

Glossary of Bicycle Terms

AERO BARS: Extensions that stick out in front of the handlebars to allow the rider to get into an aerodynamically low position.

AERO WHEEL: A wheel designed to reduce wind resistance.

ANAEROBIC THRESHOLD: The exercise level where the body begins to switch from aerobic (oxygen-using) to less-efficient anaerobic processes to produce energy.

ATTACK: An aggressive, high speed acceleration away from other riders.

BAILOUT GEAR, GRANNY GEAR: The lowest available gear ratio. Implies a very low gear, often with a triple crank.

BARCON: Suntour's trade name for their bar-end shifter.

BAR-END SHIFTER, BARCON: A small shift lever that mounts on the tip of the handlebar. Barcon is a trade name.

BEAD: One of the two inner edges of a clincher-type tire. It includes a strengthening metal or fiber cable to prevent the air pressure from stretching the tire larger than the rim.

BLOCKING: Legally impeding the progress of riders in the pack to allow teammates in the break a better chance of success.

BLOW UP: see bonk.

BONK: To exercise to the point of depletion of the body's energy stores, leaving one extremely weak and giddy.

BOTTLE CAGE: A bracket for holding a water bottle on a bicycle frame.

BOTTOM BRACKET: The bearings and spindle, located in the lowest part of the frame, to which the cranks connect.

BRAKE HOOD: The cover for the top of the brake lever assembly on a bicycle with drop handlebars. It provides a convenient place to rest your hands when riding in a more upright position.

BRAZE-ON: Any small fitting attached to a bicycle frame (typically by brazing or silver soldering) for guiding brake and shifter cables or for attaching water bottle cages, racks or the like.

BRIDGE: To catch a rider or group which has opened a lead.

BREAK A CHAIN: To split a chain.

BREAKAWAY: Suddenly riding away from a pack of racers, quickly enough that opponents cannot keep close enough to draft.

BUNNY HOP: To hop a bicycle over an obstruction, with the front wheel leaving the ground first.

BUTTED TUBING: Tubing with a wall thickness that is thinner in the center and thicker near the ends. It has a better strength/weight ratio than straight tubing.

CADENCE: Pedaling rate, measured in revolutions per minute (rpm).

CAMPY: A nickname for Campagnolo, an Italian bicycle component company.

CANTILEVER BRAKES: Caliper brakes in which the pivot point is below the rim and attached to the frame or fork.

CASSETTE: A cluster designed to be used with a freehub.

CAT, CATEGORY: The competition level in USCF-sponsored races. Cat 5 = beginner, Cat 4 = novice, Cat 3 = sport, Cat 2 = expert, Cat 1 = elite.

CHAIN SKIP: Slipping of a chain off the sprocket teeth when pedaling hard.

CHAIN SLAP: Banging of the chain against the chainstay. Usually caused by riding fast over rough terrain.

CHAIN SPLITTER: A chain tool.

CHAIN STAYS: The tubes that connect the bottom bracket to the rear wheel.

CHAIN STRETCH: Elongation of a chain beyond the standard .500 inch per link. It is not really caused by stretching, but by wear in the chain link bearings.

CHAIN SUCK: 1) Trapping of the chain into the gap between the chain stay and the chainring due to "sticking" of the chain to the chainring as it turns. 2) Any of various other conditions that cause a chain to vary from the proper chainline.

CHASERS: Those who are trying to catch a group or a lead rider.

CHROMOLY: A chrome-molybdenum steel alloy used in bicycle frames.

CIRCUIT: A road course which is ridden two or more times to compose a race.

CLEAT: 1) A slotted shoe attachment designed to grip a rattrap pedal. 2) The mechanism on the bottom of a bicycle shoe that locks into a clipless pedal.

CLINCHER TIRE, WIRED-ON TIRE: A tire that stays on the rim by the tire bead being captured between the rim walls. While widely used, the term "clincher" is actually a misnomer: It correctly refers to an obsolete tire type with extended sidewalls clinched between two movable parts of the rim. See **BEAD, TUBULAR TIRE**.

CLIPLESS PEDAL: A pedal designed to lock to a mating device (cleat) on the bottom of the cyclist's shoe by means of a special spring-loaded mechanism. Clipless pedals are so called because they replace toe clips as a means of tying your feet to the pedals. See **RATTRAP PEDAL, SINGLE-SIDED PEDAL**.

COG: A rear sprocket. (The normal meaning of "cogs" is "teeth," but bicycle parlance uses "cogs" to mean rear "cogwheels" or sprockets.)

COMPONENT GROUP: Same as group or gruppo.

COMPUTER: A cyclocomputer.

CRITERIUM, CRIT: A bicycle race, generally around a short loop on city streets.

CYCLOCOMPUTER, COMPUTER: A readout that clamps to the handlebars and indicates speed, distance, elapsed time and sometimes cadence, altitude, heart rate, etc.

