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10 ways to cycle more in 2015

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January means resolutions. You want to ride your bike more this year, you say? Here are some suggestions to help make it happen.

Even those of us who ride regularly often wish we rode more. Some of us want to get fitter. Some of us want to use the car less. Some of us just want to spend longer having fun in the fresh air. Yet it can be hard to break old habits. Here are some tips to get you pedalling more in 2015.

1. Assess your cycling

You need to measure it so you've got some way to improve. Using a GPS cycle computer or a smartphone, you can log your rides using apps and websites such as Strava or Mapmyride, then monitor the miles and/or hours you've cycled in a given day/week/month/year. Or you can take a simpler approach: have you ridden your bike today? If so, put a tick or a smiley face on that day on your wall calendar. See how many you can get before each month is out.

2. Go the distance

The most efficient way to spend more time on your bike is not to do more rides but to extend your existing rides. You're already out there, so there's no extra time (or mental effort) required to get changed, get your bike ready, etc. Look for an alternative commuting route that's a few miles longer. If you take your bike by train, join or leave it one station further from home. You can always revert to your original route if you're pressed for time.

3. Minimise pre-ride prep

Five minutes of faffing before a ride is five minutes that you could have spent cycling. Five minutes is long enough to ride a mile – or to change your mind when you're looking for reasons not to ride. Either get everything ready ahead of time, so a lost shoe or light won't delay or derail a ride, or make your commuter bike ultra-practical. A bike that has mudguards, a chainguard, luggage capacity, integral lighting, flat pedals, and a relaxed riding position is a bike you can ride in whatever you're wearing, with zero preparation.

4. Make your bike luxurious

You'll be more inclined to ride a quality bike that's efficient and comfortable than a cheap bike that doesn't fit properly. It's not 'just a commuter bike'; it's a bike you will be spending a lot of time on. Pamper yourself: get a super commuter with the components – especially contact points such as the saddle – that you like best. If you suffer from any discomfort, do some research on bike fit or ask your local Cyclescheme retailer for advice. No joy? Get a professional bike fit.

5. Ride in the rain

Cloudbursts are another matter, but ordinary British rain need not stop you from cycling. Rain is okay when you and your bike are dressed for it. Mudguards are your first line of defence; there's nothing worse than being power-washed with dirty water thrown up by your wheels. You'll also need a waterproof jacket and over-trousers or an old-school cycling cape. Overshoes and/or waterproof socks will keep your feet dry. A cycling cap, which can fit under a helmet, will keep rain out of your eyes.

6. Light up the night

If you don't like cycling in the dark, you're not alone: lots of new cyclists are happier in daylight. With good lights, however, you're probably more conspicuous to drivers when cycling at night than you are during the day. As for lighting your own way on dark lanes, that's easier than ever: high-power cycle lights are widely available. Even the expensive ones are a good investment. You're not just buying bike kit; you're buying countless opportunities to cycle more.

7. Learn to fix your bike

Equip yourself with the tools and technical know-how to perform basic repairs. That way you'll never miss a ride because your bike is at the shop being fixed. There's a plethora of bike maintenance books; get a recently-published one with good, clear pictures. Alternatively, type your query into YouTube or download a cycle maintenance app for your smartphone. And don't forget that you can find some procedures, such as how to fix a puncture on the Cyclescheme website.

8. Get a commuting buddy

You might let yourself down and skip a ride, but are you prepared to let down your commuting buddy? The ideal buddy is someone you can meet up with en route at an agreed time, so that you cycle part of the way to work together. Next best is another cycle commuter who works where you do but who comes in a different way. Keep tabs on each other's commuting by having a forfeit such as putting the coffee that delivers one of you

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other's commuting by having a friend such as getting the colleagues that day when one of you doesn't cycle in. A virtual commuting buddy via Strava followers is another possibility.

9. Carry kids or cargo

Some journeys might seem difficult or impossible by bike, persuading you to take the car instead – grocery shopping, for example, or dropping a child off at nursery school. With the right accessories, these can be bike journeys instead. Get a child seat for the nursery run and panniers for shopping; both are available through Cyclescheme. (If you've got two small kids or more cargo to move, a cycle trailer will do the job – although you'll need to buy that normally.)


10. Buy a folding bike

A folding bike isn't just for commuters who take the train every day. If you own a compact folder, cycling is always an option. Why? Because the bike can go everywhere with you: train, car, bus, taxi, business trip, holiday, going out... Where you go, it goes, unless you purposefully leave it behind. And the beauty is that you're not committed to riding. You can use it when you want, where you want. So how about that new Cyclescheme package?

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