

On paper, recovery rides should be the easiest rides to do. You saddle up, spin for about an hour, and call it good. All too often, however, we screw them up by riding harder than planned, which sets back the recovery process—or worse, makes you slower over time.

If you're training and/or racing, true recovery rides are an essential component of your plan. When you train hard you do damage—that's part of the plan. Your workout breaks down your muscle, empties out your fuel stores, and generally taxes your metabolism above and beyond its status quo. When you recover, your body repairs the damage so you can come back stronger and ready for more. If you skip the recovery part, you're cheating yourself out of the maximum return on your hard work.

Along with eating well and [getting enough sleep](#), recovery rides expedite the rebound process by sending more blood into your damaged muscles to deliver tissue-mending nutrients and flush out metabolic waste. They can also help clear up post-race brain fog and help you maintain the general flow and habit of training and riding, so you don't lose momentum.

RELATED: [Ride Hard, Recover Harder](#)

You should work recovery rides into your [training schedule](#) once or twice a week following super hard training days and/or races. To do them right they should feel really easy—like ridiculously easy. You should pick the flattest route possible; keep it short—90 minutes max, 30 to 45 is usually plenty; and maintain a very low level of exertion: a 1 to 2 on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the hardest), about 60 to 65% of max heart rate, and/or no more than about 50% of your [functional threshold power](#). Your legs should feel a bit lighter and fresher when you're done.

Here are 7 ways to get your recovery rides right:

Go solo: It's pretty much impossible to do a recovery ride with a group, because it takes too much willpower to resist getting sucked into going faster and harder than intended. Use the time to go out alone and spin your legs and clear your mind.

[Get someone riding:](#) If you'd rather not ride alone, you can use your recovery rides as a time to play on bikes with your kids or to get a new friend or family member riding. You won't go very far or very fast, and the focus is on them having fun.

RELATED: [How to Recover from Hard Rides](#)

Go ahead and call it "Recovery Ride" on Strava: If you really hate seeing those super slow speeds and average mphs on Strava, but you don't want to lose those miles on your annual log, then go ahead and label your recovery ride something like "Easy Like Sunday Morning Recovery Spin." That way you can feel proud of just how slow you can go.

Change bikes: Got an old beater or [townie bike](#)? Recovery rides are the perfect time to break them out because they don't scream, "Speed up!"

Dress down for it: Keep your club, team, and/or fast, fitted kit in the drawer and pull on some [casual riding-around-town attire](#) instead. Then go spin around your neighborhood or ride to your local rail trail or park.

Use your gadgets: It's tempting to turn off the metrics when you're out for a recovery ride. But this might be the time you need them most to keep you honest. If you have a heart rate monitor and/or [power meter](#), use it.

Do something else: If you really don't feel like riding slow, do something else. Activities like easy laps at the pool, [gentle yoga](#), walking the dogs, even going for a light jog (assuming you regularly run) can do the trick. Easy cross-training can also help you get stoked to get back on the bike after hard days in the saddle.