Spinning® Instructors Ask: To Jump or Not To Jump

By Jeff Krabel, Spinning® Master Instructor | California, United States

Primary goals of the Spinning® program include developing cardiovascular fitness and creating better muscular endurance. And one of the most controversial and least understood movements in the Spinning program is Jumps. However, when using proper technique and form, Jumps are very beneficial.

Spinning® Jumps for Strength

In many ways, Spinning is similar to weight training. Both require appropriate resistance that is consistently progressed as the participants develop an ability to both attain and sustain proper form. In the weight room, a person will begin an exercise at a lower weight in order to focus on the range of motion so they can fully recruit the targeted muscle groups.

Likewise, in a Spinning class, you must begin with lower resistance until the rider has an opportunity to increase their core temperature and prepare both muscle fibers and connective tissues for the training session. Then, as both workouts continue, intensity is added through incremental additions of resistance to keep the muscle groups challenged for the intended period of time (or rep range). But resistance is never progressed to the point that form (range of motion) is compromised. Proper form ensures that muscular intensity is maximized while the stress to joints and connective tissue are minimized.

When appropriate resistance levels are used, riders can transition from seated to standing positions while maintaining
their balance over the pedals. Jumps are about rhythmic transitions from a seated position on the wide part of the saddle to a standing position over the tip of the seat. Forward flexion is not increased and (ideally) cadence remains consistent through the transitions. Jumps challenge the body’s ability to adapt quickly to the varied demands of sitting and standing while pushing appropriate resistance loads.

**Spinning® Jumps for Fitness**

When instructors prompt students to maintain their body alignment, their cadence, and their balance point, Jumps are beneficial to both muscular endurance and cardiovascular development. Excessive joint stress can be avoided by teaching the consistency and fluidity of the movement especially when riders demonstrate overly high cadences or uncontrolled forward momentum when performing the movement.

While it is true that outdoor riding rarely requires a rider to stand and sit down repetitively in a short span of time, Jumps do offer a unique training opportunity to cyclists. Developing an ability to stand and pedal at progressively stronger resistance loads has both cardiovascular and functional benefits. It presents an element of cycling that requires a high level of skill that is difficult to train on the road because of the high intensity it would require. Indoors, a rider can control the intensity, slow the cadence, and work on maintaining proper body alignment as the cardiovascular system continues to get stronger. It is specified training that helps create a stronger overall skill base in a rider who mostly participates outdoors.

A Jump is a flat road movement, which means the guideline parameters are 80–110 RPM with light to moderate resistance. With Jumps, I rarely use the word “light” because I see most students remove far too much resistance. The cadence guideline is helpful with this movement, but not nearly as much as the
basic understanding that Jumps contain a mixture of two movements: both a Seated Flat and a Standing Flat.

In hand position two, a rider must maintain proper upper body alignment with the shoulders slightly forward of the hips and the elbows bent toward the pedals as the body moves with a consistent lateral rhythm. The pedal strokes are very fluid and controlled, which is more a result of working with resistance than being pulled by it.

Once each checkpoint is accomplished, the rider transitions by lifting themselves up to a stable position over the tip of the saddle. The rider achieves balance by continuing to ride with soft elbows, a slight forward tilt, and a “whole body” side-to-side movement. The number of Jumps performed is far less important than the control and rhythm that is practiced during the movement itself.

**Spinning® Jumps for Fun**

Jumps are both a fun and unique part of the Spinning program. They enhance cardiovascular development, body awareness and leg strength. No other movement in the Spinning program demands as much body control as Jumps do. That alone, makes them a highly valuable part of any training session.