CYCLOCROSS RACING: A type of off-road racing over a rugged, muddy course.

DERAILLEUR: The assembly that "derails" the chain from one sprocket to another, in order to change gears.

DISH: The rear wheel hub on a bicycle is off-center from the rim to make room for the cluster. This is called "wheel dish."

DOUBLE BUTTED SPOKES: Swaged spokes. The spokes are thicker at the ends than in the middle.

DOWN TUBE: The frame tube that connects the head tube to the bottom bracket.

DRAFT: Riding close behind another rider to take advantage of the aerodynamics.

DROP HANDLEBARS: Racing-style handlebars with curving, swept-down ends which facilitate a low, aerodynamic riding position.

DROPOUTS: The forward-facing slots into which the rear-wheel axle is clamped to mount the wheel. The forward slope allows the wheel to drop out forwards to facilitate changing the tire. See **FORK TIPS**.

DROPPED, GETTING: When a rider can no longer stay with a group.

DROPPING A CHAIN: Having the chain fall off a chainwheel (on either side).

DROPS: The downward-curving portion of racing-style handlebars. You place your hands here when you want to get aerodynamic for fast riding.

ECHELON: A form of pace line in which the riders angle off behind the leader to get maximum draft in a crosswind.

ENDO: A fall on a bicycle in which the rear end lifts off the ground and the rider goes over the handlebars.

FIELD: see peloton.

FIXED-GEAR: A drive system which lacks a freewheel, meaning you can't coast. There usually is only a single gear ratio.

FLOAT: The amount of foot rotation available on a clipless pedal.

FOLDABLE TIRE: A clincher tire with non-metallic Kevlar beads. It folds for easy storage but is more difficult to change.

FREEHUB, FREEWHEEL HUB: A wheel hub with a built-in freewheel.

FREEWHEEL: 1) The ratchet mechanism that allows the rear wheel to turn without turning the pedals. Necessary to allow coasting. It can be part of the hub or part of the freewheel cluster, depending on the design. 2) A freewheel cluster. 3) A cluster, with or without a freewheel.

FRICITION SHIFTERS: A shifter in which the gear shift lever moves continuously: lever position determines which gear you are in. See **INDEXED SHIFTER**.

GEAR INCHES: The equivalent diameter of the drivewheel, with gear ratio taken into account. For example if, in a particular gear, the front chainwheel has twice as many teeth as the rear sprocket, then gear inches equals twice the wheel diameter.

GRADE: The steepness of a hill, measured in per cent. Equal to feet of vertical rise per hundred feet of horizontal distance.

GRANNY GEAR: An easy, bailout gear.

GROUP, GRUPPO: The collection of most components required to turn a frame into a usable bicycle. Generally includes the front/rear derailleurs, front/rear sprockets, crank, bottom bracket, headset, hubset, chain, brakes, brake and shift levers and sometimes the seatpost. Not usually included are the wheels/tires, pedals, saddle, fork, stem and handlebars.

HAMMER: To ride fast.

HEAD ANGLE: The angle of the head tube, measured from the horizontal.

HEADSET: The bearings inside the head tube that support the steer tube.

HEAD TUBE: The frame tube that supports the steer tube, and thus the fork.

HOOD: Brake hood.

HOOKING: When a rider swerves, hitting the front wheel of a following rider with his or her rear wheel. This often causes the following rider to crash.

INDEXED SHIFTER: A shifter with a click stop for each gear position. See **FRICTION SHIFTER**.

INDEXED STEERING: A detent or grainy feeling in the headset bearing.

INTERVAL TRAINING: Training with short periods of very intense exertion.

JERSEY: A bicycling shirt, often emblazoned with team logos and advertisements. Usually includes pockets in the back.

JOCKEY WHEEL, JOCKEY ROLLER: A tension roller.

JUMP: A sudden acceleration.

LEADOUT: A leadout rider starts his or her sprint too early. His or her teammate drafts off of him, coming around him as he starts to fade.

LUG: A short angled tube used to join and reinforce two or more tubes of a bicycle frame.

MADISON RACE: A team track race with only one rider per team at a time, switching off tag-team style.

MASSED-START: A race in which competitors start at the same time (as opposed to a time trial.)

MINUTEMAN: The rider who leaves one minute ahead of you in a time trial.

NIPPLE: A spoke nipple.

OXYGEN DEBT: To go anaerobic.

PACELINE: A group of bicyclists riding close together in single file to reduce wind resistance.

PACING, PULLING: Leading a paceline or peloton.

PELTON: A group of racers riding in a close-spaced pack.

PRIME: (pronounced "preem") A special award given to the leader on selected laps during a criterium or the first rider to reach a specified point in a road race.

PRESTA VALVE: A special air filler valve used on most high-pressure bicycle tires. It is thinner than Schrader-type valves.

