

If daylight, weather, or road conditions have curtailed your outdoor riding at this time of year, don't despair. While some riders used to training in the great outdoors consider indoor training to be synonymous with boredom, there are many ways to get a quality indoor trainer workout without it feeling like a burden. After all, if you truly loath the process, you're probably not going to be very consistent with it – and the most effective training program for most of us is the one we consistently complete.

First of all, some general comments as to exactly *why* the trainer can be so mind-numbing, with some suggestions as to how to address this.

**Monotony:** Unless you've got a programmed workout on a high end "simulator" type of trainer, there are no hills, no turns, no wind changes...not even a rude motorist to yell at you. There's just you and the pedals, never coasting, going round and round until you're done. The solution? Add in changes of your own making. Schedule a gear shift every 2 minutes, get out of the saddle for 15-30 pedal revolutions every 5-10 minutes, change intensity every 5-15 minutes. Write out a script for each workout beforehand (some specific workout suggestions later), and follow it if needed. Plan on shorter durations as well; warm up, get your work in, cool down and be done! I rarely ask any client to be on a trainer for much more than an hour at a time.

**Boredom:** Again, with relatively little external stimulation, your mind can start to wander during a trainer workout. Feel free to dial up the audio-visual entertainment! When I started riding years ago, Sony Walkmans were relatively new. I'm talking about the kind that played cassette tapes. Headphones were expensive and cumbersome as well. Nowadays the ubiquitous MP3 players allow you to set up hours of workout music, complete with your own playlists for each workout! Along the same lines, catch up on your video watching during workout time. Whether you watch saved TV programming that you like but can't watch during the week, or videos of pro races (my personal preference), find something that keeps you interested and motivated. You can also set "triggers" for yourself, like stand every song change or commercial break, or shifting gears/cadence at certain breakpoints.

Another way to combat boredom, although it takes a bit more planning, is with group trainer rides. Get a few friends/teammates together on a regular basis, it's far more motivating than trying to go it alone in your basement. One advantage of group trainer rides over regular group rides is that each person can do their own workout if you choose, and no one ever gets dropped. The *Brazen Dropouts* club of Madison, WI is a great example of a successful club organizing structured group trainer workouts all winter.

**Heat stress:** I wrote an article last July on the effect of heat on sustainable power. To summarize, increased core temperature decreases sustainable power significantly. No problem you say, I keep my house at 70-72', which is a nice temperature to train in. Not so fast! When riding outside there's a constant breeze flowing over you that assists in cooling. How important is it? A trainer workout with no airflow in 70' temperature is akin to a 95'+ workout outside. Your solution? Set up in a room you can get down to below 65', preferably between 55 – 60' (although you can just wear more clothing if it's

cooler than that, such as in an unheated garage). Also, get a powerful, adjustable speed fan and aim it directly at your head and torso. Don't neglect hydration, you're losing just as much fluid indoors as you do for outdoor rides.

Some specific workout suggestions:

**Steady threshold:** Warmup, gradually increasing intensity for 5-15 minutes, then do anywhere from 6-12 times 5 minutes at threshold intensity (use a powermeter, HR, or even a speedometer to assess what level is sustainable for these) with exactly 1 minute recovery between intervals. Feel free to get off the bike during the recovery interval, towel off, change audio-visual entertainment, or get a drink. The limited recovery interval is important for this workout, however. Cooldown for 5-15 minutes as appropriate.

**Variable cadence tempo:** Again including an appropriate warmup & cooldown, ride at a steady "tempo" intensity for 30-90 minutes, but shift gears every 2 minutes to use a cadence range as low as 60rpm, and as high as 120rpm. While there will certainly be a narrower range that's more comfortable for you, this ameliorates monotony, while also expanding the range of cadences you're comfortable riding at.

**Pyramids:** Following warmup, ride a set of hard "chunks" starting at 1 minute, and increasing by 1 minute in duration before decreasing by the same duration in the second half of the workout. For example, ride hard chunks of 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 minutes in a single workout, always with 1 minute recovery in between chunks of work (the limited recovery keeps this a primarily aerobic workout).

Riding the trainer is safer, more controlled, and a great solution to get a quality workout in a short period of time during the winter months. Use these tips and techniques to make up your own repertoire of workouts that keep it enjoyable and fresh for you!