

**Safety and Education**  
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**Ride Farther, Ride Faster, Move Up**  
**Part 1 of 2**

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**INTRODUCTION**

It was Sunday morning, and I was standing in the hot sun, sweating, and eating my second piece of pizza. I had just finished PEDAL Hilton and was standing with a group of KABC riders telling white lies about how fast we had gone and congratulating each other on completion of an EPIC ride.

One of our fellow riders approached me with a recommendation. He said that there were lots of club riders who wanted to get faster, ride farther, and move up, but they didn't quite know how. He added that perhaps I could provide a few articles on how those aspiring riders might improve their fitness. He explained that the articles needed to be free of complexity and technical jargon.....I needed to make it easy to follow.

Okay. So here it is: a two-part mini-series. This week (Part 1) explains that you don't really need to ride all-day every day to achieve better fitness. Next week (part 2) is a training plan prepared for you. Easy, right?

Take a look, then take the challenge. See you at the other end of six weeks.

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**The Most Efficient Way to Perform Cycling Endurance Training**

SAVE TIME WHILE BUILDING YOUR FITNESS WITH THIS APPROACH.

By Selene Yeager / Published: Feb 9, 2023 / Bicycling.com

Most of the time, when we talk about cycling endurance training, we think of long, low-intensity miles. You spend anywhere from six to 16 weeks clocking hours on the bike so you can build your [aerobic system](#) and make those long hours feel easier.

While it's true this long and slow method to building [endurance](#) is effective, it's not the only (or always the best) option. For those of us who can't get up and ride for four to six hours a day, a schedule-friendly method called [polarized training](#) presents a practical way to build cycling endurance on a time budget.

Here's everything you need to know about this type of training and how it can improve your cycling endurance and your rides.

## The Benefits of Polarized Training for Cycling Endurance

As the name implies, polarized training emphasizes the opposite ends of the training spectrum. That means, in any given week, you do both really [hard efforts](#) and [easy aerobic rides](#)—the best of both worlds. It's a bit controversial (polarizing?) in the sports science community, mostly because they're used to half-day base slogs. But this method is backed by a body of sound research.

"Ultimately, your 'base' comes down to your [mitochondrial](#) capacity," says exercise physiologist Paul Laursen, Ph.D., of the training service lab [Plews and Prof.](#) "Research shows that while longer, lower-intensity exercise increases the number of mitochondria in your cells, [high-intensity training](#) makes those mitochondria more powerful."

Plus, when you do a set (or especially multiple sets) of [high-intensity intervals](#), your heart rate stays elevated during your "recovery" periods, which benefits your aerobic energy systems—especially as the session progresses, says Laursen.

However you slice it, [interval training](#) undoubtedly builds cycling endurance, even if you're already pretty fit. "Our research has found that when well-trained cyclists performed two interval sessions a week for three to six weeks, their [VO2 max](#), peak aerobic-[power output](#), and endurance performance improved by 2 to 4 percent," Laursen says.

To that end, the best way to build endurance is by blending the distribution of your training so about 80 percent of your rides are in those aerobic 'zone 2' intensities (in terms of [heart-rate zones](#)) and about 20 percent are performed at high and very-high intensities, or a blend of zones 3 to 5 throughout the week, says Laursen.

## The Ultimate Endurance Training Interval

Cyclists looking to build endurance via interval training should perform [intervals](#) ranging between 30 seconds to 5 minutes, at a very hard intensity. These build your aerobic system while also being hard enough to recruit some [fast-twitch sprint fibers](#), which makes those power-producing fibers more resistant to fatigue over time.

“Performing three to six of these [leg-burning efforts](#), allowing one to two minutes of recovery in between, can have impressive effects,” says Laursen. As you gain fitness, increase the number of reps and the intensity.

Aim to perform these sessions twice a week, allowing at least one day of [recovery](#) in between. Then do the rest of the week’s riding at a moderate aerobic pace. Keep in mind, too, that if you’re planning to do a [100-mile ride](#), you still need to clock some longer days in the saddle so you can be comfortable on the bike, [practice pacing](#), and dial in your [nutrition](#) and [hydration](#)—all things that shorter interval workouts can’t do.

Finally, remember that interval training, though beneficial, is also stressful. It’s essential that you not only include easy days and [rest days](#) in your weekly endurance [training plan](#), but also that you eat a [balanced diet](#), get adequate [sleep](#), and be mindful of your general recovery.

If you don’t, “you can end up fit but unhealthy, with high levels of stress hormones and [inflammation](#) that can do real damage over time,” Laursen says. “It’s all about balance.”

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Okay riders, that’s the introduction. Are you up for this? If so, I’ve made it easy. Check in next week for a completed six-week training plan to get you on your way. Until then,

Make Every Ride Epic,

Darryl