

Getting Ready for a 120 to 140 km Event

The 8-week training schedule below will get you through an event with a smile on your face. I'm assuming that you can ride about 25 kilometres when you start the program. I'm also assuming that your training time is limited. Isn't everyone's? The plan starts with only about 4 hours a week on the bike and gradually builds to 9 hours. An event can be done on such a modest time commitment because it's a one-day ride, not a multiday tour requiring consecutive long days in the saddle. As a result, each event training week includes one long ride. It accustoms you to the endurance demands of the event.

I've also included a weekly fast ride. Studies show that short-but-brisk training sessions provide as much benefit as dawdling through long rides, good news for time-challenged cyclists. Adding intensity to one workout each week develops the power to combat headwinds and hills, and you'll be able to join a fast peline if you choose. ("Pacelines" are groups of cyclists riding together to save energy against the wind.)

In addition to each week's long ride (for endurance) and fast ride (for fitness), add 3 easy spins of about an hour each, for recovery. Separate the endurance (long) ride and the speed ride by at least 2 days. Take 2 days completely off the bike. You can do light exercise such as walking or upper-body weight training if you like.

EIGHT WEEK PROGRAM FOR 120 to 140km EVENT

Notes: The long and fast rides are shown because they change each week. Separate them with at least 2 days, choosing from your 2 rest days and 3 easy days, depending on how you feel.

Week 1

Long Day: 1 hr. and 30 min. at moderate effort (75% of max heart rate)

Fast Day: 1:00 including 5 kms at a brisk pace (about 80%)

Week 2

LD: 1:45 at moderate effort (75%)

FD: 1:00 including 8 kms at a brisk pace (80%)

Week 3

LD: 2:00 at moderate effort (75%)

FD: 1:10 with a long climb (15-20 min.) or against a headwind for 20 min.

Week 4

LD: 2:30 at moderate effort (75%)

FD: 1:10 including 8 kms at a fast pace (85%)

Week 5

LD: 3:00 at moderate effort (75%)

FD: 1:15 including 4 short climbs 20-45 sec.) just below max heart rate

Week 6

LD: 3:30 at moderate effort (75%)

FD: 1:15 with a long climb (15-20 min.) or against headwind for 20 min.

Week 7

LD: 4:00 at moderate effort (75%)

FD: 1:30 including 15 kms at a fast pace (85%)

Week 8

You're almost ready! Here's how to taper during the final week to ride your best.

Monday Endurance: 4:30 at moderate effort (75% of max heart rate)

Tuesday Speed: 1:30 with 5 short climbs (20-45 sec.) at a hard pace (85%)

Wednesday Spin: 1:00 at an easy pace (65%)

Thursday Rest day

Friday Spin: 1:00 at an easy pace (65%)

Sunday: You're ready to ride a Race!

TIPS

Eat Right to Ride Strong and Recover

During the long training rides, get in the habit of nibbling and sipping throughout. The key to endurance is your stomach, not your legs. Even the best-trained riders pack only enough fuel (glycogen) in their muscles for a couple of hours of strenuous cycling. Fluid stores evaporate even faster. Eating and drinking before, during and after the ride is crucial. Remember that fluid replacement is essential during training, too. Routinely drink at least 8 big glasses of water each day.

Make Sure Your Equipment is Up to the Test

Training isn't just for accumulating mileage.

Long rides help you sort out all the logistics and comfort issues that accompany a day in the saddle.

Use your endurance training to test your equipment and food.

Do your shorts chafe?

Is your seat comfortable enough on those longer rides?

What kind of energy bars and sports drinks go down easily?

Training is also the time to get comfortable in a group. If you're apprehensive about group riding, opt to ride the event on your own or with a friend.

Don't Overdo It

Resist the urge to cram extra training into the week of the event.

You're much better off riding fewer miles and starting the Event rested rather than rolling out with heavy tired legs. Cut your mileage by at least half in the 6 days before the ride.

Be Sure to Check Out the Course Beforehand

Find out about the course too.

Is it hilly?

Are headwinds probable?

Severe conditions can add more than an hour to your finishing time.

Pack emergency food and make sure your gearing is low enough for the terrain.

Check to see how many rest stops are provided, where are they and what's on the menu.

If you can't stomach the foods or drinks being offered, carry your own. Or make arrangements with non-riding friends to supply you along the way..