

Benefits of High Cadence

One of the advantages of the compact crankset for the recreational cyclist is that it promotes the use of higher cadences. Cadence is simply described as the speed at which you are pedaling and is measured in RPMs. Cyclists may have a natural inclination for either high cadence riding or low cadence pedaling in a big gear. Despite this, most recreational cyclists can see improvements by working on maintaining a higher cadence.

The first reason is a reduction in knee strain. A mistake common to newbie cyclists is that they go out and push big gears up steep hills without much of a fitness base. Riding huge gears at relatively low cadences may work for professional time trialists, but the average cyclist could be putting unwanted stress on the knees, especially if he or she hasn't been properly fitted on the bike. Swapping out a standard road crankset with a 53 tooth big ring for the 50 tooth big ring on a compact crank can force riders into a higher cadence and save their knees in return.

Higher cadence also has the tactical advantage of faster accelerations. Coach Levi from CoachLevi.com describes it like this, "Spinning fast in a low gear allows for faster accelerations, because you can bump up your cadence even more to increase your speed. If you need to shift gears, that's also easier, since the drive-train is under less stress." This can be a very useful tool for riders who are getting used to riding in a group. A sure sign of an inexperienced cyclist is the inability to stay with a group when speeds change rapidly.

High cadence, lower gear riding can also be a useful tool for the rider just looking to gain a little fitness and lose a little weight. Studies have shown that more fat calories are burned during low intensity / high duration exercise, than are burned during high intensity / short duration exercise. Although fat burning and endurance training can benefit all riders, those who participate in moderately paced group rides and charity rides will probably be best served.