



PUSHING YOUR RIDING BOUNDARIES

Bike Trials is a fantastic sport, but not as well known as other cycling disciplines. It combines a great community with never ending challenges. Just like rock climbing it is a sport that involves overcoming obstacles with whatever techniques you can, meaning no matter what level of rider you are from first day on a bike to world champion you are challenged every time you go riding. Even for a recreational cyclist some trials training can dramatically improve your general riding. From perfecting your trackstand for race starts, to dialing in your balance.

Trials is both a lot of fun and a fantastic training tool, but starting a new sport can be intimidating so it helps to know what to expect.

First things first, trials is a sport of balance everything stems from your ability to be calm and controlled in one place. You will start practicing standing still or “track standing” on a grass slope, but in the end you could be totally composed motionless 4 meters above the ground on a skinny log. People often think of trials riding as the gravity defying leaps onto or off rocks, but really the most fundamental skill is perfect balance and that is the best place to start.

One of the best way to push your skills is to start competing. Entering a competition not only gives you exposure to other riders and be able to accelerate your learning, but nothing is quite like the motivation of putting yourself to the test against other people. Your first experience in a trials comp will be in Novice class. These sections can be ridden on any standard mountain bike with limited changes. All you should need to do is drop your saddle to get it out of the way. If you have some flat pedals it is a good idea to put them on too, this will allow you to get your foot down quickly if you need to without getting caught in the clips. The

sections themselves are designed to test your balance and bike handling. Don't be intimidated by watching the top riders, at it's heart trials is simply a bike and rider trying to conquer the hardest terrain they can without putting a foot down and we have tests for riders of all levels.

So how is the comp going to run? Before the start there is a rider briefing, here you will get any notes the organizers have regarding sections or the comp, you will also be issued with a card to mark your score, keep this safe! This is also your chance to ask any questions you have. This is a judgment free zone so don't

be shy if you have any nagging questions. Although the sections will be numbered feel free to complete them in any order. You will have two and a half minutes to complete each section and you will do each of the five sections three times. Although the aim is to keep your feet on the pedals often you're better off taking a “dab” than fighting your balance too much and ending up putting both feet down which will give you the maximum five points. That brings us to the scoring system. Trials is scored in dabs, a dab is basically a touch of your foot to the ground. one foot touch is one dab up to a maximum of 5 dabs in each section.

If both of your feet touch at once you are deemed to be no longer on the bike and that is also five dabs. As you get more advanced more rules come into play but the best way to find out about these is to get yourself to a competition. Your goal more than anything else is to get through the section whether that is on zero points or four.

If you want to improve your skills on a bike mixing in a bit of trials practice is the best way. Nothing gives you as much confidence on a trail or at the traffic lights like being able to balance, turn and maneuver at all speeds without thinking or needing to take your feet off the pedals. So check the MTBA website and find a competition nearby, you'll find a group of passionate riders that will help with any questions you have and you can be a better bike rider to boot.

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