

How to Get Started in Road Cycling

Road cycling is a sport that has something for everybody. Rides can be short or long, hard or easy, hilly or flat, alone or with a group. The St. Catharines Cycling Club hosts a variety of different rides to cater to various kinds of riders. However, there are a few things common to every ride. To begin, all rides require basic equipment, bike handling skills, and good safety practice on the road. This guide will help you get started with what you need to fully enjoy road cycling with the St. Catharines Cycling Club (SCCC).

Equipment

The following table lists all of the important equipment that SCCC riders may need. You can purchase these items at any of the local bike shops. Some of these items may be ordered online, but often it is better to buy in person to ensure a proper fit. With any equipment, it is important to ensure that the equipment is in good condition before using it on a ride.

Item	Description
Bicycle (Required)	Obviously, bike riding requires a bicycle. For riding on the road, we recommend that you purchase a road bike. A local bike shop can help you choose the kind that is best for you. Other bikes (e.g. mountain bikes) can still be ridden, but the added rolling resistance may slow you down and make it difficult to keep up with the group.
Helmet (Required)	The SCCC requires members to wear a helmet in order to participate in any SCCC ride. Crashes don't happen often, but it only takes one bad crash to do permanent brain damage. In the last few years, some helmets have even become fashionable.
Cycling shorts (Strongly Recommended)	Even on short rides, the seams in regular shorts can cause significant discomfort. Cycling shorts cover the nether regions with a seamless pad and are much more comfortable. Most riders prefer bib shorts, but regular shorts are fine.
Cycling jersey (Strongly Recommended)	Besides being much more aerodynamic (and thus faster), jersey pockets are the ideal place to store important items like a phone or a multi-tool during the ride.
Tire levers & spare inner tubes (Required)	Even the best tires can puncture. You should always take tire levers and at least one inner tube with you on every ride. To learn how to change an inner tube, see this tutorial:

	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwwfV99VV8I It is recommended that you store these in a saddle bag.</p>
Other ride essentials (Strongly Recommended)	<p>You should also take a phone, a multi-tool (in case of mechanical problems), money, ID of some kind, and (for long rides) some food. See this tutorial for packing advice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1gv6Y5NSno</p>
Water bottles (Strongly Recommended)	<p>Even on cold days, you will lose some water through sweating. It is important to have at least one water bottle (two bottles in the summer) to keep hydrated on long rides. These fit nicely into bottle cages that can be installed on any road bike frame.</p>
Cycling shoes & pedals (Recommended)	 <p>Although they can be difficult to master at first, cycling pedals and cleats allow you to pedal more efficiently by pulling in the backstroke and can help you to keep control of the bike.</p>
Extra gear for bad weather	<p>Bad weather isn't necessarily a reason to stay indoors, but you may want to wear arm warmers, leg warmers, an undershirt, a jacket, gloves, a cap, and/or shoe covers. This video outlines the important cold weather gear: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBK4ZyYXrw8</p>
Sunglasses	<p>Most riders prefer to wear some kind of glasses to block the wind as they ride. These can also be important to stop debris from flying into your eyes, since seeing properly is essential to everyone's safety.</p>
Cycling computer	<p>XX photo XX Although entirely optional, many riders use a cycling computer to record their rides. It can be fun, informative, and motivating to see your speed, cadence, distance, etc. as you ride.</p>

Group Riding

Except for the Thursday time trials, all of the regularly scheduled SCCC rides are group rides. Riding in a group allows riders to draft, taking advantage of other riders' slipstreams to save effort and energy. Group riding is also more motivating, and allows for conversation. However, it is important to follow proper group riding technique and etiquette in order to keep the group safe. If you are new to the SCCC, please see the *Ride Guidelines* section of the website (under *Our Rides*). This video may also be helpful: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK5MPtMrMqU> . If you are new to group riding or unsure of your abilities, we recommend that you join the Monday group rides to ensure you have the appropriate skills before you engage in other group rides.

For safety reasons, SCCC members are required to use a bike without handlebar extensions (AKA aerobars, triathlon bars, or aero skis) on group rides. Using extensions makes it impossible to react to sudden braking or swerving in the group, and could cause a crash.