

RIBBLE

GET BACK TO CYCLING

4-Week Training Plan

There really is no time like the present

WELCOME TO THE BACK TO CYCLING PLAN

This plan is designed for riders returning to cycling, those following a structured approach for the first time, or anyone looking for a simple and easy to follow plan. Over four weeks, you'll build general fitness and establish a sustainable cycling routine using straightforward training that works indoors or outdoors.

AFTER FOUR WEEKS

This plan builds general fitness and establishes good habits. After four weeks, you can repeat the plan, try longer rides, or look for more advanced training if you want a new challenge.

The routine you build matters more than the fitness you gain.

WHY THIS PLAN WORKS

Simple and achievable. No complicated training zones or confusing instructions. Just clear guidance on how hard to ride and for how long.

WEEKLY OVERVIEW

Week 1: 4 sessions, 3.0-4.0 hours - Getting started

Week 2: 4 sessions, 3.5-4.5 hours - Building routine

Week 3: 5 sessions, 4.5-5.5 hours - Gaining confidence

Week 4: 5 sessions, 5.0-6.0 hours - Feeling stronger

INDOOR TRAINING OPTIONS

Every session in this plan works perfectly indoors on a turbo trainer or smart trainer. Indoor training removes weather barriers and gives you complete control over your environment.

Platforms like Zwift, TrainingPeaks Virtual and Rouvy provide an engaging place to ride when the weather keeps you inside.

UNDERSTANDING EFFORT LEVELS

This plan uses a simple 1-10 effort scale based on how the ride feels to you. No heart rate monitors or power meters needed - just listen to your body.

Level 1-3: Easy - Gentle spinning. You can chat easily. Feels relaxed. You can do this for hours.

Level 4-5: Comfortable - You can talk normally. Could ride like this for hours. You can do this for 2-3 hours.

Level 6-7: Moderate - Breathing gets heavier. Can speak in short sentences. You can do this for 20-60 minutes.

Level 8-9: Hard - Breathing hard. Few words only. You can do this for 5-20 minutes.

Level 10: Maximum - All-out effort. Can't sustain for long. You can do this for 10-60 seconds.

Your effort level might feel different each day - that's completely normal.

CHOOSING ROUTES

Easy rides (Level 1-4): Pick quiet, flat routes where you can spin the pedals without worrying about traffic or hills.

Steady rides (Level 5-6): Rolling roads work well. Small hills are fine - they add natural variety to your effort.

Harder efforts (Level 7-8): Find stretches where you can ride consistently without stopping for traffic lights or junctions.

Safety first: Always choose safe routes over perfect training routes. A good session completed safely beats a perfect session that puts you at risk.

WHEN YOU'RE UNWELL

Minor cold: If it's just a runny nose or slight headache, an easy spin at Level 2-3 might help you feel better. Skip any harder efforts. Feeling rough: Fever, aches, or feeling genuinely unwell means stay off the bike completely. Rest helps you recover faster.

Getting back: After illness, start with easy rides before returning to the plan. Better to take extra rest than make yourself worse.

MISSED SESSIONS

One session missed: Just carry on with the next planned ride. Don't try to catch up.

Whole week missed: Repeat the previous week before moving forward.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Week 1: Rides might feel easy. That's the point - you're getting back into the habit of riding regularly.

Week 2: You'll feel more comfortable on the bike. The same efforts will feel slightly easier.

Week 3: Clear improvements. You'll recover more quickly and feel stronger during rides.

Week 4: What felt hard in Week 1 now feels manageable. You're ready for more riding.

Normal feelings: Some muscle soreness is normal, especially early on. Sharp pain is not normal - listen to your body.

EQUIPMENT

Indoor training: All sessions work on a turbo trainer. Use a fan to keep cool and keep water handy.

Outdoor riding: Fresh air and scenery often make rides more enjoyable and easier to stick with.

Keep it simple: You don't need special equipment. Your bike and basic safety gear is enough.

WEEK 1: GETTING STARTED

4 sessions, 3.0-4.0 hours total

Focus: Getting back into the habit of regular riding.

TUESDAY - EASY RIDE

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Effort: Level 2-4

Purpose: Gentle start to your cycling routine

Keep this relaxed and easy. Think of it as movement rather than exercise. Focus on enjoying being back on the bike and getting comfortable with your position.

FRIDAY - STEADY RIDE

Duration: 35-45 minutes

Structure: 10min easy start (Level 3) + 20min steady pace (Level 5-6) + 10min easy finish (Level 3)

Purpose: Building basic fitness

Find a pace that feels sustainable - you should be able to chat throughout the middle section. This teaches your body to settle into a rhythm.

SATURDAY - LONGER RIDE

Duration: 60-75 minutes

Structure: 15min easy warm-up (Level 3-4) + 40min steady pace (Level 5-6) + 10min easy finish (Level 3)

Purpose: Your longest ride of the week

This is your main ride. The pace should feel comfortable and sustainable. Practice drinking during the ride to build good habits.

SUNDAY - EASY RIDE

Duration: 25-35 minutes

Effort: Level 2-4

Purpose: Gentle recovery ride

Easy spinning to finish the week. If your legs feel heavy, that's normal. Gentle pedaling helps you recover for next week.

