

Design and Flow of an Indoor Cycling Class

By Chris Kostman

Getting Class Started

Identify newcomers immediately. Greet them. Learn their names. Set them up on a bike of their choosing using proper biomechanical positioning; be sure to tighten their toe straps. If there is just one or two newcomers, then explain flywheel/fixed gear system, resistance control, emergency brake, etc. one at a time. If more than two newcomers and pressed for time, then explain to group from instructor bike via microphone.

Always make the safety announcements to every class at start of class:

- No coasting.
- Three ways to slow down: slow legs; add resistance; use emergency brake.
- Move leg out to side if feet come out.
- "This is your workout; you don't have to keep up with anyone. If we're going too fast, too hard, or out of the saddle too much, then sit down and back off; it's no big deal."
- "If you come three times a week for a month, you'll be a machine at this."

Class Format

First song is always a warm-up with little or no resistance, pedaling at a moderate speed. Cue about relaxed shoulders, elbows bent towards the earth, hand position one, spine straight, abs sucked in a bit.

Second song should usually be a seated climb. Cue to keep increasing resistance until the legs are on the beat of the music, working the whole circle. Take them onto a standing climb (hand position three, upper body hinged forward) during the second song or definitely by the third song. This progression provides an ideal and reasonable warming up process. (Going straight into fast legs spikes the heartrate up too quickly and doesn't allow the muscles of the body to warm up well, which is why we start with climbing BEFORE fast legs, running, or jumps.)

Last song is always a cool-down with appropriate music and volume down a bit; also, speak more softly or even don't use the microphone: no resistance on the bike, pedaling smoothly and softly all the way through the song. After one to three minutes just riding smoothly in hand position one, lead a variety of upper body stretches (neck, shoulders, chest, etc.) while still pedaling, then as song ends, lower body stretches, both on and off the bike. REMEMBER: no stretches with only one foot in the pedals, i.e. one leg up on the bars while still in the saddle. Do all one legged stretches OFF the bike completely.

Cueing

LESS IS MORE!!!!!!! Most new instructors are in the habit of talking too much. This is annoying, for cycling classes are intended for participants

to let themselves go and have their own ride. They can't do this if they're constantly being told what to do and made to change riding style, technique, or position every eight counts. Also, RELAX! Don't be nervous. This is a cycling class, not Congress or cancer.

Cueing first and foremost is about proper biomechanics and body alignment: •shoulders relaxed. •elbows bent towards the earth. •spine straight. •hinge forward at the hips. •abs sucked in a bit. •pedal in smooth, perfect circles, keeping knees straight over the toes. •keep your leg speed on the beat of the music (most of the time).

Flow

Keep class moving! This is a ride, not a series of different, isolated exercises. Don't feel compelled to change movements every song, let alone during songs. Only perfect practice makes perfect, so let members get into what they are doing by spending at least one song at a time doing the various movements: climbing in or out of the saddle, running, etc. most of the time. Obviously, you can break things up and pair different movements during some songs; just don't do that all the time.

Your class will flow better if you keep the class doing whatever they are doing ALL THE WAY to the end of each particular song. In other words, hold them there until the final beat of the song; don't back off or take a water break twenty seconds before each song ends. Then on most occasions, take them STRAIGHT INTO the next song and its movement or riding style. (Occasionally lead them in a quick water break, but keep it short and simple and you, yourself get into the next song ASAP and let them catch up with you.) This will keep the class going and flowing.

Finally, be especially sure to ride the last three songs this way, with quick, smooth transitions between songs. Keep up the intensity, pace, and motivation straight through these last songs, for this is what they will remember and take with them. Remember: "all's well that ends well."

During songs, flow is achieved by working WITH the music, actually riding the music. Don't use a clock for thirty second intervals or accelerating, running, or whatever; instead, follow the music and lead an interval during a fast, 32 count section of the music (you can still say this will be a thirty second interval if you want to). Count out loud the last eight counts so that members can push themselves extra hard at the end of the interval. The music is the road!!!! Leg speed, intervals, transitions, etc., should almost always be tied into the music in order to let it flow more smoothly and enjoyably. HOWEVER, don't turn it into a math class by counting everything out loud on the beat. Do this in your own head, but verbalize only what is necessary to lead the class and motivate.