

TRAINING FUNDAMENTALS

by Selene Yeager

1. **Have a plan.** You may be able to get pretty fit by winging it, but truly remarkable accomplishments, whether upgrading to Cat 3 or scoring a belt buckle in the Leadville 100, require careful execution of a training program.
2. **Be prepared to scrap the plan.** You're scheduled for 20 minutes of pyramid intervals, but your legs feel like you spent the last few days constructing a real pyramid. Spin today. Hit it hard tomorrow instead. Your plan should be etched in clay for molding to your needs, not in stone for beating yourself up.
3. **Ride at the edges.** Once a week, go so hard your eyes hurt. Follow it with a ride so slow the snails yawn. The combination makes legs strong.
4. **Be true to yourself.** Cyclists are pack animals. Enjoy the camaraderie, but don't let your training goals get trashed by constant king-of-the-mountain contests, town-sign sprints or the all-hard, all-the-time mentality of the group. If you can't trust yourself to go easy when you need to, ride alone.
5. **Do what sucks.** You hate climbing because it's hard for you. You should climb--because it's hard for you.
6. **Think improvement.** Do more than log miles. Intervals, cadence rides and other specific workouts are designed to progressively challenge your body in different ways from week to week. Give every ride a goal.
7. **Maintain the human machine.** The gym is your body shop. Visit twice a week to strengthen your core and other stabilizing muscle groups. And don't forget to stretch. By keeping your supporting muscles strong and joints flexible you can avoid an achy back, tight hip flexors and other overuse pains that can weaken even the strongest cyclist.
8. **Train your brain.** Your body can do more than you think. Convince your brain through positive thinking and visualization. You'll be surprised at what you accomplish when you say you can.
9. **Eat.** Fuel your workouts with the food you eat on race day. You'll ride faster in practice and digest better when it counts. Experiment: There are dozens of energy concoctions for a reason. No one thing works for everyone.
10. **Enjoy the ride.** You already have a job. Work hard at cycling, but never make it work.