PULLING: see pacing.

PULL OFF: Finishing your turn at the front of a paceline.

PULL THROUGH: Moving to the front of a paceline to take your turn.

PURSUIT: A type of track racing in which two competitors start at opposite sides of the track.

QUICK-RELEASE BRAKES: Brakes with provision to easily open up the calipers for quick wheel removal.

QUICK-RELEASE LEVER: A lever used on wheel hubs, and sometimes seatposts, which replaces the locknut for easy, no-tool removal or adjustment.

RIM TAPE, RIM STRIP: A strip of plastic or cloth placed inside a clincher-type rim to protect the tube from sharp spoke edges.

ROAD RASH: Abraded skin caused by a crash.

ROLLERS: A type of training stand in which the rider must maintain balance to keep the bicycle upright.

SADDLE: A bicycle seat.

SADDLE SORE: An abrasion, boil or pressure sore caused by contact with the saddle.

SAG WAGON: A motor vehicle used to pick up tired riders in an organized bicycle ride.

SCHRADER VALVE: Type of air filler valve used on automobile and some bicycle tires. See PRESTA VALVE.

SEAT POST: The removable tube that the saddle mounts onto.

SEAT STAYS: The tubes that connect the rear wheel to the top of the seat tube.

SEAT TUBE: The frame tube that connects between the top tube and the bottom bracket. The seat post inserts into the top of the seat tube.

SEW-UP TIRE: Tubular tire.

SKEWER: The portion of a wheel quick-release mechanism that extends through the hub axle.

SNAKEBITE FLAT: A flat tire caused by pinching the tire and tube between the rim sidewalls and a rock or other obstruction. It usually causes two parallel punctures in the tube that look like a snake bite.

SOFT PEDAL: To rotate the pedals without applying force.

SPIN: To pedal with a high cadence.

SPLIT/BREAK A CHAIN: To disconnect a chain link so the chain may be removed from the bicycle.

SPOKE KEY, SPOKE WRENCH: A small wrench for adjusting spoke tension by turning the nipple.

SPOKE NIPPLE: The flanged nut that threads onto the end of a spoke to attach it to the rim.

SPRINT, MASS (or field sprint): Sprinting in a large group, often at the end of a race.

STAGE RACE: A race in which a different course is traversed each day. The winner is the racer with the lowest total time.

STEER TUBE, STEERER, STEERING TUBE: The tube that goes through the head tube and connects the fork to the handlebar stem.

STEM: The tube that connects the handlebars to the steer tube.

SUSPENSION HUB: A ruggedized hub designed to be used with a suspension.

TENSION ROLLER, PULLEY, JOCKEY WHEEL, JOCKEY ROLLER: One of the two small idler sprockets in the rear derailleur.

TIME TRIAL: A bicycle race in which cyclists race against the clock rather than directly against each other. Racers start set times apart and are prohibited from drafting each other.

TOP TUBE: The top, horizontal frame member which connects between the head tube and the seat tube.

TOPS: The part of the handlebar between the stem and the brake levers.

TOURING BIKE: Compared with a standard road bike, a touring bike has a sturdier frame, more extended, relaxed frame geometry, and clearance and braze-ons for fenders and racks.

TOW: Allowing other riders to draft behind you.

TRACK BIKE: A bicycle built for track racing. It is generally built as light as possible, with a fixed gear and no brakes. (A brake may be added for riding on the road.)

TRACK RACING: Racing over a short banked oval course, as in a velodrome.

TRACKSTAND: The act of balancing a bicycle without apparent motion, by means of small forward-and-backward movements.

TRAINER, TRAINING STAND: A frame that converts a bicycle into an exercise (stationary) bicycle. Allows training indoors in bad weather.

TRICK: 1) Hi-tech or snazzy (of a component). 2) Acrobatic (of bicycle riding).

TRIPLE CRANK: A crankset with three chainwheels.

TRUING A WHEEL: The process of making a wheel truly round by adjusting spoke tension by rotating the spoke nipples.

TRUING STAND: A fixture for holding and measuring a wheel while it is being trued.

TUBE: 1) A piece of tubing, usually part of the frame. 2) The tire innertube.

TUBULAR TIRE, SEW-UP: A tire in which the casing is sewn shut around the tube. Rather than using a wire-reinforced bead gripped by the rim wall, as in clincher tires, tubular tires are glued to a wall-less rim.

USCF: United States Cycling Federation. Sanctions bicycle races.

VELODROME: A stadium for bicycle racing, usually in the shape of an oval, with heavily-banked turns.

VO2 MAX: A person's maximum oxygen intake rate.

WORKSTAND, REPAIR STAND: A frame that holds a bicycle off the ground for convenient repair.

700C: A wheel size used on road bikes of approximately 700 mm (27.6 inch) diameter, including tire.