

# Road Bike

## Average cycling speed for new and experienced cyclists

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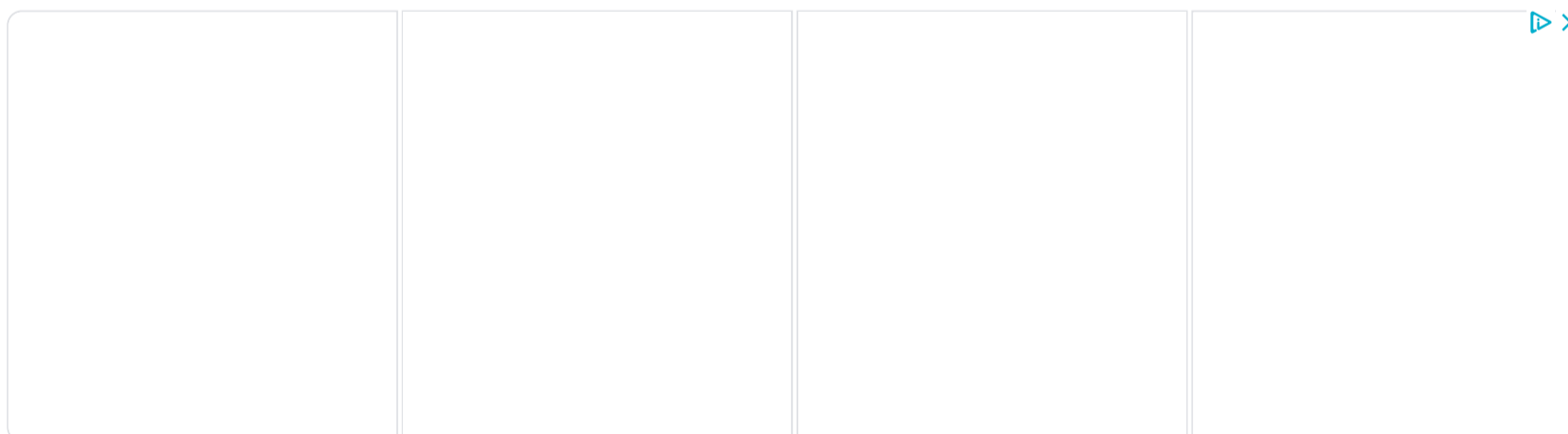
One of the most common questions among new cyclists - and one of the hardest to give a sensible answer to - is the average speed of a cyclist.

There are lots of reasons why average speed can't be used as a reliable measure of comparison, which mostly come down to the following:

### Riding conditions

If you live in Norfolk, where hills are few and far between, your experience will bear little comparison with a rider setting off to the Lake District each week. The rolling hills of the Cotswolds are not the same as the Scottish highlands.

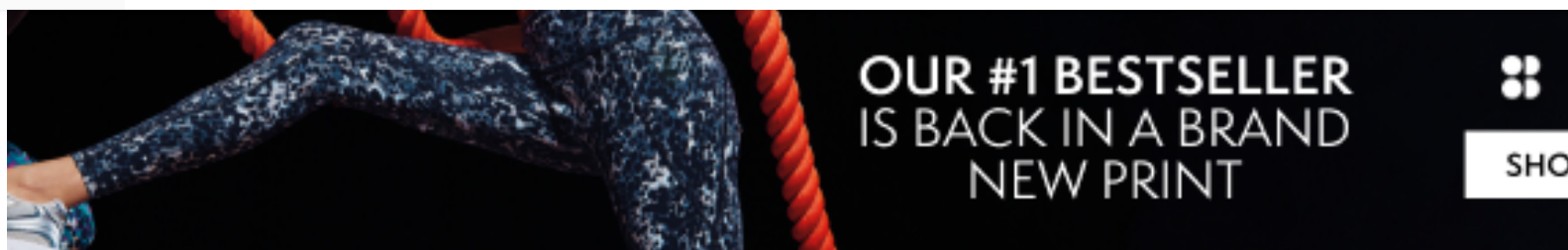
So hearing from someone else that their average is, say, 20 miles per hour, means very little if you don't know where they are riding.