WEEK 2: BUILDING ROUTINE

4 sessions, 3.5-4.5 hours total

Focus: Adding a bit more structure while keeping things manageable.

TUESDAY - EASY RIDE

Duration: 35-45 minutes

Effort: Level 2-4

Purpose: Starting the week right

Easy spinning to get ready for the week ahead. Notice how much more comfortable you feel compared to Week 1.

THURSDAY - INTERVALS INTRODUCTION

Duration: 45-55 minutes

Structure: 15min warm-up (Level 3-5) + 3 x 6min moderate (Level 6-7) with 4min easy (Level 3-4) between + 10min cool-down

Purpose: First taste of working a bit harder

The moderate sections should feel comfortably hard - you can still talk, but in shorter sentences.

Don't worry about speed, just focus on effort.

SATURDAY - LONGER WITH EFFORTS

Duration: 65-80 minutes

Structure: 15min warm-up (Level 3-5) + 35min steady (Level 5-6) with 2 x 4min harder efforts (Level 6-7) + 15min easy finish

Purpose: Combining endurance with some harder work

Your longest ride with some harder efforts mixed in. The harder efforts should feel challenging but controlled.

SUNDAY - EASY RIDE

Duration: 35-45 minutes

Effort: Level 2-4

Purpose: Easy end to the week

Gentle ride to finish the week. Notice how your recovery feels compared to Week 1.

WEEK 3: GAINING CONFIDENCE

5 sessions, 4.5-5.5 hours total

Focus: Longer efforts and feeling more confident on the bike.

MONDAY - EASY RIDE

Duration: 35-45 minutes

Effort: Level 2-4

Purpose: Fresh start to your third week

Easy pace to begin Week 3. You should feel much more at home on the bike now.

TUESDAY - LONGER INTERVALS

Duration: 50-60 minutes

Structure: 15min warm-up (Level 3-5) + 2 x 12min moderate (Level 6-7) with 6min easy between + 10min cool-down

Purpose: Sustained moderate efforts

Longer blocks of moderate effort. Focus on maintaining steady effort throughout each 12-minute section.

THURSDAY - STEADY RIDE

Duration: 55-65 minutes

Structure: 15min warm-up (Level 3-4) + 30min steady pace (Level 5-6) + 10min cool-down

Purpose: Building endurance

Comfortable pace for most of this ride. This should feel easier now than it did in Week 1.

SATURDAY - INTERVAL SESSION

Duration: 60-75 minutes

Structure: 20min warm-up (Level 3-5) + 3 x 8min moderate-hard (Level 7-8) with 4min easy between + 15min cool-down

Purpose: Your hardest session yet

Level 7-8 should feel hard but manageable for 8 minutes. Focus on consistent effort rather than going too hard at the start.

SUNDAY - LONG RIDE

Duration: 75-90 minutes

Structure: 20min warm-up (Level 3-4) + 45min steady pace (Level 5-6) + 10min cool-down

Purpose: Your longest ride

Your longest ride of the plan. Keep the effort comfortable and sustainable. Practice drinking and eating during the ride.

WEEK 4: FEELING STRONGER

5 sessions, 5.0-6.0 hours total

Focus: Confirming your fitness gains and feeling confident about your progress.

MONDAY - EASY RIDE

Duration: 40-50 minutes

Effort: Level 2-4

Purpose: Easy start to your final week

Notice how much easier this feels compared to Week 1. Your comfort and confidence should be much improved.

TUESDAY - FITNESS CHECK

Duration: 55-65 minutes

Structure: 15min warm-up (Level 3-5) + 2 x 15min steady-moderate (Level 6-7) with 5min easy between + 10min cool-down

Purpose: Testing your progress

Two blocks of sustained effort to see how your fitness has improved. Compare how you feel to your first intervals in Week 2.

THURSDAY - MIXED EFFORTS

Duration: 60-70 minutes

Structure: 15min warm-up + 35min varied (10min Level 5 + 5min Level 6 + 10min Level 5 + 5min Level 7 + 5min Level 5) + 10min cool-down

Purpose: Practicing different efforts

Variable efforts to practice controlling your pace. These changes should feel smooth and natural now.

SATURDAY - PROGRESS TEST

Duration: 70-85 minutes

Structure: 20min warm-up (Level 3-5) + 30min sustained effort (Level 6-7) + 10min easy recovery + 15min cool-down

Purpose: Seeing how far you've come

A sustained effort to test your progress. This 30-minute block should feel much easier than similar efforts in Week 1.

SUNDAY - CELEBRATION RIDE

Duration: 75-95 minutes

Effort: Level 3-6 as feels good

Purpose: Enjoying your achievements

Ride at whatever effort feels good. You've completed four weeks of consistent training. Enjoy how much stronger you feel.

PLAN COMPLETE - WELL DONE!

Congratulations! You've built fitness and established a solid routine. You should notice:

- Much more comfort and confidence on the bike
- Better recovery between rides
- Clear understanding of how different efforts feel
- A sustainable routine that fits your life

What's next? You can repeat this plan, try longer rides, or look for more advanced training if you want new challenges. The routine you've built is the foundation for whatever comes next.

Most importantly: You've proved that consistent, regular riding works. Keep that routine going. Remember: The best plan is the one you actually finish. Well done.

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