

C-Sig Training Series

Clothes & Accessories for Cycling

Below is a list of clothing and accessories that cyclists use to keep themselves warm when it's cold, cool when it's hot, and comfortable on long rides. For those new to this sport, the idea of wearing brightly colored shirts and skin-tight shorts may seem downright odd, but there are serious reasons behind these "funny looks."

Clothing

Bike helmet, required for all club rides; prices vary, but ones sold today all provide required level of protection; price difference reflects number of vents, air flow, weight and other design features; once a helmet is worn in a crash, it should be replaced.

Balaclava/headbands (thin, fit under helmet) keep head & face warm, protect ears from wind chill; the **Headsweat scarf** protects against sunburn & allows sweat to drip down ties at the back of the neck

Cotton **cycling cap** or painters' cap has small front brim to protect eyes from glare and rain; thin, so fits under helmet; to use as rain hat, spray with Scotch Guard

Base layer, worn next to skin, wicks away sweat; women put it over a sports bra

Short and long-sleeved shirt, has 2-3 pockets in back to store snacks, keys, money; long front zipper preferred, to open when hot; choose bright colors for visibility to cars when riding.

Arm warmers, fit over arms to reach the short-sleeved shirt; easy to take off and store as temperature warms up during ride.

Jacket (some come with detachable hood for rain); use as windbreaker; newer ones "breath," even though water resistant, to allow some heat and perspiration to escape; choose bright colors for visibility.

Sleeveless vest has windbreaker front only, so perspiration escapes from back.

Bike shorts should ideally be 8-paneled; more panels better protect skin from rubbing; seams are placed to avoid friction; the "chamois" (crotch padding) will vary in thickness among different brands – trial and error will determine what's comfortable for you; women should not buy the cycling shorts advertised for spinning class, such as sold by DKNY – their padding is too thin for rides on the open road;

most shorts are available in different inseam lengths; if you hate the Lycra look, there are mountain bike shorts with hidden spandex leg panels and good padding; shorts are worn next to your skin; never wear underwear beneath your bike shorts.

Winter-weight **long cycling tights** have wind-breaker fronts, and backs that “breathe” to allow perspiration to wick away; best have ankle zippers, to pull on/off over shoes.

Tights/Capri-style knickers/leg warmers; are worn over shorts, to protect the knee joints in weather colder than 65 degrees.

Clipless bike shoes accept a mechanism that allows the cyclist to clip on to his pedals, so leg muscles can pull up as well as push down, to save strength; mountain bike shoes have more interior cushioning and a recessed clip, for easier walking off the bike; both kinds have hard soles to provide direct energy transfer from foot to pedal, without significant loss of energy.

Booties fit over bike shoes to protect against wind chill and cold.

Cycling gloves are fingerless, for dexterity, and padded on the palm near the upper thumb and fingers to protect hands from constant jarring while riding; also helps to relieve pressure of putting body weight onto the hands while cycling; there are winter-weight gloves (full fingers) and thin **glove liners**, which fit under regular cycling gloves for extra warmth.

If I had to choose where I’d spend my money, I would buy the best shorts I could afford. There are many different styles of chamois. You’ll find the one that’s most comfortable for you and your saddle. (If you go to a bike shop to try on shorts, this is the one exception to the no-underwear-under-shorts rule!)

Accessories

Wrap-around **sunglasses** protect eyes from glare and road dust; should be shatter-proof and fully UV coated to protect eyes from sun exposure; always wear UV-coated glasses on rides.

Lip balm (example: Blisstex) with high SPF; carry in outside pocket and apply frequently.

Sunscreen, with titanium dioxide as active ingredient (so-called “non-chemical” sunscreen because it blocks rays from penetrating); doesn’t break down as fast or irritate skin as other sunscreens can; look for them in health stores; also good for getting chain grease off your hands while on rides.

Chamois Crème, Bag Balm or other lubricant: applied to bike shorts chamois or, for women, can be applied directly to crotch area, to lubricate sensitive areas in contact with bike saddle; women, especially, do not buy mentholated chamois crème! Apply all sparingly.

Chemical Toe Warmers fit between sock and shoe for 6 hours of warmth

Exfoliating soap can't be beat for getting road dirt and grease off in the shower; many types, from lavender stems to oatmeal

Resources

cycling **catalogues** are good sources for bike clothes, accessories and equipment; some to try are Bike Nashbar www.nashbar.com; Colorado Cyclist www.coloradocyclist.com; Performance Bicycle www.performancebike.com; Terry (for women), www.terrybicycles.com; Title Nine Sports (for women), www.title9sports.com