



The proper clothing makes even wet rides fun.

DON'T HANG IT UP

THESE FOUL-WEATHER RIDING TIPS WILL HAVE YOU PEDALING ALL YEAR LONG.

OFF-SEASON RIDING CAN MEAN MANY THINGS. In the Pacific Northwest, cyclists face near-constant rain. Midwest riders contend with bitter wind. In the Northeast, wet and cold conditions are typical. Even in sunny California, temps can dip into the 50s. No matter where you live, the key to enjoying winter riding is preparation. It will take some experience to know how many and which layers to use for specific conditions, but generally, as the windchill temperature decreases, the more layers you need to wear, and the more weatherproof the outer layer should be. Here's my head-to-toe guide to prepping your body for cold-weather action.

HEAD Start with a beanie or balaclava that's thin enough to wear under your helmet. For windy or wet days, a helmet cover works wonders. Bandless earmuffs, which can be found at ski

Quick Tip

YOU STILL NEED TO DRINK WHEN THE MERCURY DROPS. REMEMBERING TO DRINK WHEN IT'S HOT OUTSIDE IS A NO-BRAINER, BUT TAKING IN FLUIDS IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT IN THE WINTER. TO MAKE HYDRATION MORE APPEALING, FILL YOUR BOTTLE WITH YOUR FAVORITE FLAVOR OF ENERGY DRINK. OR PUT A WARM DRINK—SUCH AS TEA WITH HONEY—INTO AN INSULATED BOTTLE.

The Question

DO I NEED A BIKE-SPECIFIC JERSEY?

Inner layers don't have to be made for cycling as long as they're breathable and wick sweat. For the outer layer, I wear a cycling jersey or jacket with three back pockets. I carry extra gloves or a phone (in a zip-lock bag) in the left pocket and a tightly rolled vest or jacket in the middle one. Food goes in the right pocket—because I'm right-handed, that's the easiest pocket for me to reach and thus the place where I stash items I'll use most often.

shops, are also useful. (Yes, you'll look geeky in this ensemble—but you'll be warm and dry.)

TORSO I've found wool to be the perfect next-to-skin layer. It stays warm when wet—either from sweat or precipitation—and doesn't get stinky after one use. Wear garments that have long zippers so that if the weather warms up or you're climbing, you can unzip to increase ventilation and reduce sweating. Finish off with a wind barrier: A thermal vest might be all you'll need, but for rainy days, wear a heavier jacket with sealed seams. Because winter often brings low visibility, be sure you're wearing reflective material.

LEGS Get a good pair of thermal tights long enough so you don't have strips of exposed skin. Use suspenders or get the bib style—pedaling can cause tights to slip if nothing's holding them up. (Tightening a drawstring around your waist is like choking yourself, as your abdomen should be contracting and expanding for optimal breathing.) For windy or wet conditions, get tights with a water- and windproof front panel. Reflective piping on your tights is also a good idea.

HANDS AND FEET Full mittens are warmer than gloves. To warm hands up midride, stop at a convenience store and throw your soaked gloves into the microwave for 30 seconds—this really works.

Feet exposed to tire spray pose a greater challenge. Wool socks will stay warm when wet. Insulation booties help keep toes toasty; riders in extremely wet climates will want to top them off with rainproof shoe covers. Pull your tights over the tops of the booties so water won't run into them. In a pinch, use sandwich bags over your stocking feet to block wind.



← **ALEX STIEDA**, the first North American to wear the yellow jersey in the Tour de France, with 7-Eleven in 1986, leads tours and skills camps (stiedacycling.com).