



INDOOR CYCLING ASSOCIATION

# How to Create Profiles for your Indoor Cycling Classes



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*How to Create Profiles* is an excerpt from an upcoming eBook “The Handbook for Coaching Indoor Cycling”. It will be a general reference book for instructors from all programs, whether new to instruction or those with many years of experience. You can expect the book sometime in the fall of 2012.

### How to create a profile

Learning to create your own profiles is a great skill to have as an indoor cycling instructor. It can be daunting to new instructors however, as few certification programs spend much time giving sufficient instruction on how to create them, or their instructions only leads to more confusion. To be perfectly honest, like anything worth doing, it takes practice, practice, practice. To understand the profile creation process from the inside out, and to be able to manipulate the training elements (you might call them puzzle pieces) that shape a solid profile that makes sense, it also takes making mistakes and learning from them.

Early on in your experience as an instructor, it might be wise to utilize profiles that have been created by other instructors for a few weeks just to get the hang of the teaching side of the equation. This will help you when it's time to create your own profiles. While you are teaching one of these profiles, evaluate it as you are teaching. How does it feel to put these elements together? Does it flow smoothly? Does the desired intensity make sense and is there sufficient recovery? Most importantly, can YOU the instructor do the profile as its written and without too much fatigue? In other words, is it even plausible? Some of the profiles that are available on free forums on the internet or through some of the indoor cycling programs, can be too hard or even impossible as written. I've seen numerous ones that ask for a series of movements and/or to maintain a certain intensity that in reality is not even humanly possible, except for perhaps the most fit of athletes (and even then, those athletes may avoid that kind of intensity). In others I've seen them ask for movements while asking to stay at a low intensity, and that might be impossible.

By experimenting with pre-written profiles, you'll see what works and what doesn't if you pay close attention to intensity and perceived exertion as you ride.

An excellent way to learn how good profiles are put together is to attend a lot of other instructors' classes. Evaluate not only the teaching techniques, but ask some of these questions about the profile and class:

- How was the ride put together
- How it was communicated.
- Was there an objective stated at the beginning of the ride?
- If so, was it followed?
- If not, can you see how the profile is less likely to have a common thread running through it?
- Did you like the class? Why or why not?
- Did the instructor communicate the profile in a manner that was easily understood?
- Or was the class confused at what to do next, for how long and at what intensity?
- Did you feel that one segment led smoothly into the next, or was it a hodgepodge of miscellaneous movements thrown together?

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Another excellent way to learn about quality profiles is to take Continuing Ed. and Master Classes from experienced indoor cycling educators. You can usually find these at conferences or at clubs that host certifications and workshops. Your own club can host a Master Class or two. However, one problem with some Master Classes and conference sessions is that they are often what I call “spectacle events”. Sure, these are usually amazing and exhilarating to attend, and you can learn some motivational cues to add to your repertoire - I myself love to present and to take these kinds of rides. But, they don’t often teach you a lot about assembling a profile that would be appropriate for your *average* every day indoor cycling class, a class that is not a “special event”. That is why I have put together a list of Master Classes with turn-key profiles to use in your own every-day classes (please see the appendix for information).

The point is, take a lot of classes, but do so with an eye to evaluate the good (and poor) elements of the profile itself, in order to learn. Then it’s time to create your own.

### **The key to good profiles**

The key to building solid profiles is to have a good understanding of training principles. You don’t have to be an expert in physiology or exercise science, but an instructor who doesn’t have a good grasp of basic training principles runs the risk of creating profiles that offer insufficient recovery between intervals, or of not balancing the various elements of fitness throughout the class, the week, the month or the training period. Note that the latter is still very important even for students who are not athletes or cyclists – every human being benefits from variety and will plateau from doing the same thing all the time.

## **What type of profile does your class need or want right now?**

Before creating a profile, it’s important to consider the current situation you find yourself in with your class. This might include the following:

- Is it a new class for you? If they don’t know you well, then focus on excitement and variety in your first few weeks of profiles. Make sure they know that you can teach a hard class, but don’t fall prey to making all your first few classes incredibly hard. Introduce technique improvements over time. Do not try to do a drill-based or endurance profile in the first 3-4 weeks. You need to build their trust that you know what you are doing first.
- What have you been doing the past few weeks in your class? Make sure to include variety in terrain, intensity, drills, mental versus entertainment-focused rides, and music.
- Where are you in the year? Early winter should include a higher percentage of moderate intensity, technique based classes. Spring/summer can include a higher percentage of higher intensity, provided you have been progressively building to that point.
- At times you might want to build a profile around a particular song or soundtrack you have just discovered.

### Basic profile creation rules

#### 1. *Always have an objective for every class*

Your very first step in creating a profile is to start with your objective in mind. You might choose your class objective based on how you are feeling at that moment, what you did in your last class, something you haven't done in awhile. You may choose it for an emotional reason, or based on how a certain song affects you. Once you have an objective, you will find that not only are your profiles easier to create, but they will have a thread of commonality throughout them, helping them to be seamless and make more sense to you as well as your students. Your students might not be able to put a finger on it, but compared to other instructors who just wing it or who throw together a bunch of symbols like throwing dice without any greater overall objective, your classes will have that certain *je ne sais quoi* to them.

#### *How about a sub-objective?*

Usually I will have one overall objective and then a secondary or sub-objective or two to help define the ride even more. The secondary objective will provide the means of attaining what your overall objective is. Also it will help you to reject superfluous segments that detract from your main objective and help keep your profile from becoming a mish-mash of unrelated stuff. It also helps define the kind of music that you will choose, because often it is the sub-objective that sets the emotion and mood of your ride. You will see examples of this in the upcoming profile examples.

#### 2. *Variety*

Variety is the spice of life. It is also the spice of IC classes!

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you always teach interval because you think it's what your students want?
- Do you give them what they need as well as what they want?
- Are you really heavy on hill climbing because *you* like to climb hills?
- Do you encourage intensities of all levels, from aerobic to threshold to above threshold?
- Do you include drills in some of your classes? Or do you believe that your students will get bored from drills?
- Do you make sure to include mental focus segments in many of your classes?

You help your students more easily reach their own fitness goals when you offer a variety of intensities and techniques every time you teach. You want to make sure you have a good mix of classes from week to week. They may include primarily flat rides with faster cadences, hilly climbs with multiple rolling hills or one or two big climbs, a hard interval class with a specific intensity in mind, or it might be a class focused on technique work in which the terrain or intensity becomes secondary.

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### 3. *Keep it simple!*

Sometimes the simplest profiles are the best ones. Don't try to fit in every kind of terrain or movement or objective into each ride. Pick one or two goals and limit it to that. Trying to do too much dilutes your purpose and takes away from your objective. Variety is important from class to class and from week to week, but it doesn't imply that you should be changing positions or terrain within your profile every minute or two! And this leads us to the next tip...

