

**HILLS.** Some find them to be a great place to attack and really tear a field apart. Some find them to be the fast track to the pain-cave. Some try to avoid them altogether! Whether they are short or seemingly never-ending, you will eventually hit a climb no matter where you ride. Either way, it is always a good idea to get prepared for the hills by keeping a few training techniques and tips in mind.

**Find a comfortable position for your hands** on the top of the bars or in the hoods. Being a little more upright makes it easier for the diaphragm and ribs to elevate, allowing you to breathe more easily. Such a position also allows for stronger hamstring muscle recruitment.

**Relax.** Make sure your hands and upper body (your neck, shoulders, and arms) are relaxed and you're not tugging on the bars or rocking back and forth.

**Try to keep your cadence above 75 rpm.** Too slow of a cadence in too big of a gear only makes for more of a weight-lifting type of effort in your legs, which can sap your muscular endurance more quickly than a higher cadence, which helps your body rely more on your much more fatigue-resistance cardiovascular system.

**As a default, stay in your saddle:** The first thing many riders do when they arrive at a climb is stand up. This is normally only done on short and steep climbs. When you are sitting, most of your body weight is on the saddle. Standing while climbing can help switch up muscle groups and may give you a some extra short-term power, but it takes more energy as you push down on the pedals and support your body weight. On average, staying in the saddle is 13% more aerobically efficient. (In other words, it would take you 13% more oxygen to put the same total effort into the pedals if you're standing vs sitting) Instead, shift to an easier gear before you reach the climb and stay in the saddle.

**Advanced Tip:** Climbing in and out of the saddle. Coming right off the heels of our previous tip, keep in mind that all cyclists are different. Some like sitting down while others like standing on the same climb. It's important to know what is best for you and that can only be known after practice and training. On longer climbs, you may see some cyclists get out of the saddle for a few pedal strokes to help switch up muscle groups and give their rear-end a break. You're welcome to try this technique too! However, keep your standing stints relatively short. Too long out of the saddle equates to more energy being used. When you're ready to stand, shift up once or twice into a harder gear. Otherwise, it will be too easy for your body weight to turn the pedals. Once you are standing up, try to count out 15 to 20 pedal strokes then shift down and get back down into the saddle. Stay seated for a minute or two then repeat if necessary. Try to incorporate this technique in training to help get the feel for it and try it on different types of hills so you know when it is most useful for you.



**Route Reconnaissance:** It is always good to review the elevation profile of your event and make a note of any significant climbs, so you know where they come on the course. Consider the length, grade, and what happens to the road after the summit. Beware, what goes up must come down, so practicing going downhill is also important!

## **GOOD LUCK!**

Keep the tips mentioned in this article on your mind as you prepare for this year's CT Challenge over the following weeks. Consistent practice and determination will pay off big time.

