

Biking

Stationary cycling is one of the most common cross training activities. While the pedal movements on a bike do not simulate the running motion, the bike does enable you to get your heart rate high and sweat quite a bit, which provides a great psychological boost. Moreover, almost every gym has them and I've found a few unique ways to simulate hill repeats.

Unfortunately, there haven't been many studies conducted on the effectiveness of cycling as a cross training method as it relates to running. This is mostly due to the close approximation of cycling and running to triathlons.

For runners, biking is a great cross training tool to recover from hard workouts, mainly because it circulates lots of blood through the lower limbs and there is very little impact. Plus, it provides a good sweat and it's easy to get your heart rate up. For injured runners, it can be a good change of pace, a nice psychological boost and, if your injury allows, can help simulate some hill running.

Sample workouts

Easy = 65-75% of maximum Heart rate. During a typical easy run, you would have a stride rate that is equivalent to a cadence that is 83-88 rpm (rotations per minute) on a stationary bike. So, for easy bike sessions and breaks between intervals, lower the resistance on the bike so you can maintain a rhythm between 80 and 90 rpm. Remember, each bike will have a resistance level that correlates with a different effort, so test each one to see what level works best for you.

Easy biking sessions should be used as recovery between hard workouts or general maintenance. In general, you should replicate your time running on an average easy day with time on the bike. So, if your normal easy day is 45-50 minutes, than you would bike for 45-50 minutes.

Medium = 87-92% of maximum heart rate. This is what you would consider a hard tempo run effort; comfortably hard. Maintain 85-90 rpm, but increase resistance to increase heart rate and effort to appropriate levels.

1. 10 min easy w/u, 8 x 3 min hard w/2 min easy, 10 min easy c/d
2. 10 min easy w/u, 10 min medium, 2min easy (x 4), 10 min easy c/d
3. 10 min easy w/u, 5 min medium, 2 min hard, 2min easy (x 7), 10 min easy c/d

Hard = 95-100% of maximum heart rate. This would be considered a VO2max or speed workout type effort. Again, maintain 85-90 rpm and increase the resistance to achieve desired effort level.

You can also use very high resistance, which will force you to stand on the pedals and push hard (think the Alps during the Tour de France). The rpm's will be lower (55-65 rpm), but you'll simulate hill running and build muscle strength. Make sure this doesn't aggravate any injuries.

1. 10 min easy w/u, 10 x 2 min hard (stand on pedals at high resistance), 2 min easy, 10 min easy c/d
2. 10 min easy w/u, 10 min medium, 5 min hard, 2 min hard (stand on pedals at high resistance), 5 min easy (x2), 5 min easy c/d

Cross training can be tough, especially when you're injured or want to be increasing your volume faster. By providing a variety of workouts and implementing some bike workouts, you'll emerge from your injury with minimal fitness loss and challenge your aerobic system without the pounding associated with running.

"The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses - behind the lines, in the gym and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights."

-Muhammad Ali