### 4. *Stay still already!*

Try to avoid constant changes in position. This type of class emanates from the group fitness mentality where there is constant change, moving from one thing to another. That is fine for a kickboxing or a Step class, but an indoor cycling class is different on many levels and should not be treated like the other group fitness classes. A constant change of position or intensity prevents your students from achieving any one fitness goal, and can lead to early fatigue or even injury because they aren't focusing on proper form. Often, they are more focused on trying to keep up with the instructor or the person next to them. It contributes to an ADD type of lifestyle and avoids commitment.

It also prevents them from learning proper technique. Technique can only be acquired through practice. And technique practice doesn't occur in 30 or 60-second increments.

Now I am not saying you need to sit in the saddle for a 15 minutes at a time, or even 10 minutes, but try to spend longer than a minute or two, perhaps even up to 5-6 minutes doing one thing without changing. If this is not what your students are used to however, don't try to throw it at them suddenly. Gradually build from 2 to 3 to 4 minutes or more without changes. You will be surprised at how they will begin to accept it.

To help them stay more engaged and willing to stay in one movement for longer periods, it's helpful to utilize *intrinsic* cues to keep them engaged (visualizations, focus on breath, etc), rather than constant *extrinsic* distracting cues ("Up", "Down", "Go!", "Faster!"). This would require more of a mind-body approach\*. I guarantee that when you become skilled at teaching this way, it will enhance your profiles and your teaching style like almost no other technique!

(\*For more tips on how to implement this style of teaching, read the eBook "Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor". Tip #2 provides a long list of resources for this purpose.)

## Ideas of Objectives and Sub-objectives for your profiles

The following are four examples of the first step of profile creation using both a primary and a secondary objective.

### **Example #1:**

Primary Objective: You want to do a lot of climbing in this class (often referred to as a Strength class). Once you establish this, the basic parameters for this class are already laid out. For example, the cadence will most often be somewhere between 60 and 80 rpm\* and you will be using higher resistance. There should be more climbs than flats (not counting warm-up or cool-down). A 60-minute class with this as the primary objective should include about 30-45 minutes of time actually spent climbing.

\*Note: it's OK to use slightly lower or slightly higher climbing cadences when you have *skilled* riders and a very *specific* secondary objective such as force development drills on the low end (as low as 55rpm) or higher cadence muscular endurance climbs on the high end (up to about 85rpm). But that is another subject....

Secondary Objective options:

- 1) Intensity-based: this would include hill repeats at threshold, an uphill time trial, climbing at an aerobic tempo pace, short steep anaerobic climbs (above threshold), etc.
- 2) Technique-based: focus on pedal stroke drills while climbing, and/or on smooth transitions in and out of the saddle, focusing on not letting cadence drop when sitting back down after standing climb (very common), etc.
- 3) Metabolic and muscular-based: muscular endurance high cadence climbs, or force development slower cadence climbs, etc.
- 4) Motivational focus: using emotion to make it to the tops of a series of climbs, one long grind and the mental fortitude required to get there, using your climb to represent other challenges in life, etc.
- 5) Mood or ambiance: climbing in the rain, through beautiful or rugged scenery and so on.
- 6) Real life simulation: a mountain bike loop ride in the hills, a scenic rolling hills road ride, a Tour de France stage in the Alpes, etc

### **Example #2**

Primary objective: Interval workout

Secondary objective:

- 1) Lactate tolerance intervals of 1-2 minutes long with 2-3 minutes recovery in between each one. RPE would be *very hard*.
- 2) Threshold intervals of 4-8 minutes with 2-4 min recoveries. Mix of hills and fast flats. RPE would be *hard*.
- 3) VO2 Max intervals (VHIT) of 4-6 minutes with 3-5 minute recoveries. (Usually too intense for the average Spinning student because of the duration at "*very hard*".)

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- 4) Intervals “couched” as an “outdoor ride” such as a mountain bike ride with hard segments alternated with easier segments.

### **Example #3**

Primary objective: Endurance ride (aerobic intensity)

Secondary objective: Just because it is an “endurance” based ride does not imply that it has to be all on flat roads or only in the saddle. It can be:

- 1) Tempo ride in Zone 3 over varying terrain
- 2) Cruise intervals in Zone 3 or low Zone 4.
- 2) Pedal stroke and/or cadence drills on a flat road from 80-110 rpm.
- 3) Narrow cadence range from 90-95 rpm the entire time (a *very* focused ride)
- 4) Mind-body focus to keep students mentally engaged.

### **Example #4**

Primary Objective: A fun outdoor ride simulation

Secondary objective:

- 1) An out and back ride: ride out to one point then turn around, so you see the same roads from a different perspective. Hills are different on each side, and you may have a tail wind one way and a head wind the way back.
- 2) A loop ride that is repeated 3-5 times, each loop with a different focus. Determine how much time you have available for the main portion of the ride, then divide by the number of desired laps to determine the approximate length of each loop. For example, a 60-minute class with 8 minutes for warm-up and cool down leaves 44 minutes. That would be two 22-min loops, three 15-min loops or four 11-min loops.
- 3) A simulation of a local cycling event on roads your students should know (even if they only drive them in a car, and not ride them on a bike)
- 4) A rolling mountain bike ride with single track segments. By virtue of the fact that ascending steep single track is pretty intense, you will have to insert periods of recovery, so by extension, the secondary objective becomes a covert interval ride! When you know this, it will help guide you to place recoveries throughout your profile. You can disguise them as “plateaus” following short steep climbs.



### Selecting Music for your profile

Does the profile come first, or the music? In general, you write your screenplay, and then you put your soundtrack to it. This will probably be the case with 90-99% of your profiles. But there are times in which a certain song or album can inspire you to create a profile around it. Similarly, after you've created your profile, and put your music playlist together, you might decide to alter what you had planned to do in your sketched out profile plan (whether to sit or stand a climb, for example) based on the energy and emotion of the song you chose, and not based on the fact that two minutes have passed.

For the bulk of your profiles, music will be the final step. Once you know your primary and secondary objectives, it is much easier to select your music to match the mood or energy that you are looking for. This is especially important if your objective is based on mood, emotion, or mind-body focus or if it is a high intensity ride that requires very energetic music.

I have my music categorized into a wide variety of folders. (See "Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor". Tip #9 is to organize your music in advance and in meaningful categories in order to save you hours of time when creating your profiles).

When I have sketched out my general profile structure, I start looking around my iTunes folders, based on the objectives I've laid out as I've conceptualized my plan. If it's a high intensity interval profile, it will be more important to select songs that are full of energy than a mood enhancement song (unless that mood is to choose an "angry" song to empower them)! If it's a series of rolling hills that has a more fun objective, I might choose songs that they are more familiar with, perhaps rock or pop. If it's a long grind, or perhaps two long hills, in which I challenge them to focus inward, on their technique and breath, then I will most likely choose songs without words to distract them from the mental focus. This is where ambient/world/downtempo genres are especially inspirational.

