

# Tapering for Events

Tapering is reducing volume and/or intensity of training prior to competition.

Most riders and coaches believe in the value of tapering for events.

Here's why, and here's how:



## CYCLE HANDOUT

### Why Taper?

Optimal event-day performance is a balance between being (1) recovered and rested, physically and mentally eager to race and (2) detrained—losing fitness from too little training.

The idea is to arrive at the event with all systems primed.

Tapering is reducing volume and/or intensity of training prior to competition. Multiple studies have shown that this improves performance.

Most coaches recommend reducing overall volume and volume of intensity, but keeping interval intensity high. That is to say: ride less, perform fewer intervals, but keep interval quality for the intervals performed.

Volume reduction may be 20% to 60%.

### Balancing Training and Detraining

Consider these key points:

1. Glycogen energy stores take at least two days to be replaced after exhaustive aerobic exercise. More likely three.

Exhaustive aerobic exercise occurs with a one-hour time trial at 90% of max HR or a two-hour ride at 85% of max HR.

2. No exercise in the 48 hours before events is associated with glycogen overload and muscle cramps in some athletes.
3. Muscle power is reduced by strength training for at least two weeks after maximum workouts. More likely three.

Strength training includes weight work, one-legged riding, big-gear work, and anaerobic efforts.

Eccentric exercise is especially damaging to muscles. Eccentric exercise occurs when muscles lengthen under tension. This is characteristic of some weight work and unaccustomed high-cadence work.

General cycling is not an eccentric

exercise. General running is. For this reason runners may need more of a taper than cyclists.

4. Endurance lasts for at least 10 days. More likely two weeks.
5. It takes at least a week to recover from an unaccustomed long ride.
6. Maximum aerobic capacity lasts for a few days. Perhaps a week.

### How to Taper

The key points provide the basis for the following recommendations:

1. The last endurance ride should be 7 to 10 days before the event.
2. Avoid exhaustive aerobic exercise for at least three days prior to the event.
3. Maximum weight work and maximum on-the-bike strength work should be avoided for at least three weeks before the event.

Avoid unaccustomed eccentric exercise.

Accustomed on-the-bike strength work can be continued until one week before the event but at no more than 75% of previous max power.

4. Continue aerobic intervals until 3 to 7 days before the event. Reduce the number of intervals by one-third.
5. Rest or active rest (easy riding) two days before the event.
6. Warm-up the day before your event to near event intensities.

### Final Words

For many cyclists an effective taper turns out to be simply missing one workout and shortening another.

Following these suggestions should help you arrive at your event well-rested, fit, and ready to do your best.

**AB**