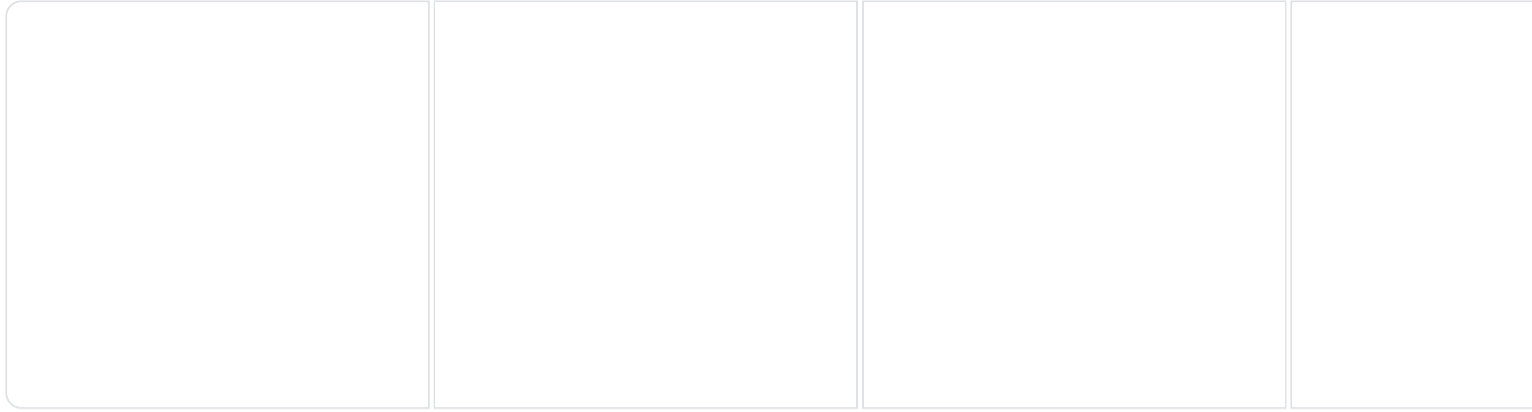
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Some areas are naturally and frequently exposed to high winds. Wind has a very significant impact on cycling speed, even quite gentle wind. Likewise temperature is a factor, with very hot and cold weather both acting to reduce average speed.

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Peripheral equipment like tyres can also make a small difference in weight and speed.

I suspect, but can't prove it, that the psychological impact of buying a lighter / more expensive bike also plays a role - if you think you will go faster...you will go faster.

But if you are overweight yourself, saving a kilo on the bike will make a smaller difference.

### Distance covered

Average speed varies to an extent with distance covered. Rides less than an hour or so in length will usually have a slightly lower average, because the first part of a ride is slower as your legs warm up. Rides between one and two hours usually have the greatest overall speed. Then for longer rides the average will often start to fall slightly, as fatigue plays an increasing role. For many of us rides over about three hours can become very tiring (assuming a reasonable sustained effort during those three hours!)

### Cyclist age

Cyclist age is important, but often less so than the number of years experience that the cyclist has.

Over the years cyclists accumulate a greater proportion of 'slow twitch' muscle fibres in their legs. Heart and lungs will often be strong and efficient. But age counts against all of us!