Recently I did a profile that was a first for me, even after 15 years of teaching. I did this near the end of a 15-week periodized cycling clinic, so my students were the same during the four months, they all wore heart rate monitors, and all were cyclists (some were very new to cycling mind you, they are not all strong riders)! Because of this I was able to do this ride, I don't think it would have been possible in my regular classes. We had been focusing on some very high intensity riding, as well as some serious climbing the previous few weeks. I needed a flat road profile at moderate to moderately-high intensity. I decided to do Cruise Intervals ALL AT 90RPM! I did 3X15 minutes at an aerobic pace @90rpm. Recovery songs were 3-4 minutes (at 85rpm). Even the warm-up was at 90rpm. The class was amazing, and I got a lot of compliments, but it was very hard, even for me, to stay focused. I have to say, the sense of accomplishment was outstanding. My choice of music absolutely was the key factor in the success of the ride, because of the way the songs facilitated the mind-body connection. I do not think that the level of focus and

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commitment would have been possible with music with a lot of lyrics, especially popular ones they knew.

In putting the music for this ride together, I simply searched my iTunes for songs of 90rpm and put them together. The intervals ended up being 14, 15 and 16+ minutes each – the exact duration wasn't important for this particular profile. The recovery breaks were for mental and physical recovery – to stand and stretch the legs, get water, release the single-minded focus, and prepare for the next one. This is not to suggest that you should be doing a very cycling specific class such as this at your club, because I know it would not work at many facilities. I bring it up here to describe how I put together the music based on the specific objectives of this profile.

### **Song choices for short intervals**

Suppose I have planned a long interval of around 3 minutes or more. In most cases I will use one song for that entire duration effort; when the song ends, we back off the effort and recovery. However, if the interval is short, as in less than 3-minutes, I will usually combine the work effort with the recovery effort into one song. For example, suppose I want four 1-minute high intensity intervals above threshold followed by 2 minutes of recovery. I will probably choose two 6-minute songs: 1 minute very hard push, 2-minutes easy, 1-minute very hard, 2-minutes easy, for two songs in a row. Or suppose I have short 2-minute hard efforts followed by 3 minutes of recovery. I will probably use one 5-minute song, combining the work with the recovery into one song. This is because I don't like cutting songs down to 1 or 2 minutes using Mixmeister.

On the other hand, when my intervals are longer, say 3-5 minutes or more, the intensity isn't usually as high, so my recovery might only need to be 2-3 minutes. I like to use shorter songs for these recovery segments. One tip that has helped me when finding music for my interval profiles has been to create a playlist in iTunes called "Short songs for recovery". In it I place every song I can find that is about 3-½ minutes or less. It's growing every day – right now I have about 400 songs in it. Then when I need that short recovery song in between those moderately-high to high-intensity efforts of 4 minutes or more, I search in here.

Sometimes it is fun to use the same group for all your recoveries, or the same genre. For example, all of your recovery songs might be 80's retro, 70's disco, classic rock, the Beatles, Elvis, etc. This adds an element of fun to your profile – you tell your students that when they hear the retro song, or when they hear the Police, they can breathe a sigh of relief that the hard part is over. (Of course, if you do this, make sure your interval songs are not the same group or genre as your recovery). The following are some suggested groups that have a good number of shorter songs of 2-3 minutes. These make excellent choices for when you want to use one group for all the recoveries:

The Beatles  
Elvis Presley  
The Cure  
The English Beat

The Clash  
The Police  
Elvis Costello

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The Rolling Stones (especially their earlier songs tend to be shorter)

Tom Petty

Creedence Clearwater Revival

Neil Diamond

Bruce Springsteen

The Doors (when I do this, I call it “Stepping through the Doors”)

REM

Van Morrison

Stray Cats

Vampire Weekend

Spoon

Green Day

There are obviously many more. Have fun with your recoveries! They don't have to be Enya or Tracey Chapman! ;-)

### **Using music to define your profile, or to define your road**

As mentioned above, there may be times where you come across a song that energizes or moves you so much, that you create a profile around that particular song, or that you determine what you do during the profile because of the energy of a certain song.

As an example, the song *Baba O'Riley (Teenage Wasteland)* by The Who begins at 60bpm, then right around 3.5 minutes, the bpm picks up gradually to 86bpm. You can have fun with this song – begin by simulating a steep climb that gets a little less steep, so you begin pedaling faster and faster as the hill gradually rolls to the top. Led Zeppelin's *Black Dog* has rhythm surges from slow to fast (up to 85bpm) throughout the whole song, allowing you to simulate very short steep bursts of speed and intensity. This is great for a mountain bike profile with short steep fast uphill of about 45 seconds.

An excellent example of a song in which the energy breaks in the song describes variations in the road is the song *Salva Mea* by Faithless. It is 10:47 and has numerous rhythm and energy breaks. Note that the bpm of the song stays constant, but the energy does not (when you listen to the song you will see what I mean. It is available on most music download sites). Use the subdued energy for a seated climb, and as the energy picks up, stand up. On several occasions it builds and builds to a peak – use the sudden breaks in energy (when it takes off) to sit down and pedal fast downhill. Then it slows back down, and you go back uphill.

You can decide to alter your position using the chorus and verse of songs. You might sit during the chorus, then stand up for each of the verses. Though this is not any kind of set rule, a lot of pop songs will repeat the verse three times. The third time is often longer than the previous two. Some examples of using the chorus and verse to change what you do are *The Cave* by Mumford and Sons, *How Far We've Come* by Matchbox Twenty, and *Leave the Memories Alone*, by Fuel.

### **Profile creation example from start to finish: Threshold intervals**

There are many ways to put together fun and exciting profiles. The following is one profile from conceptualization to completion from my perspective. You can see the thought processes that I went through as I decided what to do in the ride, and the changes I made after initially sketching out the plan. I describe the situation I find myself in (time of year, level of students, recent class history, etc), the various things I consider as I decide on my objective and terrain, assembling the elements of terrain, resistance and cadence, and finally, how I decide to put the music to the ride.

#### **My situation:**

I have been doing a periodized program for my classes and we are 5 weeks into the 12-week program. We did a threshold field test the first week to establish training zones. Now it is time to introduce some higher intensity work. (Note: you can do this using RPE as well, if your students don't wear HRMs)

#### **Things I have to consider:**

We have spent most of the past 5 weeks in moderate zones (Zone 2 and 3) with a couple of short forays to Zone 4 (sub-threshold). It's important not to bring on too much intensity too fast, so I want this ride to progressively introduce threshold intensity in short to moderate-length intervals, with a recovery that is at least half the length of the interval or more.

