

**MACMILLAN**  
CANCER SUPPORT

# The 12-week Improver Plan

In partnership with



**elitecycling**  
performance coaching

# Introduction

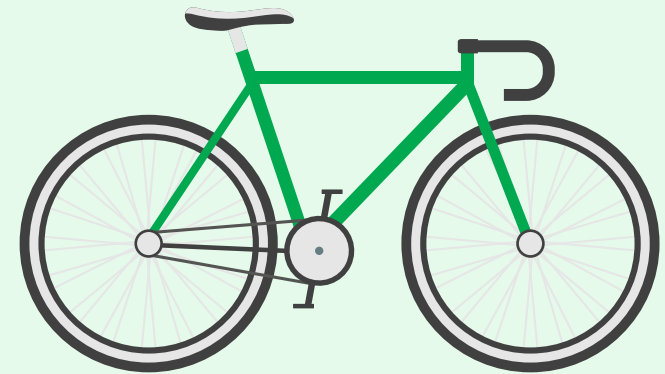
Welcome to the 12-Week Improver Plan, designed to help cyclists of all abilities improve endurance and strength, while accommodating family, work and lifestyle commitments. Flexibility is key, and we've ensured this training plan caters to all.

## Key features

1. **Perceived Exercise Exertion (PEE):** This plan uses perceived exertion as a guide, so you don't need any measuring devices like heart-rate monitors or power meters.

PEE Scale	What it might feel like...
1	Completely at rest. Sat at home in your armchair.
2-3	Easy, very light. Able to fully converse with no effort.
4-5	Light, comfortable. Able to speak, but in shorter sentences.
6-7	Controlled discomfort. You can only speak a few words at a time.
8	Hard, deep breathing. Talking is becoming difficult.
9	Very hard, heavy effort. You're barely able to speak.
10	Maximum effort. Sprinting. Full exertion. You can't sustain this.

2. **Alternative activities:** Unable to get out for a ride? Substitute with an alternate sport or try our Stretching and Pilates exercises to stay mobile. If you're short on time, focus on resting and preparing for the next session.



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## Training principles

**The key to success is maintaining a steady pace with minimal spikes in perceived exertion. Gradual progression and consistency are crucial:**

**Phase 1:** Focus on steady efforts to build endurance.

**Phase 2:** Incorporate strength-building sessions.

**Phase 3:** Add higher-intensity efforts to prepare for your event.

During climbs and challenging segments, your body will naturally work harder. This programme will prepare you for these efforts.

### Warm-ups and warm-downs

**A warm-up prepares your body for the ride by increasing blood flow, raising your heart rate and loosening muscles. A simple 10-to-15-minute warm-up could look like this:**

1. Easy spin (5 mins): Start with a light pedal at a comfortable pace.
2. Gradual build-up (5 mins): Increase intensity, slightly, every minute.
3. Short efforts (optional, 2-5 mins): If doing intense efforts, add a few 10-to-20 second accelerations with easy spinning in between.

**A warm-down helps your body recover by gradually lowering your heart rate and flushing out lactic acid. A simple 5-to-10-minute warm down includes:**

1. Easy spin (5-8 mins): Gradually reduce effort, keeping a high cadence.
2. Gentle stretching (2-5 mins): Focus on quads, hamstrings, calves and lower back.

### Indoor training

Indoor training really helps – especially in the colder and darker months, so having a turbo trainer or visiting the gym to use a static bike will help keep you on track, stay motivated and hopefully avoid colds!

### Final thoughts

This plan is designed to help you build a strong foundation and progress steadily toward your goals. Stay consistent, listen to your body and adapt as needed.

Here's to your success over the next 12 weeks!







