

More and more people are taking to their bicycles for a new hobby – but what about all those biking questions you feel you should know but are afraid to ask? Here's our helpful, modern-day guide to cycling proficiency.

Why do male cyclists shave their legs, what's the best cream to prevent chafing, am I a Mamil and what is a derailleur?

These are just a few of the questions that novice – and even experienced – cyclists might think about but will rarely dare to ask out loud.

The problem is that, for too long, cycling was the preserve of seemingly geeky guys, the kind that hung out in tiny bike shops or raced in male-dominated cycling clubs.

Wouldn't these cyclists laugh in your face if you asked a silly question? I'm not saying they would definitely laugh but they did give an air of potential mockery.

Thank goodness in recent years, road cycling has become more mainstream and bike shops are increasingly welcoming places.

Men and women are jumping on their bikes in greater numbers and are learning for themselves about the

many parts and terms of cycling.

Yet even now, there are those questions you might only dare to mutter quietly behind your cupped hand to a close pal. Here, I reveal some of the things you always wanted to know about cycling but may have been too afraid to ask.

“For too long, cycling was the preserve of geeky guys”

Is wearing Lycra and spandex really necessary?

Road cyclists are very fond of their stretchy, tight-fit shorts, tights and jerseys. They're not essential to ride a bike but they are practical and comfortable.

If you prefer, you could choose baggier mountain bike shorts or comfortable running leggings, a sports T-shirt and a waterproof jacket.

Also, check out urban cycling ranges in shops and online, such as www.wearecycling.co.uk

Do I need to wear pants?

Bike shorts are meant to be worn without underpants or knickers. If you do wear pants you'll find that they rub uncomfortably.

Racer, hybrid, cyclocross or time-trial bike?

Every style of road bike is suited to different terrains and sports.

Think carefully about where you will be riding most often and take some advice from a bike shop. But be

ONRIGHT ROAD

Getting the correct kit can make you feel the part but it's not all essential to start cycling



SHHH...I THINK I'M



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warned – you may end up buying two different bikes.

My old bike had just three gears, now I have a new one with 22 gears. Help!

Your new bike will most likely have two chainrings at the front of the bike and a cassette of 11 cogs at the back.

The 22 gears are made up of a ratio of the chain on these different cogs.

To ride in the easiest gear – when going uphill – engage the smallest ring at the front and the largest cog in the back.

The opposite is the case for riding a harder gear on the flat or downhill when you want power.

The change in gear size is largest at the front and more incremental when moving through the back cassette.

My friends have been laughing at my triple chainring.

That's a bit mean of them but these days, many road bikes are fitted with two-cog chainsets instead of three.

These are generally compact chainsets and they provide a similar

gear ratio to a triple set-up. If you're new to cycling or like lots of easier gears for hills, stick with a triple chainset at the front (and then laugh at your pals as you zoom uphill first). **Someone told me to use my granny gear. But I'm childless and only 32.**

A granny gear is not for a grandma's bike but the term for the easiest gear.

The correct term is granny ring and refers to the smallest of the three chainrings. It can also be used to describe the largest cog on the back cassette or the cog that you keep for the steepest hills.

What on earth is Strava?

Strava is a GPS tracking app that records your speed on a road or trail worldwide. It lets you track your rides – and also runs – via your iPhone, Android or dedicated GPS device and helps you analyse and quantify your performance.

It can be used to challenge yourself to go faster or, more frequently, as a device for proving to your cycling friends that you're better than them

on a hill climb or flat road section. See www.strava.com

How can the pros sit on a bike for weeks yet after just one ride, my bottom is sore and raw?

The first point is that men and women have different lower regions, so there are particular solutions to each.

Buy shorts – tight-fitting or looser mountain bike fit – with padding specific to male or female.

Choose a gender-specific bike seat. Women's saddles offer a wider seat and cut-outs to match their physique.

Creams, gels and liquids help to prevent chafing, rather than the bumps and bounces of riding.

One for women is Hoo Ha Ride Glide. See www.planetx.co.uk

Flat pedals or clip-ins?

Clip-ins work like step-in ski bindings, so you can clip in and out of your pedals with the aid of cleats on your bike shoes.

Clip-ins offer a more efficient ride because you gain more power through