I decide I want to do a ladder series of intervals of 4, 5, 6, 5, and 4 minutes, each at threshold intensity (RPE of 7/10, or "Hard" on the subjective scale). Recoveries will be 2 minutes for the 4-min efforts 3 min for the 5-min efforts, and 4 min for the 6-minute effort. That makes a total of 24 minutes of work and 16 minutes for the recoveries following them (no need for a recovery after the final 4-minute effort because it is followed by the cool-down). This makes a total of 40 minutes. I have a 60 minute class, and will have a warm-up and cool-down of 6-8 minutes each. That leaves some extra time, so I elect to add a 4-minute effort before the main set of intervals, to high Zone 3, with 3 minutes of easy afterwards. This serves as an extension of the warm-up and prepares the body for the harder intervals to come. Also, this makes it better for the students, because few people are ready for threshold efforts after only 6-8 minutes of warming up. This allows them to more easily attain the desired intensity for that first interval in the main set.

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I begin by sketching out a framework for this class in a notebook. When I do this, there are often a lot of scratching out as I make alterations. My class starts to look like this:

### **Warm-up**

8 min to Zone 2

4-min to mid to high Zone 3 (“moderately-hard”), followed by 3 min easy

### **Main Set:**

- 4 min hard/2 min easy
- 5 min hard/3 min easy
- 6 min hard/4 min easy
- 5 min hard/3 min easy
- 4 min hard

### **Cool down and stretch**

10 minutes

At this point I haven’t yet considered what I’m going to do in each interval. For this particular profile, the most important thing was to establish the intensity and the duration first, since that was the *primary objective*.

Now it’s time to decide the *mode* – how I am going to bring their intensity to threshold. I look at it and decide that I want some variety for each interval. I have another profile with a primary objective of “hill repeats at threshold”, and in that one, I do each effort on a hill. But since the objective of this particular ride is simply “threshold intensity” and not necessarily climbing, I decide I will do both flats and climbs with varying cadences.

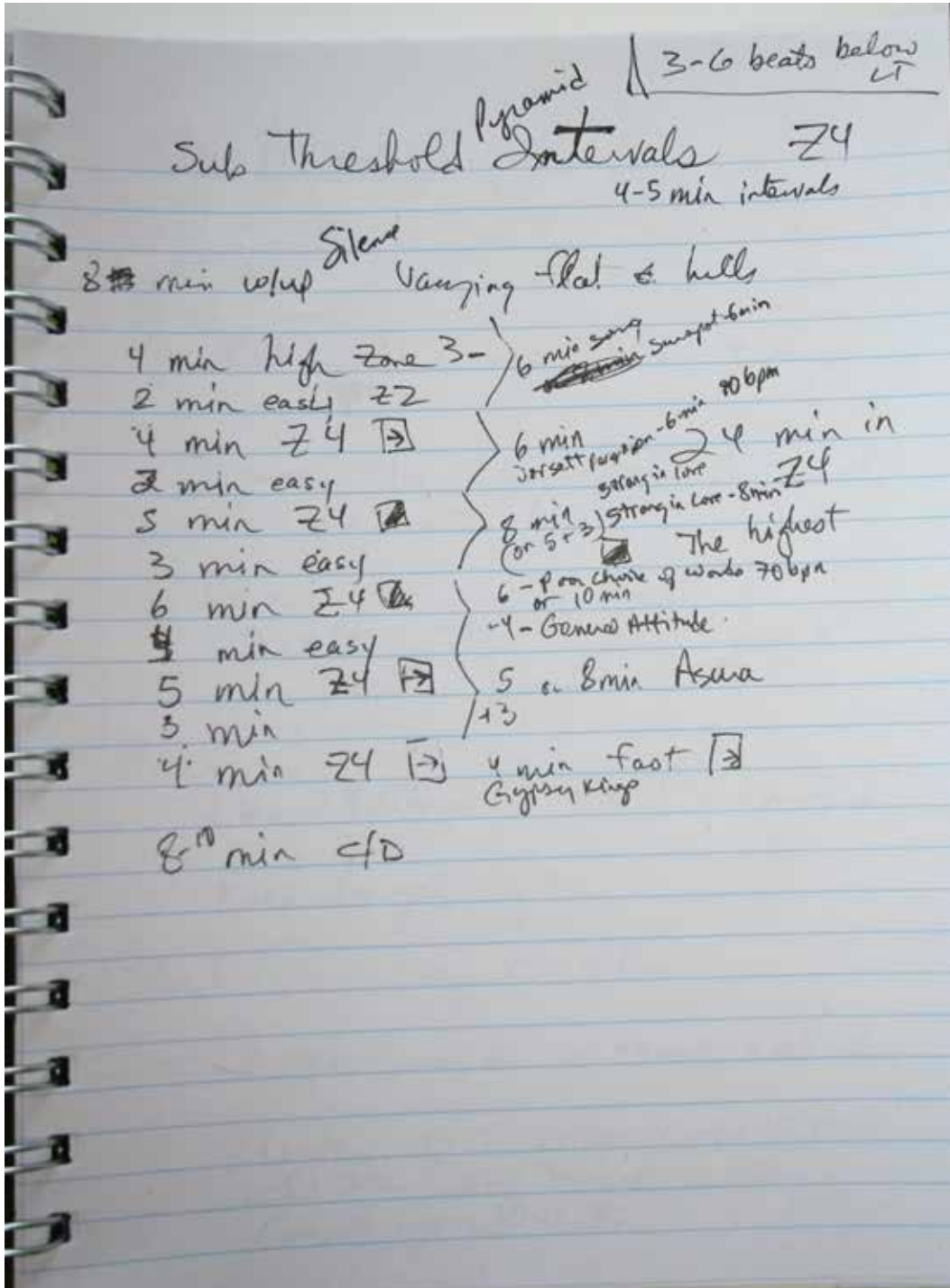
I decide to do 3 of the shorter intervals as fast flats and the other 2 as climbs. The faster cadence work is actually harder for most people, so I decide to introduce the intervals with one fast flat because it’s shorter and because faster cadences affect the cardiovascular system more than the muscular system; this puts off the muscular fatigue until the middle two intervals. I also decide to end with two fast flats because of the challenge it represents. The longest one is a climb because I know they prefer those (yes, sometimes I am nice to my students)!

### **Putting music to this profile**

When selecting music, I usually work on the body of the profile first and choose the warm-up and cool-down songs afterward. I could conceivably do a different song for each of the work and recovery efforts, but I also can combine the work effort and the short recovery with one longer song.

I decide that for this profile I am going to use the beat of a song to help define the cadence of each interval. The cadence won’t be as important for the recoveries, since I’ll be encouraging them to do whatever they need to do to bring their heart rates down, so for those I’ll choose a song with a middle of the road bpm – they can choose to pedal to it or not.

