

There are many ways to arrange a sprint workout. The most important variable is the reality factor: as much as possible you should practice sprints that look, feel, sound and smell like race finishes. Having said that, the following is a workout that hits all the essential physical elements of sprinting. These exercises can be fun no matter how much you've been riding recently. If the other elements of your training are in place, these exercises can help with your race finishes. If you haven't developed a good aerobic base, base training will be more useful than sprint drills. Before you attempt the workouts, make sure you know how many teeth you have on your cassette and chain-ring gears. If you are sprinting on open, public roads, agree with your partners that you will abort a sprint drill if there is danger from a car or other obstacle.

Start by warming up at an endurance pace for at least 30 minutes before the first effort. Add two efforts per week starting with two efforts the first week you practice sprinting.

**Warm-up Drills:** complete your warm up with four to seven of these efforts

**1) Spins**

- A) On level ground, roll along at about 90 rpm. Remaining seated, wind up to maximum speed in a 39x17 or 50x21. Hold max speed for about five seconds. Do two of these. Note your maximum speed so you can compare from week to week.
- B) On level ground, roll along at about 90 rpm. Remaining seated wind up to maximum speed in a 39x15 or 50x19. Hold max speed for about five seconds. Do two of these.

**2) Jumps**

- A) On level ground roll along at about 4 mph in a 53x17 or 50x16. Stand and jump as hard as you can until you are completely wound out. Hold top speed and continue to try to accelerate for about five seconds. Do three of these. For one of them stay out of the saddle the whole time. Sit when you feel like it on the other two. Very strong riders can use the 53x15 or 50x14.

**Hard Work-out drills:** Pick enough of these to finish out your session. Allow a minimum of five minutes easy rolling between efforts. You get the best value by doing each exercise twice. The first one should give some ideas of what to try differently on the second. Never practice the same sprint more than twice in a row. Come back to it next week. If you have a rider who is much weaker than the other members of the group, give them a role. For example, the weaker rider could break away early and serve as a rabbit for the rest of the group, or the weaker rider could do the initial lead-out. Quit when you've done the appropriate number for the week or when you are tired and no longer able to make a really good effort. The stronger the sprinter, the fewer efforts s/he'll be able to do.

**1) Real sprints**

- A) Pick a finish line. Use whatever gear you like. Accelerate to about 20 miles per hour (a little slower for a Women 4 group or a young junior group, a little faster for an elite men's group) somewhere around 1000 meters before the line. Pick a distance you think you can sprint and go all out for the line from that point. Try to accelerate continuously all the way to the line. Add as much variety as you can by choosing up-hill, down-hill, left-turn, right-turn and U-turn sprints. If the challenge of negotiating the chosen course at speed is daunting, you've probably chosen a good one. Never do the same sprint more than twice in one session.
- B) Up-shifts: Same as above but start in a gear you know will be too low and up-shift mid-way through the sprint.
- C) Simple Lead out: Designate one member of your group to get the group up to speed and then pull off. The remaining members of the group then sprint for the line.

- D) **Team Lead out:** If you have enough riders, divide them up into groups of two or three and make each group a team. Let the teams compete to lead out their sprinters for a win. Don't keep the teams cleanly separated. Sneak into or disrupt each others' lines.
- E) **Bridging Intervals.** Give all members of your group a number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5...) Divide your group in two. Have the even numbers go in the front group and the odds in the back. Have the two groups ride at the same pace but with a 100-yard gap between them. Person 1 from the back group attacks from the back and attempts to bridge to the front group. When s/he arrives in front s/he calls out her number and rider 2 drops back. When rider 2 arrives in back, rider 3 bridges up and sends 4 back. When the groups are completely exchanged, the highest even number rider attacks and the highest odd numbered rider comes back and so on. You'll have to fudge something if you have an odd number of riders. Adjust the speed and the gap to make the bridging effort take 20-40 seconds. Longer as you get stronger. Some riders may not be strong enough to complete the bridge. Let another rider take the weaker rider across the gap.

**2) Gut Busting Efforts:** Mix these with the realistic sprints until you are exhausted.

- A) **Triple jump:** Starting at about 15 mph and 70 rpm, jump as hard as you can for 10 seconds, rest for ten seconds, up-shift one or two gears and jump as hard as you can for ten more seconds, rest for ten seconds, up-shift a third time and jump as hard as you can for ten more seconds. Ouch!
- B) **Lead out train:** Designate one member of your group to get the group up to speed, then pull off. Each additional member of the group pulls as long as they can before pulling off. Keep going until everyone has had a go or until you are all wasted. Put your slower riders at the front so everyone gets a chance to pull.

**3) Your own ideas:**

The more your sprints resemble real race finishes the better. The more artificially structured they are, the less realistic. Allow people to go early, take advantage of distractions, use the shoulder. Mix it up.



Photo by Susan Yost