

*Keep it Real*



In Your Indoor  
Cycling Classes!

This book is devoted to showing how cyclists can benefit from indoor cycling classes to improve their outdoor



cycling performance!

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Sage has been in the fitness industry since the early 1980's. She began teaching aerobics in college and graduated with a BS in Exercise Science from the University of Massachusetts in 1984.

Since then, she has taught everything from high and low impact aerobics, step, body sculpting, ski conditioning, core training, etc. She's been a personal trainer since the mid 1990's, earning her CSCS (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist) as well as several other personal training certifications. In 1997 she was certified as a Spinning® instructor, and it was the last day she ever taught Step, realizing she found a fantastic way to inspire students without the need for choreography.

In 1998 she became a Master Instructor (MI) for Mad Dogg Athletics on Team Spinning® International. In this role, she has traveled around the country certifying Spinning® instructors, teaching continuing education courses, writing workshops on coaching and training principles and presenting at fitness conferences throughout North America.

One of her "missions" has always been to keep indoor cycling true to outdoor riding, what she calls *"Keeping it Real"*. This is a challenge, because many instructors are not cyclists and don't understand the importance of keeping it specific to cycling. She's been on a "crusade" of sorts to teach instructors the dangers of crazy, aerobics-on-a-bike style of indoor cycling, and wrote a continuing education workshop for Mad Dogg Athletics called "Contraindications in Spinning®".

She also wrote the workshop for Spinning® called "Cadence, Heart Rate and Class Design", which focuses on choosing cadences and resistance that make sense to outdoor riding, and their combined effect on intensity and heart rate.

Jennifer has been a cyclist since the early 1980's. In 1988 she rode her bike around Europe on a solo, self-supported trip of 2,500 miles. While there, she encountered a guided tour, and inquired about becoming a guide. That company, as it turns out, was expanding and looking for guides. It was an encounter that would change her life forever!

She began working for Travent International in 1989, after having returned to France to study in Nice in the south of France. Every year she returned to create, organize and lead bicycle tours, gaining more and more knowledge of the best cycling in France, Switzerland and Italy. Travent was bought by Vermont Bicycle Tours in 1994, where she continued to work for a few years.

She took a break to obtain her MBA in International Management from the American Graduate School of International Management, tried the corporate world, and then moved to Vail, Colorado and became a ski instructor, personal trainer and massage therapist. In 1998 she had another chance to lead tours in France for a small company called Bicycle France. She led a VIP tour to the 1999 Tour de France with Greg Lemond, which included "back-stage" access at arrival and departure towns, and a private helicopter that took the guests off Alpe d'Huez back to Grenoble. The group was able to climb up many of the many famous climbs of France, including Alpe d'Huez and Mont Ventoux.

In 2003 Jennifer started her own bicycle tour company, Viva Travels. After all these years doing it for someone else, it was time to go on her own. Viva Travels is a unique company, providing services that few other companies offer. Although she organizes guided tours, including to the Tour de France (one of her passions), her specialty is creating unique, custom self-guided tours. Her self-guided clients are provided with everything they need to know to do it on their own in total confidence.

Her company is expanding into very innovative and unique online do-it-yourself bicycle tours, where her clients can save thousands of dollars by doing a little of the work on their own.

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## ABOUT THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK: *KEEP IT REAL*

On a bike tour in Burgundy back in the early 1990's, I happened across an amazing painted sign smack in the middle of the vineyards. It depicted a Roman scene of two men covered with vines carrying a vat of grapes, with the inscription *In Vino Veritas*, which is Latin for "*In wine there is truth*".



At the time I worked as a guide for a bicycle tour company based in Burgundy in France, and this became our mantra, because we enjoyed the fruits of the land so to speak! When we weren't on tour, we would be riding our bikes in the vineyards of Beaune, Meursault and Savigny, taking advantage of the many wine-tasting opportunities.

I turned the quote into *In Velo Veritas* because of our passion for cycling, and put up a sign in the bike barn. *In Velo Veritas* means (sort of\*): *In cycling there is truth*. I'm sure the Romans, if they had had bicycles back then, would have said the same thing! (\**Velo* is Latin for *speed, swift*. I'm not sure when it was designated to mean *bicyclette*).