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Here is the actual page from my notebook where I sketched out this profile. You can see I scribbled some things out as I changed my mind. Those are song suggestions on the right. I still use a few of the Spinning® symbols, usually just to depict a climb (it's not defined as seated or flat yet). I use a symbol of an arrow pointing to the right to indicate when I want faster cadence on flats. This helps guide me to select a song with a faster bpm.

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As I progress through these thought processes, I write a note for myself next to each work/recovery interval on my hand-written profile.

- I need a 6-min song for the first 4-min Zone 3 effort plus the 2-min recovery.
- For the first threshold interval I want a 6-minute song with a fairly fast beat (90-ish bpm) for a flat (4 minutes of work, 2 minutes recovery).
- the next one will be a climbing interval, and I will need either a 5 min climb song plus a 3 min recovery song, or one 8 min song good for climbing (we'll ride an easy flat during the recovery, even if the beat is slower).
- The next one needs a 6 min climbing song and a 4-min recovery song
- The next one will be a 5 min fast flat, requiring either a 5 min fast song and 3 min recovery, or one 8 min faster song.
- The last one will be a 4 minute fast flat
- Finish with a cool-down and stretch of about 8 minutes.

I have my hand-written profile next to me as I look in my iTunes folders for the type of song I want with the correct beat/rhythm. I create a new playlist in iTunes with the title of my new profile and as I select a song I'll drag it to the playlist. I also write down the song and bpm (if applicable) on my profile.

For intervals of this duration, I'm not picky that the song has to be *exactly* the length of the desired interval - it can be in that range (such as 4-ish minutes). If you prefer, you can use Mixmeister or another mixing software to make your songs exactly the length you desire. I only do that when the length is crucial to the profile, because I don't like when songs are chopped or shortened too much with Mixmeister. If I want a 2 minute song, I'll look for a song that's about 2-minutes; I don't like to cut a 6-minute song down to 2 minutes – too much of the heart of the song is lost. I will also use Mixmeister for special events when I have more time to devote to a very smooth transitioning playlist.

After I choose my songs from my iTunes library and playlists, I add the warm-up and cool-down, and then listen to a little of each song to make sure it will work. If not, I'll keep searching for a song that will. (Tip: when doing this, make sure to listen to a short segment of the beginning, middle and end of the song).

On the following page is what I ended up with for this profile.

## Pyramid Threshold Intervals

### Warm-up

*Silence (Sanctuary Mix), Delerium feat Sarah McLaughlin, 8:06*

4-minute Zone 3 effort plus 2-minute easy: *Sunspot (feat Airwave), Armin Van Buuren, 6:01*

Stand up for 30-40 seconds to raise intensity to tempo pace, then sit for the remainder of the effort. Stay at least 10 beats below threshold, or to a PE of moderately hard. This serves as an extension of the warm-up. Bpm doesn't really matter here, it's just to get the legs ready. There are 3 more minutes of the song to bring the intensity back down just prior to the main set of intervals.

### Main Set

1. First interval effort: 4 min hard + 2-min easy, one 6-ish minute song

*Dorset Perception (Deep Dive Corp Remix), Shpongle, 6:24*

The song is 90 bpm. Start standing for 20-30 seconds to raise intensity, then sit down and grab on to the beat. 90rpm is a great place to pedal! The effort should feel hard. If it's not, then add another half-gear underneath your pedals, but hold on to that cadence.

After 4 minutes, ease up and slow the legs down (even though the song continues, I don't make them hold the 90rpm anymore unless they want to). Bring the HR down. After about a minute they can stand and "jog" easy if they need more out of the saddle time, but keep it short. The recovery is a little longer than 2 minutes.

2. Second interval effort: 5 min hard, 3 min easy. I choose one 8-ish min song

*Strong in Love, Chicane 8:04 68 bpm*

Start standing climb for 1 minute, bring HR to desired intensity, then sit for a minute; alternate stand/sit every 30-seconds. Keep the cadence of 68rpm.

After 5 minutes of hard effort, it's time to recover. Back off the resistance and let the legs spin, even though the 68bpm continues. At this point they can break from the beat, and imagine they are on a flat road, pedaling easily. Drink and prepare for the next one.

3. Third interval effort (climbing): 6 min hard, 4 min easy – two songs.

*Poor Choice of Words, Hans Zimmer, The Dark Knight Remixes, 6:13*

This song is 70bpm. Stand up for 45-60 seconds to bring up intensity, then sit for 4 minutes, then stand until the song ends (about a minute). Hold cadence.

*General Attitude, Collective Soul 4:00*

Recover and ride easy, prepare for the next one. The beat doesn't matter on this song (IMO). I chose this song because they will know it, it's entertaining, and it's 4 minutes.



## How to Create Profiles For Your Indoor Cycling Classes

4. Fourth Interval Effort: 5 min hard, 3 min easy.

One song *Altered States (Kumharas 6 Full Version), Asura 7:47 100bpm*

(This song is a little shorter than 8 minutes. I wanted a faster beat song, and it's still a recovery of over half the work effort).

Stand for 45 seconds to raise the intensity, then sit. The beat of the song doesn't get going until about a minute and a half, so have them gradually start increasing their cadence, latching on to the 100rpm. This is a tough cadence for a lot of riders IF they understand the realistic resistance needed. If they bounce, it's ok to slow down the legs and add a little more resistance, but have them find the highest cadence they can hold with good form.

After 5 minutes, release the fast cadence, slow the legs and recover until the end of the song. Once HR falls, if they need a saddle break, stand and jog easily for 30-40 seconds.

5. Fifth Interval Effort: 4 minutes hard – fast flat

*Escucha Me, Gipsy Kings, 4:03*

Like the previous song, sit and work this faster cadence in the saddle. Stay committed. It's more difficult to hold a true 100rpm at threshold than to climb at threshold.

### **Cool Down**

*Holding the Vision, Steve Gordon 6:56*

*Everything Epilogue, Safri Duo 2:38*

## How to Create Profiles For Your Indoor Cycling Classes

### **Practice, Practice, Practice!**

You will surely make some mistakes along the way on your journey as an indoor cycling instructor, and creating profiles is one of the areas of teaching in which you must be willing to take that leap of faith. But don't be hard on yourself. Mistakes always represent an opportunity to grow. When something doesn't work in a profile you've created, make sure you write down *why* it didn't work. Perhaps your students were unable to do what you were asking at the intensity you required. Or maybe you realized that you had too little recovery, or even too much. It could be that a song just didn't fit what you wanted to do, or didn't reflect the mood you wanted to convey.

If a certain profile sort of worked, but you discovered parts of it you want to change, make those changes right away, so you won't use the same profile and playlist again. If the entire thing didn't work, well, toss it and start from scratch!

At ICA, you will receive many complete profiles that include objectives and sub-objectives, and all the coaching and cueing to use in that profile. I will give you one, sometimes even two, playlists for every profile. But my hope is that the profiles available on ICA will inspire you to create your own profiles.

