

# 10 Common Time Trial Mistakes

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The time trial is often referred to as "the race of truth" and many even consider it to be an art form. The fact is that it takes a lot of hard training and mental fortitude to excel at the discipline. Below is a list of 10 common mistakes riders make when preparing for and racing time trials.

- 1. Starting too hard:** This is probably the most common mistake riders make during time trials. It can also be one that causes a significant amount of time loss. Work into the effort over the first minutes of the event. Avoid building excessive fatigue early in the race that will cause a necessary decrease in speed. You may never recover to hit your goal pace if you start too hard.
- 2. Not warming up hard enough:** Simply spinning lightly before the start of a TT will not activate and properly warm up the energy systems you will call into play for the event. Be sure to do several efforts at Lactate Threshold Heart Rate to ensure you are ready to go. As a general rule: The shorter the event the longer and harder the warm-up should be.
- 3. Changing position or equipment too close to race day:** This sounds obvious, but it's amazing how many riders neglect this rule. Train with the position and equipment you intend to race with. Have the final adjustments made at least several training sessions before the event.
- 4. Too high or too low a cadence during the event:** Race with a comfortable cadence that you've been training with. Race day is not the time to experiment with cadences higher or lower than you've been working with in training.
- 5. Completing warm-up efforts too long before start time:** Attempt to finish your last hard warm-up effort as close to start time as possible. Within 10 minutes is optimum. Make all the necessary preparations before so you can go right from your warm-up to the start line.
- 6. Allowing split times to mentally affect your effort:** I tend to avoid using split times unless it's a situation where it will really help. Just because you get behind on an estimated split doesn't mean the race is over. Concentrate on the effort. The very best riders will often ride negative splits and not let competitors' fast early split times affect their personal pacing strategies.
- 7. Not pushing hard enough from far enough out from the finish:** The goal is to use every bit of energy you have and leave it all out on the course to get the best possible time. Learn when you can "open up the throttles" and sustain maximum effort to the finish.
- 8. Being an absolute slave to the numbers:** Power meters, heart rate monitors and cycling computers are all amazing tools that give us feedback about our performance. Don't allow the numbers they give to rule your riding completely. Learn what different heart rates and power outputs feel like. Do some of your interval training on perceived effort alone. Cover up the numbers on your monitors, go by feel and then look at the data later to see how close your estimates were. The most important heart rate and power zone to be able to "feel" for time trials is Lactate Threshold Heart Rate and power.
- 9. Not enough training time at Lactate Threshold Power:** Training at or near this important point is essential to develop time trial fitness. The exceptions to this are extremely short (less than 5 km) and extremely long (more than 100 km) events.
- 10. Going out too hard:** This one is so important I had to list it twice.

Certainly there are many more subtleties that could be listed here, but this list should give you a few things to think about before you head to your next race against the clock.