

PREPARATION

Preparation Checklist:

Follow these helpful hints to get you started... Organise a training partner/buddy
It's easier to train with friends so ask around and see if someone else can join you on regular training sessions. It's hard to miss a session if you know that the other person or group will be disappointed if you do not turn up. What better way to train than to end the ride with a social coffee?

Check your equipment

Do your training on the bike you are going to ride on for Gear up Girl. If you need to change or upgrade equipment do it as early as possible. New handlebars, pedals or seats can mean dramatic changes to your riding comfort and style that you may or may not like.

Have your bike checked mechanically

Take your bike to a bike shop to get it safety checked and adjusted. You should book your bike in at least a month before the event if major repairs are needed, this will allow time for you to 'test ride' your bike. If your bike is kept in good mechanical order, prior to coming on Gear up Girl you should lubricate the chain and check the adjustment on all moving parts particularly brakes and gears (see also *Is Your Bike As Fit As You Are?*).

Set up your optimum riding position

Taking the time and effort to set up your bike properly is the best way to ensure happy and comfortable cycling. When your bike is carefully adjusted to fit your particular body size and shape you'll feel more relaxed and will be able to ride longer distances with less effort. Once you have made the adjustments recommended below, ride gently for the next few days to give your body time to adjust to the new settings.

To set up your bike for an optimum riding position you will need a few bike tools and may need a friend to assist you. Or, get your local bike shop to help you.

Foot position

If you have clipless pedals you can make this adjustment by clipping your shoes into the pedal and adjusting the cleat fixing bolts. The ball of your foot should be centred over the pedal axle. For small feet and high rpm (revolutions per minute) pedalers, place the ball of your foot slightly behind the centre. If you have toe clips there should be a 2mm clearance between your shoe and the clip.

Seat position

First adjust your seat so that the top surface is parallel with the road surface. Then set the seat height the following way: With the crank arm at the bottom and top of the revolution sit on the seat and place your heel (shoes on) on the top of the pedal. With the seat height correctly adjusted your leg should be in the straight "locked" position. Make sure to take account of oversize heels on your shoes if you have extra thick soles.

Seat front/back adjustment

Sit on your bike in your normal riding position with the cranks in the 3 and 9 o'clock position. Your seat is correctly positioned when your tibial tuberosity (the bump at the top of the shin bone) is 1cm behind the pedal axle. You may need a plumb line and a helper to make this adjustment and you may have to readjust the seat height if you move the seat significantly.

Stem & handlebars

Correct stem height can be between level with the seat height or 6cm below. The generally preferred range is 2.5 to 4.5cm lower. To ensure good chest expansion and breathing your handlebars should be as wide as your shoulders. On a mountain or hybrid bike some riders may prefer a more upright riding position with a higher stem position. Bar extensions and narrower handlebars will give you a greater variety of comfortable hand positions and also place your upper body in a slightly lower position to reduce your overall resistance to the wind.

Adjusting to your new position

It takes time to settle in to the new position and you may still have to do some fine-tuning. Overall you should feel much better when you ride and less strained when you arrive back home.

Check your setup

When you have made your new bike setup adjustments, go for a short ride and monitor your riding position. Get a friend to accompany you on their bike so that they can observe your riding position from the side and rear. Your riding position should feel very comfortable and not stressed and your legs should feel that they are almost fully extended with each pedal stroke. If your pelvis rocks from side to side on your seat then it is set too high. Make new adjustments and try again until you feel comfortable.

Wear the right clothing

Clothing designed for cycling is very comfortable and moves with your skin without chafing and rubbing.

More practical information

Download the [Cycle Instead: Guide for new and rusty riders](#) for more useful cycling tip and information.

Practice group riding techniques

If you are new to riding in large groups you should try to ride at least some of your training runs with groups of six or more riders in a bunch. Be predictable and ride a straight line. Remember if you tip the wheel in front it is almost always you who falls!

You might also like to check out the bunch riding tips on the [Bicycle SA website](#), which are particularly useful if you are not used to riding as part of a group.

Brush up on your road rules

As much of the ride is going to be on the roads, it is important to be up to speed on the road rules and be aware of your rights and responsibilities as a road user. Check the SA Government website for more details and make sure your bike has a bell on it. <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/driving-and-transport/cycling/cyclist-road-rules-and-safety>
The [Cycling and the Law booklet](#) is also a good resource to explore

Warm up before you start

Don't rush into strenuous riding when your muscles are cold. Always warm up gently before you set out from home. Remember, warm muscles stretch best so do a few stretches when you finish your daily ride.

During the day DRINK, DRINK, DRINK!