Always remember too, that you can repurpose a profile simply by changing the objective, altering the cadence, shortening or lengthening segments, and/or putting a new playlist to it, while retaining the original structure. It is unlikely your students will be able to tell the difference. Before you know it, you will have dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of profiles to choose from. Make sure to read Tip #8, "Have Lots of Profiles" in *Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor* (eBook available on ICA). It also gives suggestions on how to organize your profiles.

Remember that members of ICA can Ask the Expert any question related to teaching indoor cycling, including on how to write profiles or about putting your music together. Also, we will occasionally be doing profile reviews, where you can send your profile in for a complete evaluation. This is perhaps one of the best ways to grow – to be willing to put yourself out there to be evaluated.

I look forward to hearing from you at ICA!

Jennifer Sage

# **Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor**



**By Jennifer Sage, CPT, CSCS**  
**Master Instructor**  
**Indoor Cycling Association**

## **Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor**

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***Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor***

By Jennifer Sage

eBook \$12.95

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## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

### About the Author

Jennifer Sage has been in the fitness industry since the early 1980s. She began teaching aerobics in college and graduated with a BS in Exercise Science in 1984. She's been a personal trainer since the mid 1990s, earning her CSCS (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist) as well as several other personal training certifications. In 1997 she was certified as a Spinning® instructor and only a year later she became a Master Instructor (MI) for Mad Dogg Athletics on Team Spinning® International. In this role, she has traveled around the country certifying Spinning® instructors, teaching continuing education courses, writing workshops on coaching and training, and presenting at fitness conferences throughout North America.



Jennifer has been one of the most visible Master Instructors on the most prominent online indoor cycling forums for well over a decade. As a result, she became like a kind of “Dear Abbey” for indoor cycling instructors and mentored and coached many individuals online through the forums, email and through her blog *FunhogSpins*. Established in 2008, *FunhogSpins* quickly became the premier indoor cycling blog on the internet (125,000 visitors from over 100 countries).

After twelve years as one of their top Master Instructors, she resigned from the Spinning® program in 2009 to launch an online training program. Then in 2011 she channeled all her efforts to create the premier online educational source for training for indoor cycling instructors, the Indoor Cycling Association. The goal at ICA is to take current science and established training principles known to be extremely effective in the endurance-coaching field and apply them to indoor cycling. This means dispelling some of the current trends in the fitness industry still utilized by most indoor cycling programs, such as the very outdated theory of maximum heart rate to determine training zones.

Jennifer managed the Spinning® program at the Aria Spa and Club at the Vail Cascade Resort in Vail, Colorado for eight years. Between her management role, her motivational and coaching role as a Master Instructor, and her online presence, she has spent twelve years working closely with and mentoring instructors, and understanding their needs, worries and concerns. It is this experience from which she pulls her advice for this eBook, the ten most common situations that can diminish an instructor's motivation. This is not *just* a Top Ten list, but ten solid pieces of advice with numerous Action Steps that an instructor can take to help reignite the passion for teaching.

In 2003 Jennifer started her own bicycle tour company, Viva Travels, after leading bicycle tours for other companies since 1989. Although she organizes guided tours to Europe, including to the Tour de France, her specialty is creating unique, custom self-guided tours. She can take your group on a custom tour – just contact her for more information! You may even receive a free trip!

## **Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor**

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Indoor cycling online coaching and training for instructors: [www.indoorcyclingassociation.com](http://www.indoorcyclingassociation.com)

Jennifer's free blog for indoor cycling instructors: [www.sagecyclingandfitness.com](http://www.sagecyclingandfitness.com)

Bicycle touring in Europe: [www.vivatravels.com](http://www.vivatravels.com)

Cycling in Europe blog: <http://cyclingeurope.wordpress.com>

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

*Have you lost your motivation to teach?*

Confucius said: ***“We may learn wisdom: by reflection, which is noblest; by imitation, which is easiest; and by experience, which is bitterest.”***

Confucius was right. Experience is the most bitter means of learning, but you don't have to feel the pain of instructor burnout! This Top Ten list will provide suggestions on how to keep the passion alive and fuel your motivation. With a combination of imitation (following some of my suggestions presented here and on the ICA website) and your own reflection (the noblest way to learn), you will discover ways to keep yourself motivated and inspired in your journey as an indoor cycle instructor and avoid some of the pitfalls that many instructors encounter. Some may say that “experience is the best teacher” and in some instances this may be correct, but there are also ways to avoid this sometimes painful lesson. Instead of making these mistakes yourself, learn from *our* mistakes – we've all been there before.

Staying motivated is more than just being prepared and organized (we all forget our shoes once in a while)! It's about keeping *yourself* inspired by boosting your self-confidence, reaching for new challenges, expanding your potential, learning and growing. Sometimes it's about accepting that you aren't perfect and can't satisfy everyone, and sometimes it's admitting you may need a helping hand to achieve your goals.



This Top Ten List is essential for new instructors to get started on the path to becoming a seasoned and successful coach. It is also an excellent resource for longtime instructors to help avoid burnout and rekindle passion.

Burnout and de-motivation typically stem from numerous causes. It's helpful to identify the source of your lackluster attitude.

### **THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR BURNOUT:**

- you're bored with your music. This can also mean you are bored with a particular genre of music that you wish you didn't have to play because your population of students imposes that limitation on you (or you *believe* they impose it on you)
- you stress out too much about the music
- you're bored with your students and/or your club. They don't motivate you so you don't feel like motivating them.
- you spend way too much time creating playlists and profiles, sometimes hours on each one.
- you're bored with your profiles

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

- you don't use any profiles (i.e., you usually wing it)
- you are unorganized with your music, profiles and/or your teaching life in general
- in your disorganization, you tend to forget things, or even miss your classes
- you are teaching too much, too often and you are simply tired of trying to be creative all the time in your classes
- you are suffering from the physical aspects of overtraining (potential adrenal fatigue)
- you have too much stress in other areas of your life
- you don't feel a connection with your students; don't really know what they need or want
- you have a lack of ideas
- you're suffering from a lack of self-confidence
- you feel like you say the same things over and over again, yet you're fearful of expanding your vocabulary into that "touchy-feely" mind-body style of coaching. *What if my students don't accept that? What if they don't accept me?*
- you need more education on physiology and training; you don't feel like you can answer your students questions on heart rate or other exercise related issues



At ICA we want to extend a helping hand to get your *MOJO* back! The suggested tips and *Action Items* in this eBook are designed to help you stay motivated and inspired to become an extraordinary coach and will help you minimize or even completely avoid instructor burnout and diminished motivation. Some of these tips may also set your *passion* back on fire. We hope so!

These suggestions are in no particular order, but I do believe the last two (#2 and #1) are invaluable for every instructor.



## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

### #10 VARY AND EXPAND YOUR MUSIC SELECTION (But stop stressing about your music)!

Music is one of the primary reasons that indoor cycling is so incredibly popular. When chosen with care, music can add an element of inspiration, motivation and emotion to your rides. It can set the mood for the class; it can be used to build the energy of the class to a peak, timed perfectly with your profile. Poorly selected music can also create conflict if it doesn't match the objective and mood you set for the class. In short, music can make or break your profile.

However, at some point, you just have to realize that if you've given your best, no instructor can ever please everyone. Sometimes you just have to let go of the idea of being a DJ or being perfect with all your music choices.

*I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.*  
**Bill Cosby**

### EXPAND YOUR MUSIC CHOICES AND OFFER VARIETY

It's important to realize that you will never satisfy *everyone* with your musical selections. Some students will love your music and some will not. Some will not be afraid to complain while others will suffer in silence or find another instructor. One person you do need to satisfy, however, is yourself. If you don't love the music your passion will be stifled, manifesting itself in mediocre coaching. You cannot coach effectively if you hate the music, but you can learn to tolerate genres slightly outside of your regular preferences if you open your mind to the different qualities of music. Believe in your music and students will believe in you.

Speaking for myself, if I had a class that only wanted Top 40 music, I think I'd hang myself; I just couldn't do it. I'd find a way to inspire them with other music genres (and I do and I have). If that didn't work I'd have to find another club! But that's just me.

In order to satisfy students' musical preferences, offer a wide variety of genres and occasionally think outside the box of your own musical style. Let me tell you a little of my own experience. I began teaching using predominantly mainstream music until I realized I was going to get very sick of it quickly if I heard it frequently on the radio (and I did). I also discovered my students would get sick of it too. This may or may not be the case with you or your students since some people don't mind hearing the same songs in the gym or in class as they do at home or in the car. However, I went to the opposite extreme and used almost exclusively electronic and world music – but even that was pretty limited; it was the typical Johnny G Spinning® type of music back in the early days of Spinning®. This inspired me, and some of my students, but I probably alienated some students because of my lack of variety.

Over the years, I began adding a wider variety of genres, and in doing so, drew more and more compliments and discovered that I actually preferred my own classes more. In this process, my

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

music library expanded at an ever quickening rate, simply because I had more options from which to choose. *This alone can reduce your music anxiety!*

Even though it is impossible to please everyone, I still believe that by offering a wide variety of genres you can teach many of your own students to like, or at least appreciate, more than just their limited view - especially if they really respect you as a coach and love your teaching style. You will still have your preferences and style of music and in no way do I imply you should change. But expand and blossom as the DJ of your own class!

### STOP STRESSING!

Offering a wide variety of music and expanding your own library can help keep you personally motivated to teach. But it's also important not to stress too much about your music. An excessive focus on your music can actually *de-motivate you*. You may spend an inordinate amount of time on each playlist, you might start comparing yourself to others, you might feel you are inadequate because you don't have as many songs as another instructor or because you might not be able to afford purchasing a lot of music. Relax and know that if you start now, you can gradually grow your library over time. *Start where you are!*

I know some instructors who fret about playing the same song twice in the same year. Unless you have the benefit of 15,000 or more usable songs on your iTunes, this is overkill and will create unnecessary stress and de-motivate you when it comes to creating your playlists. If a song works well for a certain movement in your classes, you like it, your students like it and it describes your road well, then there is nothing wrong with using it in multiple profiles. You will probably coach it in a different way each profile, so it will feel different. Just don't overdo it and play it every week or two. If you find that you have overused a song, but it's a fabulous cycling song, "retire" it for six months or a year, then pull it back out when it feels new again.

Every instructor finds what works best for him or her; I personally try to avoid using the same song more than once or twice in a four- to six-week period for the same class. And then after a few months, I might avoid it for four- to six-months.

### HOW TO EXPAND YOUR MUSIC SELECTION FOR FREE (OR AT LOW COST).

- Join eMusic for a month or stay a member and continue to add to your library (it's one of the lower-cost per song legal sites). Click on the eMusic icon on the ICA website to get free downloads just for checking it out or for joining (there is no long-term contract). TIP: sometimes after being a member for a while and you decide to quit, they will offer you a bonus of free music to lure you back.
- Join Napster for a few months and take advantage of their joining bonus.
- Each audio profile on the ICA will have music suggestions. On some profiles there will be two playlists, of different genres. We try to list the source for each song, and seek out songs available on eMusic whenever possible (for those who need help in completing their monthly allotment)
- Ask your students and friends to lend you their favorite cds.

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

- Listen to live streaming radio to get new music ideas. One great source is [www.pandora.com](http://www.pandora.com). This station allows you to customize your station to the type of music you prefer – what they call the Music Genome Project. Another is [www.rhapsody.com](http://www.rhapsody.com).
- Expand your music knowledge by listening to genres outside of your normal preferences. Try genres like Global Chill, Alternative, Downtempo, Indie, etc. Keep a pad of paper handy to write down songs you think would be good for your classes, or purchase them directly online through Pandora. Because I am always looking to fulfill my eMusic monthly quota, I always look on eMusic first when I hear something I like on Pandora. Pandora also has an iPhone app.
- Here are two legal free music downloading sites for unique, alternative and indie music:  
[www.stereogum.com](http://www.stereogum.com)  
[www.rcrdlbl.com](http://www.rcrdlbl.com)  
(Note: there are numerous posts on ICA with more suggestions for music downloading sites, many of which are free or inexpensive. Do a search on “music” if you have not seen all these posts).
- Search this site for reviews of cheap legal mp3 sites: <http://www.cheap-mp3s.net>
- Look on [www.Pedal-on.com](http://www.Pedal-on.com) under Music and Profiles for other instructors’ suggestions for playlists and resources. Some instructors will post their music to Skytunes to make the songs available for anyone who wants them. (The legality of this is questionable...but in reality it’s not much different than trading cds with a friend).

### ACTION ITEMS

- Widen the variety of genres that you play.
- Listen to streaming music sources to discover new material. Try soundtracks, world music, global chill, electronic, house, trance, dance, alternative, downtempo, indie rock, roots rock, adult contemporary, funk, etc.
- Change your music often, but don’t stress about reusing a song.
- Ask students for their suggestions (you don’t have to act on them if you do not like it). Students might bring you in their favorite cds, which you can add to your library. Also borrow cds from friends.
- Even if your students “say” they only like top 40, continue trying to challenge your classes with different styles of music. Acknowledge their preferences of course, but add 1- 3 different styles to each playlist. There will *always* be students who really appreciate the change.
- If you have a finicky crowd that’s hard to please, a simple formula for success is to arrange your playlist so the first few songs are ones your students know, saving the emotional and/or instrumental songs for a little later into your class. Finish with a bang using another uplifting tune they recognize. This magic formula creates an “ice breaker” in the beginning of class, and students are more receptive to coaching.
- Join discount music service where you can get free downloads. Sign up for Amazon’s mailing list to receive notices of free downloads, which they often do on holidays.
- Seek out forums, blogs and membership sites (like ICA) that provide indoor cycling music playlists.
- Keep a pad of paper and pen ready in your car so that when you hear a song that would be good in your classes, you can write it down. Also jot down what it’s good for (flat, HIT, hill, etc).