## Phase 1: Build endurance with high cadence drills.

- This phase emphasises the importance of **consistent training** while gradually **building up volume**.
- If you miss a session, don't dwell on it; instead, concentrate on completing the next one.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<b>Week 1</b>	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins base	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	1.5 hours base	2 hours base
<b>Week 2</b>	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins base	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	2 hours base	2.5 hours base
<b>Week 3</b>	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	2.5 hours tempo	3 hours base
<b>Week 4</b>	Rest	Recovery: 20 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Recovery: 20 mins	Rest	Recovery: 1 hour (optional)	1.5 hours (coffee stop, social ride)





## Phase 2: Build endurance and strength.

- **Low cadence drills:** Ride on **gentler gradients**, using a lower RPM than usual to focus on building muscular endurance.
- **For steeper climbs**, shift to easier gears and increase cadence to reduce strain and prevent fatigue.
- **At the summit**, spin at a higher rate to clear lactic acid build up, aiding recovery during the ride.
- **Incorporate hills:** Gradually add hill climbs to strengthen muscles and improve power. Use longer climbs or sustained strength work and shorter, steeper ones for explosive power.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 5	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 25 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 25 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 45 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	2.5 hours base
Week 6	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 30 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 30 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 60 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	3.5 hours base
Week 7	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 35 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 35 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 75 mins tempo Warm-down: 15 mins	4 hours base with hills, use low cadence
Week 8	Rest	Recovery: 20 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Recovery: 20 mins	Rest	Recovery: 1 hour (optional)	1.5 hours (coffee stop, social ride)







## Phase 3: The final push and taper

### Mid-week training:

- Slightly increased intensity for rides.
- Focus on maintaining a high cadence to improve leg speed.

### Weekend rides:

- Longer rides to build endurance and simulate event conditions.
- Emphasis on pacing and maintaining steady energy levels.

### Final week:

- Reduced training volume (distance and time) with short, low intensity sessions to maintain fitness.
- Avoid introducing new or excessively hard workouts during this time.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 9	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 15 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 15 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	1.5 hours tempo	4 hours base with hills
Week 10	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 15 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 15 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	1.5 hours tempo	4.5 hours base with hills
Week 11	Rest	Warm-up: 15 mins 15 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Stretching & Pilates: 30 mins	Warm-up: 15 mins 20 mins threshold Warm-down: 15 mins	Rest	1.5 hours tempo	5 hours base with hills
Week 12	Rest	Recovery: 20 mins	Rest	Recovery: 20 mins	Rest	Recovery: 1 hour (optional)	Event day – good luck!



## Tips for success

- **Listen to your body:** Recovery is essential, so take rest days and recovery rides as seriously as the rest of your training.
- **Event preparation:** Use the final training phase to refine fuelling strategies and ensure you're comfortable with pacing for event day.
- **Consistency:** While tapering reduces volume, maintain routine with lighter exercise to stay sharp.

This approach ensures that your body is well-prepared and rested for optimal performance on the day of the event.

### Glossary

<b>Base</b>	<b>Definition:</b> Long, steady effort (PEE: 5–6). <b>Benefits:</b> Sustainable for long durations; burns more fat than glycogen. Ideal for endurance and weight loss.
<b>Cadence</b>	<b>Definition:</b> The number of pedal revolutions per minute (RPM). <b>Measurement:</b> Use a sensor-equipped cycle computer or count pedal strokes for 15 seconds and multiply by 4.
<b>PEE</b>	<b>Definition:</b> A subjective intensity scale (1–10) for pacing when not using a heart-rate monitor or power meter. <b>1:</b> Recovery. <b>10:</b> Extremely high intensity.
<b>Tempo</b>	<b>Definition:</b> Moderate effort (PEE: 6–7). <b>Benefits:</b> Can hold for 2–3 hours if fit. Gradually increase duration if unfit to maintain proper technique.
<b>Threshold</b>	<b>Definition:</b> High effort (PEE: 7–8). <b>Benefits:</b> Sustainable for 60–90 minutes; demanding but manageable with fitness.
<b>Recovery</b>	<b>Definition:</b> Recovery rides should be low in any kind of intensity so at the bottom end of the PEE scale.
<b>RPM</b>	<b>Definition:</b> A direct measurement of crank revolutions per minute.