

10 Reasons For Indoor Training

I'll be the first to admit that training indoors is not as much fun as riding my bike outside, there are 10 reasons why you need to consider it. In fact there are times when you can get a better workout indoors than outside. While the purists will say the only riding that counts is riding outside, I'm talking mostly about getting in quality workouts. Sure, you may be accused by your cycling buddies of not being tough if you opt for an indoor workout, but you will likely get a much better workout indoors where you can concentrate on your training than if you ride outside where you are mainly fighting to survive. Plus, how many times do you need to prove you are tough by riding in the rain or sub-freezing temperatures?

1. Winter: Most people equate indoor training with cold, snow, ice and wind of winter. Riding outside can expose you to wind chill, frostbite and falls. Training indoors is often the only safe alternative. You can often get a higher quality workout indoors than you can trying to survive riding outdoors.

2. Darkness: While some people ride outside at night, again it is usually safer to train indoors when it's dark. This obviously occurs during the winter when it's dark before and after work, but can also occur during the summer if for one reason or another you cannot get outside during daylight.

3. Heat and Humidity: During the summer, when you expect to ride outside, it may be too hot and/or too humid to get a quality workout done outdoors. In the desert southwest where it frequently gets above 100 degrees F, it is hard and uncomfortable just to get out and ride. In the humid Southeast and Midwest, the combination of temperature and high humidity makes it difficult to exert hard. Now, it is important to train in the heat and humidity if you are going to ride and race in those conditions, but if you want a hard, high quality workout, you might consider doing it indoors during the most extreme conditions, or if you can only train in the middle of the day. Riding in extreme heat and humidity can also be dangerous, exposing you to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

4. Rain: Training in the rain is possible and useful if you plan to do rides and races in the rain. But you don't need to always go out in the rain, especially if you don't have time to clean and lube your bike afterwards. Again, you can often get a high quality workout accomplished indoors where outside you have distractions of the rain, slick roads and debris on your tires. Also, if it is below 55 degrees F, you can get quite chilled riding in the rain and risk hypothermia if stuck out in the rain far from home.

5. Thunderstorms: Unlike riding in the rain, riding in a thunderstorm is downright dangerous. You have the risk of lightning, whether you are out in the open or under trees, and don't think you are protected because you are riding on rubber tires. You are in contact with the ground due to water. You also have the issue of high winds associated with thunderstorms which can blow you off the road and blow down tree limbs.

6. Unable to Leave the House: There are times, even when there is good weather, where you have to be at home. This could be due to a number of reasons, such as staying home with young children or waiting for a repairman to show up. While it's hard to get on a trainer on a beautiful day, it may be your only opportunity to fit a training session in. A not-so-good reason for staying home and training indoors is to watch your favorite football team play, but if you are going to stay home and watch, you might as well be training. Try sprinting while the clock is running. On the other hand, if you are staying home to watch a live stage of the Tour de France, that is totally acceptable!

7. Lack of Time: If you only have a half hour to ride, you may be better off training indoors. This especially true if you need to ride through traffic to get out to roads where you can start training in earnest. You might just hop on a trainer, get a 5 minute warmup, 20 minute workout and 5 minute cool down. If you live in the city you may not be able to get any quality miles in before you have to turn around and head home.

8. Fog: Riding in the fog is very dangerous. You have trouble seeing what's in front of you and motorists have a real problem seeing you, even with a taillight. It's best to train indoors if it is foggy.

9. Smog/Air Pollution: In some places, there may be smog or air quality alerts on summer days when air pollution is high. This often occurs late in the afternoon, right when you are likely to be training after work. In days with smog or air pollution alerts, you can save your health and train indoors. Training involves breathing in large amounts of air and can compound the air pollution risk.

10. Controlled environment for Training: There are some workouts where training in a controlled environment is preferable to riding outdoors. These workouts include interval workouts being done at specific power levels, and carefully timed intervals where it's important to look at your watch closely. When training on the road, it's obviously important to watch the road ahead and traffic around you and may be difficult to pay attention to that and your bike computer. When there are frequent stop signs or lights, hills or strong winds, conducting an interval session is difficult to accomplish. Also, when conducting fitness tests on your bike, it is preferable to do these under similar conditions to be able to compare with previous results and chart progress. It's unusual to have identical situations outside at the times you want to conduct your tests.

To learn more about the benefits of indoor training, how to best do it, and 50 indoor training workouts, check out my eBook, [Indoor Training For Cyclists](#).

So there you have it, ten reasons to consider training indoors. While I advocate training outdoors as much as possible, there is a time and a place for indoor training in you program if you hope to make the most of your training time.

All the best in training!
Coach David Ertl

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