

Logging the Winter Miles When the Weather Keeps You Indoors

By Karen Buxton
CoachBuxton.com

Now is the time of year when inclement weather is constantly in the forecast.

Cycling trainers, rollers, stationary bikes and spinning bikes are the perfect options for cyclists who want to maintain and/or build fitness during the winter months. Now is the time to set up an indoor training area, so that it is ready to go when the weather turns nasty.

There are several pieces of equipment that will make your indoor riding experience enjoyable.

The first is a **trainer** for your bike. Trainers are designed to hold your bike upright with the back wheel in contact with the trainer. The unit provides resistance while pedaling, and there are various types of trainers to choose from: stand-alone resistance trainers (air, magnetic or fluid) and high-tech units (such as a CompuTrainer), which operate through a computer, giving the rider programmable "virtual" courses and variable resistance.

Air-resistance trainers, which use a fan to create resistance on the rear wheel, are generally the least expensive and the noisiest. Magnetic trainers use magnetic fields to generate resistance and provide a much quieter ride than the air units. Fluid trainers use internal fluid to generate hydraulic resistance, and they also provide a very smooth and quiet ride.

Rollers are another excellent indoor option. They consist of a frame with three revolving drums on which a bicycle can be ridden. Learning to ride rollers takes a lot of practice and bravery, as the rider is not attached, as with a trainer, and must balance upright while pedaling.

The best tip for a first-time user is to position the rollers in a doorway, next to a wall, or use another solid object to steady yourself until balance is achieved. Because the rider must steer to stay upright, rollers make balance and smooth pedaling essential and thus are a better choice than trainers to refine these techniques.

If a second bike is available and there is a dedicated space in your home or garage for your workout area, keep one bike set up on the trainer. This decreases preparation time and allows more time for the training session. Having your bike already set up eliminates the "too much hassle to get ready" excuse.

Also, indoor riding is an extremely sweaty proposition, and utilizing another bike saves wear and tear on your racing bike.

Another indoor choice, although a bit more permanent and costly, is a **spinning bike** or [stationary bike](#). These are very effective to improve pedaling technique and cadence, especially if you have the luxury of space, where you can dedicate a room for your indoor training.

As with trainers, there are many options on the market that vary both with the adjustability of the bike and the overall quality (cost).

The lack of wind resistance on an indoor trainer means an important cooling effect is lost. A must for an indoor workout is a floor fan or two. To protect the floor from sweat, a great purchase is a rubberized mat that fits under the entire wheelbase of the bike. Mats can be found at most sporting goods stores.

For most trainers, you need a block to put under your front wheel to make the bike level. Several companies make specific pieces for this; however, a block of wood or phone book works just as well. Draping a towel from the handlebars back across the top tube not only keeps the sweat from pooling on the floor, but helps protect your bike.

More than likely, [your sweat rate](#) will be greater indoors than outdoors, so make sure that you have plenty of fluid available for your training session.

Staying Entertained

Logging the miles indoors can be a bit tedious for some athletes. Beat the boredom by equipping your workout area with a TV, video player, CD player and/or a DVD player. Some might find music or videos too much of a distraction, especially if you are new to rollers, so use your own discretion.

There are various workout videos on the market to choose from. These provide a specific workout to follow. Other great viewing choices include Ironman races, Tour de France videos, other sporting events or favorite movies.

For a good interval session while watching your favorite TV show, work hard during the main program and use the commercials for recovery. You will be surprised how fast an hour session goes by using this technique.

For more workouts, check out *Reoch Zonneveld Indoor Cycling Training Program*. This book contains 25 indoor riding sessions, each lasting 60 minutes.

If your training plan calls for a long ride and you just can't handle the long hours indoors, [bundle up and start outside](#) for an hour or so, weather permitting. Then, finish the remaining ride time on the trainer.

Another option is to head out for a run and use the trainer as a cool-down or recovery from your run session.

Remember that before any indoor cycling session, warm up for at least 15 minutes. Spin for 10 minutes and throw in several pick-ups in the last five minutes before starting the main part of your session.

Make sure that you have plenty of fluids, incorporate an easy cool-down spin, refuel following your workout, and wipe your workout area dry to reduce rust and mildew. Also remember that spinning wheels can be a hazard to small children and pets, so keep everyone clear during the workout.

Winter weather does not have to be the end of the cycling season. All that you need is space, a trainer, tunes and a plan. You will soon be on the road to your best season yet.

Equipment You'll Need for Indoor Riding:

- Trainer, rollers, spin bike or stationary bike
- Rubberized mat
- Sweat towel
- Front wheel block
- Fans
- TV/VCR/DVD
- Music/videos
- Water bottles
- Heart-rate monitor

Karen Buxton coaches triathletes, duathletes, cyclists and runners. For more on her coaching services, visit CoachBuxton.com