The moisture you sweat out on the road has to be replaced so you must drink lots of water as you ride. Always carry a water bottle and/or hydration pack and make sure these are filled at the start. All refreshment stations are signposted. In hot weather adding some hydration fuel to your water will help you retain and use your water more efficiently. Food is also important. Don't forget your sound carbohydrate dinner and breakfast and take some high-energy snack food with you to eat along the way. It can be good to carry a few Jelly Beans as a sugar hit to help you get through the last few kilometres.

Have a great ride

Gear Up Girl SA is designed to be an enjoyable day out so don't get so obsessed with your riding that you miss the fabulous scenery or the great company of hundreds of like minded travellers. When you finally cruise into the finish you'll know that all the good preparation you've put in was well worthwhile.

Take a few pictures along the way

Taking a small camera with you to record those great scenes and capture shots of those new friends you will meet along the journey is a great idea. That way you will slow down and enjoy the whole experience.

Want more training information?

The best place to find out more about cycling for fitness is to join a cycling group or club. Visit the [Bicycle SA website](#) for FREE Rides Programme details, which lists your nearest social ride.

Preparation Program

A training guide to help you prepare

If you can ride a bike but have been too busy to start training, this 4 week training guide will help you prepare for Gear up Girl. If you are not regularly active, or are over the age of 35 years, we recommend you see your general practitioner for a check up before starting this program. If at any time during the program you feel pain, discomfort or dizziness, you should stop immediately and see your GP.

Anyone with relatively good fitness will be able to complete the ride, which is why we have also included days of Active Living (AL), which are alternative activities of moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes. For example, swimming, jogging, gardening or walking.

Before starting the program:

- Have your bike checked for safety by a bicycle mechanic
- Ensure your helmet is Australian Standards approved (the red sticker with ticks) and is in good order with no cracks
- You should ride with at least two 750ml water bottles on your bike, or a backpack hydration system that can hold at least 1.5 litres of fluid
- Other helpful items are cycling gloves, nicks (padded lycra shorts), and a small saddle bag with basic tools such as spare tube and tyre levers
- Source out some local bike lanes or bikeways for your training. A good way to do this is to drive the routes and note distances. Yes, you need to find some routes with hills! E.g. you might map out an 'easy loop' and a 'challenge' loop. The Travel Smart maps (free from Bicycle SA) include cycle lanes.

Training rides

- If you're going on a large or multi-day ride we encourage you to do as much bike riding as possible, either by yourself or with friends or family. Every hour in the saddle will make the event that much easier.
- Start off with a number of training rides of about 30km along bike paths and trails in the local area. At first 30km may sound exhausting, but regular weekly rides will build stamina.
- Be sure to increase the amount of effort you put into your training rides. You won't increase your stamina or fitness if you are not forcing yourself to exercise more strenuously.
- You don't necessarily have to start on roads, but eventually ween yourself off quieter paths and trails – especially if you're working towards a tour or multi-day event.
- Add 5–10km each week after the training-ride period to slowly increase your distance. Many back streets are ideal for group training as traffic is minimal.
- For the last ten minutes of the ride change into an easy gear and gently spin home. This will help prevent the 'dead leg' syndrome when you're finished – a problem caused by lactic acid pooling.
- Resting your muscles is just as important as the physical training itself. Listen to your body. You can seriously affect your progress if you over-train.

If you can find a friend to train with, this is a big help - as it will ensure you do get out of bed because your friend is waiting down the street for you! What better way to spend your training time cycling and chatting with friends?

Suggested training program: Four-week 'Build-Up Programme'

| Week | Longest Weekly Ride | Other weekly rides | Total distance |
|------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 15km | 5km, 10km | 30km |
| 2 | 20km | 10km, 15km | 45km |
| 3 | 25km | 15km, 20km | 60km |
| 4 | 30km | 20km, 25km | 75km |

Some tips for cycle training:

Drink plenty of water during the ride, e.g. have a good sip every 15 minutes to stay hydrated

For a long ride you might also like to take some light snacks or energy bars

Ensure your diet is healthy and includes food from all the food groups, including carbohydrates. This is especially important for active people, as these types of food are fuel for the body.

Following each ride, include a 15-minute stretching routine to keep your muscles from tightening and help prevent injuries. This will also help you become more flexible

In the first few weeks of the program, ride the hills in an easy gear so you don't fatigue your muscles, and gradually build up to using harder gears.

Intervals are great for fitness, and are included in the program below. Generally 'easy' means you can still talk while riding in this phase. 'Hard' means you are puffing - and 'please don't ask me any questions during this phase! Always finish each interval session with easy cycling to recover your breathing.