

Iron Horse Training

What is Cadence?

Cadence, also known as leg speed, is simply the speed at which you turn the cranks, measured in revolutions per minute (rpm). However, bound into the concept of cadence is the idea that some rpms are better than others. Low cadence cycling requires us to push harder on the pedals, high cadence cycling requires us to spin the pedals faster. Recommended cadence or leg speed for beginners to accomplish the ride to Silverton is 80-100 RPM.

Why is Cadence important?

Cadence is important because it allows the cyclist to pedal efficiently, making it easier on the legs and especially the knees. The best cadence is a balance between leg speed and pedal pressure, but as a cyclist puts more energy into the task, both increase. So, the beginner cyclist will pedal at 60 rpm going 10 miles an hour, the intermediate cyclist will spin at 80 rpm going 15 miles an hour, and the advanced cyclist will twirl at 100 rpm going 20 miles an hour.

Now if the beginner cyclists were strong enough to stand and pedal the whole distance up the mountain, they could do that, but it makes much better sense to gear down, sit down, and keep the cadence up. The length of the climb makes a difference.

Finding Cadence / Leg Speed

Finding your current cadence is easily determined by counting, for one full minute, the number of times your leg makes a full revolution. It is common that a cyclist who is just starting out will have a cadence or leg speed of 50 to 60 rpm. Also, most beginners probably are riding at a cadence that is below their optimum. Cadence can be increased through training.