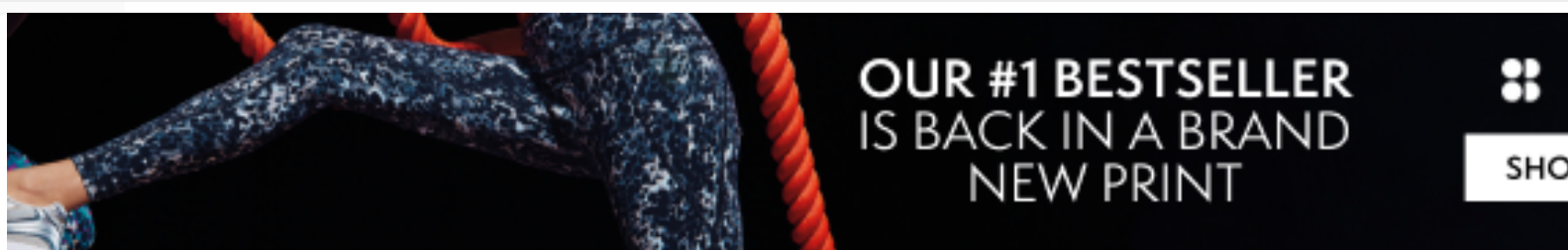
Older riders will usually be less strong at fast sprints or bursts up short hills, but very good at maintaining steady speed over longer distances. There are lots of 40-50 year old cyclists who can hold their own in rides with 25 year olds.

### Teamwork

Cycling in a group - paceline riding - has very significant benefits. For much of the time you will be 'drafting' the person in front ie experiencing limited wind resistance yourself. Although the benefits this provides will vary with conditions and the number of people in the group, it is often said that the average cyclist's speed will increase 20-30% as a result of cycling in a group, even more.

So it is very unlikely your average solo speed will be comparable with the local cycling group. The Tour de France riders achieve 25 miles per hour over 125 miles, but that is very much due to the large size of the peloton (group of cyclists).

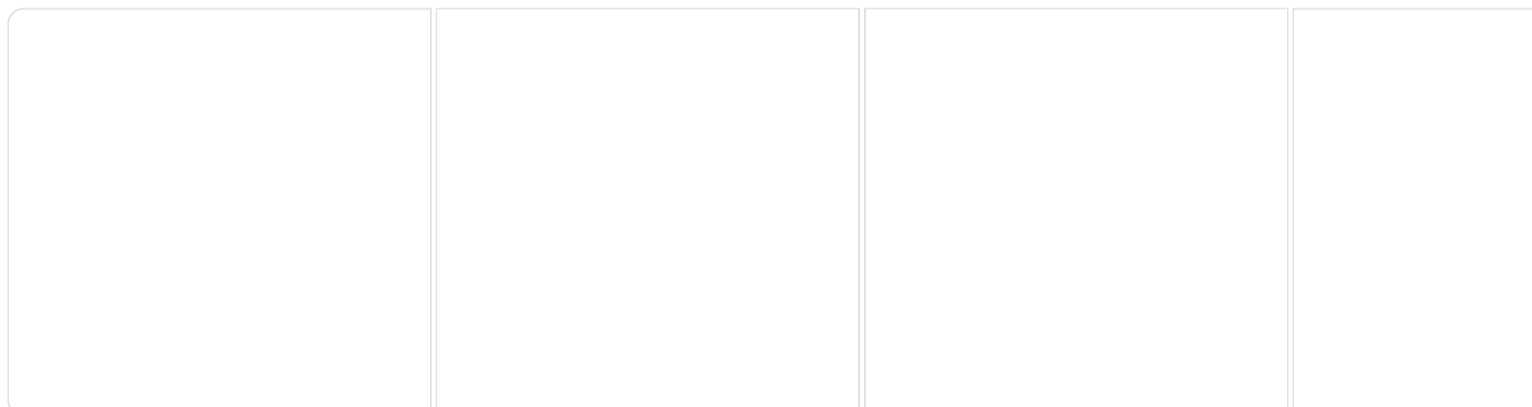
## Average speed - indications



- Beginner, short distance (say 10-15 miles): average speed 12 mph. Most cyclists can achieve 10-12 mph average very quickly with limited training
- More experienced, short-medium distance (say 20-30 miles): average 15-16 mph
- Reasonable experience, medium (say 40 miles): average around 16-19 mph
- Quite competent club rider, some regular training likely, medium-long distances (say 50-60 miles): 20-24 mph

Many cyclists never get to an average over 13-15 mph, don't worry about it, enjoy yourself. Plenty of cyclists can maintain 25+ mph over long distances, especially if conditions are flat or they are cycling in groups.

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