

Cueing and Leading an Indoor Cycling Class

By Chris Kostman

Volume and Speaking Level

Spend time figuring out the appropriate volume settings for the sound system. Keep in mind that they will not remain constant over time due to a variety of factors: your tapes will inevitably not be recorded at the same level; the sound system's master setting may be adjusted; the ambient sound in the room will vary due to the number of students as well as sound intruding from outside the classroom.

Do not blow out the eardrums of your students with loud music or your voice. Contrarily, don't make it so low that it's just background elevator music. Students should *feel* the music as the road! My observation in general is that new instructors set the music volume *too low* and their microphone level *too high*. Students should feel and hear the music primarily; your voice should be *inserted* carefully into the music only when necessary to guide the class, cue about body position, or motivate.

Modulate your voice volume level as appropriate to the song and moment in the class. Sometimes it's literally a whisper. Other times it's strong and attention-getting. During warm-up and cool-down it's always soft and smooth. During the cool-down, gradually lower your voice until you don't even need a mic for the last few minutes. Remember, the class should be a smooth transition from outside world, into class, through the class, out of the class, and into the outside world.

Cueing

First and foremost, DO NOT speak in command form. Avoid telling students what to do. Most people are unfortunately told what to do all day long; don't be yet another voice in their head giving them instructions. Remember, this is their ride, not yours. You are a tour guide, not Tony Robbins. Students should get into the ride, not be constantly harangued or badgered by an instructor who doesn't know when to zip it.

So, a few tips for effective cueing:

- Avoid saying anything that you would say to a dog.
-Ex: Instead of "sit down" or "take a seat," say "take it down" or just "and down."
- Avoid the command form in sentences.
-Ex: Instead of "relax your shoulders," say "shoulders relaxed" or instead of "turn the knob to the right," say "let's add a little bit more resistance."

- Avoid verbs as much as possible.
 - Ex: Instead of "add more resistance," say "and a little bit more" or instead of saying "stand very tall," say "nice and tall, no weight on the hands."

Observing a Class

Remember this is a group of twenty, thirty, or more *individuals*. Pay close attention to *each and every one of your students as individuals*. Observe many, many things about each student:

Legs and lower body:

- Is the bike set up right and are the toe straps snug?
- Is legspeed appropriate to the ride? Too fast, too slow, or what?
- Are they riding on the beat if that is the intention?
- Are the feet staying more or less parallel to the ground?
- Are knees going straight up and down, in line with the toes, and parallel to one another?
- Are hips stable in the saddle or rocking back and forth?

Upper body:

- Is pelvis rotated forward?
- Is spine straight?
- Are the shoulders relaxed?
- Are the elbows bent towards the earth?
- Is there no weight on the hands?
- Is their face relaxed, calm, and smiling, or grimaced and scowling?
- Are hands in the right position on the bars?

Other:

- Are they drinking water regularly?
- Are they getting into the ride?
- Is the vast majority of the group staying up with the class?
- Are people motivated to stay with it to the very end?
- Are people burning out on a particular movement, position, song?
- Do they need a breather?
- Are they having a good time and enjoying themselves?

Also remember that this is *a group activity!* Are they cohesive as a group, interacting with one another, and enjoying the activity as a whole? Or are they thirty individuals doing thirty different rides and ignoring you? Are you being effective at bringing them together as a group, as well as making eye contact and acknowledging them individually by name? In other words, is there a team spirit and sense of working towards a goal as a group made up of individuals, progressing through time and improving?