hands. Padded cycling shorts, handlebar tape, and gloves work.

### Bring the Right Clothes

Use tested and broken-in clothing.

Be prepared for cold weather or rain. A lightweight wind or rain jacket is often a good idea. Always pack a big, clear garbage bag, which can be used as an emergency rain poncho, in your travel bag. You don't need to bring it on the ride if the weather is perfect, but it's nice to have it in case you need it. If traveling to the mountains or other possibly cold areas, long-fingered gloves and tights or leg warmers can be useful.

It's okay to be slightly cool at the start—that way you won't have to start disrobing 10 minutes into the ride.

Riding until the late afternoon? Be prepared for chillier air.

### Frame & Wheels

Sure you can do a century on a mountain bike with knobbies. But a road bike will outperform a mountain bike or hybrid. Lighter bikes improve cycling enjoyment.

Slick high-pressure tires will improve any bike's speed. Aerodynamic (with fewer than the standard number of spokes) or lightweight wheels will also help. But don't sacrifice reliability for small aerodynamic or weight benefits. As previously noted, don't try new equipment for the first time on race day.

### Take Medications? Plan Ahead

Exercising for many hours may reduce or eliminate the need for some medicines. Exercise may increase the required dosage of others.

Anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen are increasingly being recognized as contributing to kidney problems during exercise.

High blood pressure medicines and insulin commonly need dosage adjustment.

If you take *any* prescription or non-prescription medication, check with a physician familiar with its use in exercise.

### Wear Sunscreen

Of course it protects your skin. It can also prevent you from getting overheated and can keep you working longer. Preapply, carry, and reapply as necessary.

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## **Dine Wisely the Night Before**

Carbo-loading dinners are fine. Most riders should salt their food.

Save the partying and alcohol, if that's your style, for the night after your century ride.

## **Set Things Out the Night Before**

Pin your number on your jersey. Try on the jersey; make sure the number doesn't tear away.

Lay out all the clothes you will need on a chair or in a pile.

## **Hydrate**

Pre-hydrate and drink often while you ride. Plan on drinking one waterbottle per hour if the weather is cool and you are not riding hard. Drink up to two waterbottles per hour if it is hot or if you ride at a high-intensity level.

Carry two waterbottles or the equivalent in a hydration system such as CamelBak.

Drink before you are thirsty. Cool fluids go down more easily. Drink some calories while you're at it. Perhaps half-strength fruit juice, Gatorade—whatever you've tried before that works for you. Lost fluids decrease performance. Dehydration increases heat stress and hyperthermia.

## **Don't Over-Hydrate**

"Drink! Drink! Drink!" Important advice. But too much of a good thing can cause problems too. Unless trained to do so, most athletes can't process more than one quart of fluids per hour.

Too much fluid can cause gastrointestinal bloating.

Too much fluid can also result in low blood sodium—described next.

## **Get Salt**

Water and most fluid replacement drinks don't have enough sodium to replace that lost with sweating. Your body usually has enough sodium reserves for about five quarts of sweat—five hours of moderate exercise in cool conditions or just a couple of hours when working hard in the heat.

Low blood sodium (hyponatremia) is the main medical problem necessitating emergency treatment and hospitalization in endurance aerobic sports such as centuries and marathons.

Most riders should plan on consuming salty foods the day before and the breakfast of their century.

Most prepared foods (sandwiches, cookies, muffins) are high in sodium.

Consume salty snacks during long rides, and choose fluids, bars, and gels with high-sodium content.

## **Eat**

The century will use up a lot of calories—at least 2,500. You need to eat before you ride (have a good breakfast). You need to eat while you ride, and during rest stops along the way. Try to average at least 300 calories per hour. Fig bars, bananas, bagels, energy bars, carbohydrate gels. They all work as energy sources. As stated above, try foods before your event to see what you like and make sure they agree with you.

## **Consider Caffeine**

A little caffeine before and during the ride may help delay fatigue and keep you going. Don't try this for the first time on the day of your event—if you are interested, try it before. (Caffeine, a diuretic, may also mean you have to stop more often to urinate.)

## **Maps & Directions**

Read over your training route or century route before you start riding. We will provide these on our training rides, and event promoters provide them for us on the day of the big event. Carry maps with you.

