

## Practice Perfect Pedaling

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Quality riders have a fast, supple pedal stroke. You can spot them way down the road because they're so silky smooth. They handle wind or hills without any noticeable effort.

All of us can get closer to a pro stroke. As we return to the road for the new season it's a great time to work on the skill. It comes from practicing these simple techniques:

---**Pedal slower.** The ultimate goal is to pedal fluidly and comfortably at 90-100 rpm in most circumstances. But it's hard to apply good form while spinning a high cadence. Your feet get going faster than your brain. You can't remedy faults that way.

So change to a bigger gear and slow your cadence to 75-80 rpm. Now you can feel each pedal all the way around the stroke. You can concentrate on the segments and improve them.

When you're smooth at 80 rpm, advance to 85, then 90 and upwards.

---**Aim for the bar.** You've probably heard to pull through at the bottom of the stroke like you're scraping mud off the sole of your shoe. And that's still the right image.

But equally important is what happens on the other side of the pedal circle. As your foot comes up the back, push your knee toward the handlebar. This helps you overcome the "dead spot" that results as your foot transitions across the top, from up to down.

Also helpful is to think "round" instead of "up and down." It's another way to ingrain a circular stroke. Testing has shown that even pro riders aren't able to pull their pedals up the backside with significant force, but it helps to lighten the load for the leg pushing down.

---**Descend like a whirlwind.** After using the first 2 techniques and getting the feel for a circular stroke, head for the hills. Descents help you practice at high rpm.

Leave your bike in a relatively low gear as you start down. Build your cadence steadily until it's well over 100. See how fast you can spin before your stroke gets choppy and you start bouncing on the saddle.

The key to a smooth blur is relaxation. Don't tense your upper body, strangle the handlebar and *force* your legs to turn faster. *Let* them turn faster. When you can succeed at 120+ rpm, it'll help you be silky at a mere 100.