Now, 18 years later, I actually have a new translation for this ‘ancient’ saying I made up. As a Spinning instructor intent on keeping indoor cycling true to outdoor riding, I now translate the phrase *In Velo Veritas* to mean: *Keep it Real!*

*In cycling there is truth*, so let’s *Keep it Real* when riding indoors on a stationary bicycle!

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PART 1  
INDOOR CYCLING  
AND THE  
COMMITTED  
CYCLIST -  
CAN IT WORK?

## CHAPTER 1. TRAINING INDOORS

### YOUR FIRST INDOOR CYCLING CLASS

**A**s a road cyclist, it's important to continue your training in the winter months. This can become challenging, especially if you live where weather limits year-round cycling. Even if you live where it remains warm enough to ride during the winter (lucky you!), the shorter days of winter might limit your ability to ride before or after work if your days are structured around an 8-5 workday.

Perhaps in the past you've set your bike up on a trainer in your basement and struggled through your workouts by yourself, forcing yourself to endure long hours in the saddle. I know how difficult it can be to get on that bike and be motivated to do your desired workout by yourself. It's just not that fun. Even with the use of training videos, or distractions like movies or a great sound system, it just gets old *by yourself*.

So, maybe you decided to try an indoor cycling class, or were dragged there by a friend or significant other. "C'mon! It's fun! It's a great workout! The music's great, you'll love it, I promise!"

The following description of a class may or may not be similar to what you experienced in your first class. If it wasn't, you should be grateful to have found a good instructor, but I bet you have heard stories similar to the following. If your experience was anything close to the following, then not to worry, this book will give you all the answers on how to maximize your enjoyment and training from indoor cycling classes while staying away from common movements or techniques that will detract from your cycling training, or worse, injure you.

Your friend convinces you to come to class, and you acquiesce and allow yourself to be taken to the club. You walk in the dimly lit room; the instructor is a very fit, muscle-bound, tall brunette, who strangely doesn't

look much like a cyclist. She sports black capri tights instead of bike shorts and a low cut midriff sports bra. Her hair is pulled back tight. She has lipstick. She smiles at you. Let's call her Jane.

You wisely take a bike in the back row. The lights are dimmed, with black lights cast downward from the ceiling, causing an eerie glow in the room. You can barely see your heart rate monitor. Soon, the class is pumping wildly to Justin Timberlake. Barely five minutes into the class, Jane screams into the microphone, "OK, it's time to get serious! Everybody stand up and sprint! C'mon, I wanna see those fast feet!"

The class stands up, speeding up their legs so quickly that you can barely see them, whirring around like the roadrunner being chased by Wile E. Coyote. The "sprint" goes on for over a minute. Riders are flopping all over the place, but they begin to whoop and holler with enjoyment.

She then takes the class into a regimented sequence of movements; first pushups on the handlebars, followed by a rhythmic "up down, pump twice, up down pump twice", etc. These move into very fast rhythmic jumps in and out of the saddle. "If you want to make it harder," she yells, "don't sit all the way back down!" Out of curiosity, you try doing what she suggests, but immediately realize it's not a wise move when your back starts complaining, so you sit down as everyone else continues their erratic jumping. Jane's eyes catch yours disapprovingly.

Then the class is asked to stay standing for 3 minutes, while you "isolate and freeze", not allowing the upper body to move at all. "Pretend that you have a glass of water on your head and you don't want to spill it," she says. "Stand tall like you're the Statue of Liberty!" In order to do this, riders have to perch themselves up on their fingertips; it looks like they're drying nail polish.

This seems very foreign to you; you know you would never do this on your bike outside, but you're a little afraid not to obey her. Pretty soon,

your knees start to hurt, followed by your low back. Then she asks you to lower your hips a few inches, “Go for the burn! Feel those quads!” she yells! Grunts and groans arise from the group, followed by a few “Yeahs”. You hope Jane can’t see well enough in the dark to notice that you’ve sat back down.

“It’s time to climb” she announces. To a heavy beat of Shakira, you’re told to put a lot of tension on the bike and stand up and climb a hill that’s a “9 out of a 10”.