## **Train Right**

Build up your mileage systematically and progressively. Increase mileage no more than 10-15% weekly. Plan to allow for proper rest and recovery. Taper slightly before your event.

## **Train for Speed**

Ride 10% of your weekly mileage above event-pace.

## **Pace Yourself**

Don't go out too fast. Ride steadily. Use your gears. Effort surges may be incorporated into training, but reduce overall individual best time. Too much early enthusiasm can lead to exhaustion later in the day. Know your limits. Deliberately hold yourself back a little at the beginning—you will be able to finish more strongly at the end.

## **Rest a Little If You Need To**

If you need a breather and to sit down for a few minutes, that's fine. But don't sit around too long, or stiffness and lack of motivation may overcome you.

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Six stops with just ten extra wasted minutes each add up to an extra hour of time. You might enjoy those 60 minutes—and that's fine. If you are a slow rider, keep in mind that you may not have that luxury if you want to finish within the time cutoff.

Apart from one major refueling break, keep stops short.

### **Change Positions**

Don't get locked into the same position. Stand up, shrug your shoulders, move your arms, wiggle your fingers and toes. Learn to stretch and relax on the bike.

### **Ride With a Group, Draft Efficiently**

Riding in the slipstream of others at speed often reduces the work by about 25 percent. Find the right group to help you keep your average speed faster than you could accomplish alone. Riding with others is also less mentally fatiguing, and helps the time pass more easily.

Be cautious about riding too closely to riders whose skills you do not know.

### **Watch the Climbs**

Stronger riders: Pushing a little on the climbs in the event will improve your overall time. Weaker riders: Be conservative when climbing. Save your energy—you've got a long way to go.

The lead rider of a paceline reduces the usual intensity effort when at the front on a climb—since following riders are not receiving as much aerodynamic benefit as on level ground.

### **Breathing**

Especially when climbing or riding hard on level ground, concentrate on your breathing. Get a rhythm coordinated with your pedal stroke—you'll go faster.

### **Think Positive**

Motivation improves performance. Focus on your goals, train properly, and go to your event with confidence.

Remember why you are riding before you even start. It will help you if you face a crisis.

Look at the century as ten 10-mile rides. By breaking it down into sections, it's less overwhelming.

If you can get a cheering group positioned at the halfway point, it may provide a morale boost.

Plan on a reward at the end of the ride, and focus on it if the going gets tough near the end.

### **Keep It Safe**

Obey the vehicle code. Obey all traffic rules as if you were a motor vehicle.

Wear a helmet and cycling gloves.

Pay attention to the road. Keep alert for cars, other cyclists, road hazards, dogs. Learn and practice defensive riding.

Ride straight. Don't cut people off, and don't shave fractions of a second cutting corners too fast. Don't ride over your skill level, putting yourself in dangerous situations.

Centuries attract riders with a wide range of abilities and skills. Ride defensively. Give riders you don't know a wide berth. Let more space open up between riders close to you when descending, riding around corners, and on poor pavement.

### **Allow Yourself to Have a Bad Day**

Wake up and feel sick? Having problems with altitude? Just not sure why you don't feel well?

Don't place unreasonable demands on your body. Allow yourself to ride more slowly than your original goal, or to choose a shorter route. It's okay. Even Olympians feel poorly some days.

Regardless of whether you ride a century or not, remember the real contribution you have made to finding a cure for leukemia and lymphoma.

### **Obey Time Cut-Offs**

Most centuries require you to finish in daylight. This is generally a civil, county, or state permit requirement placed on the promoter.

Cut-offs also make good sense because aid stations close, medical and other support vanishes, event-day vehicular traffic control disappears, and riding in the dark is inherently more dangerous.

If you can't keep the required pace, allow yourself to be sagged (carried in a vehicle) out of the event or forward to a spot that will allow you to finish in time.

Team in Training is very concerned about rider safety. Please support the Team in its safety efforts by obeying time cut-offs.

### **Keep It Fun**

You're doing this for fun. It's not a job. Enjoy the scenery, make new friends.

Avoid placing too many demands on yourself. Keep your perspective. Concentrate on what you can do, not what you can't. **GO TEAM!**