“Push your butt over the back of the seat!” Curious, you try it. More pain in the back as well as the shoulders. You know you’d never climb like this outdoors – you probably wouldn’t make it up the hill if you did. But from the hollers from the class, it’s obvious that this is a favorite move. Jane is pushed so far back her arms are stretched out in front of her.

Next, a move she calls “Fore/aft” - 4 counts climbing with the butt pushed back, four counts forward leaning on the bars, and back and forth.

Jane gets off her bike and walks around the room, looking for a victim. She stands in front of a good-looking man, and says, “What’s the matter Bob? Not into working hard today?” He looks sheepish. “C’mon, show me what you’re made of!” and she reaches down and turns up his resistance knob for him, dramatically slowing down his cadence. “Much better!” and then to the class, in drill-sergeant fashion “Aren’t you all here to work hard today? That’s what you tell me, but I’m starting to wonder!”

Affirmations all around (otherwise they fear she’ll do the same to them). Back on her bike, she says, “and now, our hill becomes a 10 out of 10!”

You notice that several riders in the class have so much resistance, they have to pull on the handlebars to turn the pedals, at best about 40 rpm.

Relief, the hill is over. It's time for sprints. She announces that you're going to do 5 sprints of one minute each with a 30-second rest. In the "sprint" segment, feet are spinning wildly, bodies are bouncing all over the place, but nobody seems like they are really doing the kind of "real" work that you know a true sprint entails; they're just spinning their feet like a weed-wacker. Nevertheless, students are huffing and puffing and grunting and groaning. By the fifth one, efforts have dramatically declined, and riders aren't able to maintain the high cadence of 120 rpm that she's asking for (regulated by keeping time to the fast-paced music).

Mercifully the class comes to an end. Some of the students high-five Jane, and someone says, "Jane, you've outdone yourself! That was awesome!" In the locker room, more accolades, and comments about how that burn will stay with you for a few days if you "do it right".

You leave, shaking your head, vowing never to return...

OK, so I've painted a pretty grim picture of how some "spin" classes are led. Granted, I used some of the worst stereotypes, but the sad part is that this type of class is actually quite common in clubs around the world (don't believe me? I'll send you some youtube video links or blog addresses with proof). I've heard of every single one of these moves, and many more even crazier movements and techniques from instructors as I travel the country teaching certification courses.

Sometimes at instructor orientations, when I describe the contraindicated and dangerous moves that are prevalent and that have no place in a Spinning® class (or any indoor cycling class for that matter), the new instructors-to-be look at me and say, "you've just taken away just about everything they do at my club! What's left?"

I'm here to tell you, it doesn't have to be this way! I like to joke that these instructors who teach these unsafe moves must get a commission from the local orthopods and chiropractors. But you should also know that there are many, many excellent instructors out there who do know how to train properly, who know what a real "sprint" is, who understand threshold and aerobic base building, who care more about a safe and effective workout than being the "most popular" instructor with the "hardest" classes, and who do know how to ride a bike properly and bring the outdoors indoors in their class profiles.

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## **WHAT YOU'LL LEARN FROM THIS E-BOOK**

It is possible to be a dedicated road cyclist or mountain biker and still have an enjoyable, safe and relevant training session in an indoor cycling class. I will be giving you tips on how to look for the best programs, clubs and instructors, and then how to judiciously select what you will and won't do in the class, based on whether what the instructor is asking of you will enhance or detract from your riding skills.

You'll learn the ways in which indoor bikes are similar to your road bike, and what skills you can improve by using them. You'll also learn the ways in which they are different, which will have implications on whether a training technique is effective or not.

As a long-time road cyclist and mountain biker, my preference is to be outdoors whenever I can. But I live high in the Rocky Mountains where there is a relatively short cycling season and I'm a self-confirmed wimp when it comes to riding in cold and wet or snowy weather – I just don't (read: won't) do it! I am very grateful for the Spinning® program, which has provided me with an exceptional means for staying in cycling shape throughout the winter months. I'm here to tell you, indoor cycling classes can really work if you know what to avoid and what to focus on.

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