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

- Do your best, but then *relax*! It takes time to develop an extensive library, especially if cost is an issue. Realize that you cannot and will not ever please everyone.
- If it's taking more than 20 or 30 minutes per playlist, that's too much. You might want to reevaluate your priorities.
- ***Remember that you are one of the people you have to please with your music choices! Offer variety but keep true to what inspires you. Expand, but develop a style.***

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### #9 ORGANIZE YOUR MUSIC TO SAVE TIME

So now your music library is growing, but it takes you hours to find songs that work for your profiles. That's enough to cause stress and stifle you from creating new and varied playlists. Having your music organized well is one way to stay motivated because it can help you become more productive when creating playlists. In iTunes, or whatever program you use, create categories for your music. It may seem like a lot of work on the front end, but like any type of organization project, it will save you many hours later on, especially as your library grows. When you have a lot of music, the more organized you can be, the more time you'll save.

The following is only one method of organization, but it has been very successful for me. You might find that this, or some version of it, will work for you.

#### ORGANIZE YOUR MUSIC BY CATEGORY

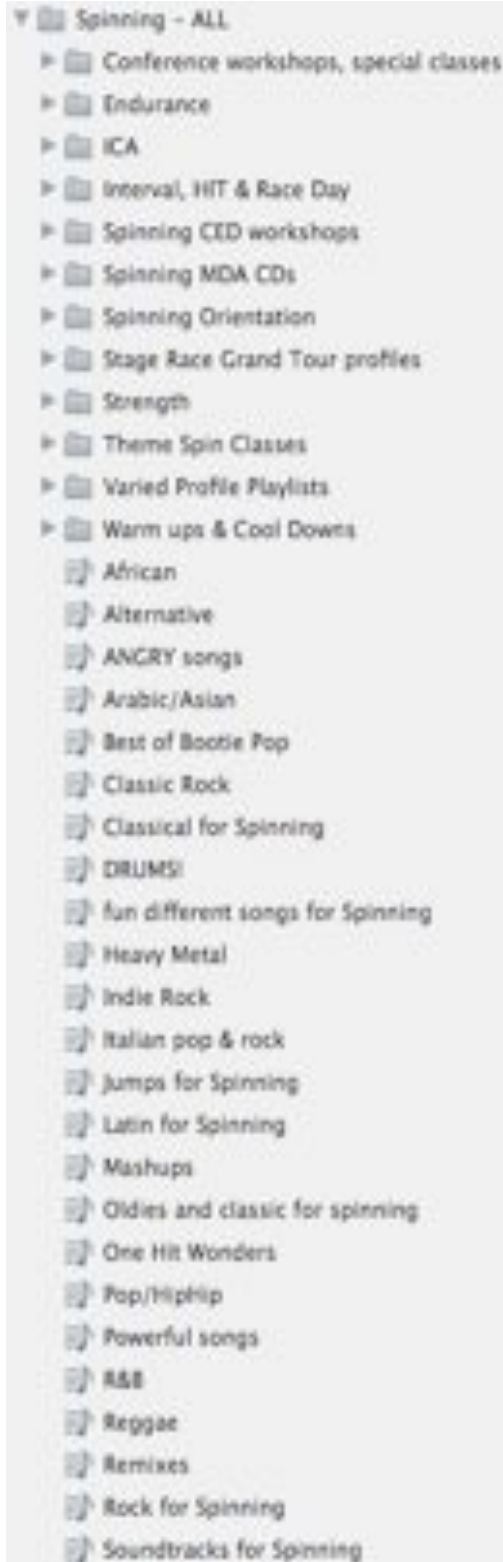
I categorize my music based on what I would use it for in a profile. On one hand, I categorize it simply by the type of class (Strength, Endurance, HIT, etc) and also on the *rhythm and energy* of the song. I even have some songs categorized by the beats per minute. This is relatively new for me, since in the past I only used the beats for slower climbing song. Many of my songs, regardless of bpm, will make their way into both a climbing folder as well as a flat road folder because of the background rhythm of the song – I know I can ride anyway to it depending on how I choose to coach it. This simple tip of expanding the ways in which you might use a song can almost double your available songs – a great tip if you feel limited with your music.

I have over 12,000 songs, which is small compared to some people I know but pretty extensive after 15 years of teaching. It is still not all categorized, and I am constantly discovering new music on my own computer! As I get new music, I take a little time to listen to each one, if only for a few seconds to get the *feel* of the song. As a seasoned instructor you can often tell within just a few beats whether the song will work or not in your classes and with your style, and in the process quickly determine how you are most likely to use that song – as a warm-up, on a climb, as a fast paced hard effort, etc. I recommend listening to the beginning middle and end of the song, as some songs change tempo. As a new instructor, you may have to develop your musical ear as it relates to how you would music in class, but not to worry, this will come over time and your music confidence will increase.

I'll then drag that song into a playlist, and more than likely, into several. For example, one song might make its way into the "Tempo" folder, the HIT folder, the "Endurance" folder and the "Jennifer's outdoor rides" folder! I'll then search these folders when I am creating specific playlists for profiles.

On the following pages I provide two screen shots of my itunes as an example and description of what for me has proven to be a very effective way to organize my music and profiles. The first page is some of the main folders on my itunes, the second page is the Strength folder opened up to reveal some of the individual playlists and classes.

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I have created many categories on my iTunes. Once I acquire a new song, I will place it in a general playlist (and often in numerous playlists). You can see below that I have major categories as folders (like “Spinning ALL”), with numerous subcategories (the folders Endurance, Strength, and the others described below). On the next page I opened the Strength folder to show how the playlists/profiles are organized). Below are some of the primary categories (folders) and playlists that I have in each one.

### ***Endurance Folder***

This contains songs & playlists for anything that could be used for a flat or moderate/moderately high intensity.

- “Endurance” - a general (large) collection of songs good to ride a flat road – there are many hundreds of songs in here.
- “Endurance favorites” - where my most favorite ones are; I pull from here when I have a “special” playlist I’m planning.
- Each profile is named as a playlist and date, e.g END Jan 09, or Aerobic Loops Oct 2010, etc. It corresponds with a profile in my profile book. I may have multiple playlists for the same profile, with different dates.

### ***Interval, HIT, Race Day Folder***

Contains songs/playlists that are very high energy.

Sometimes that means a high bpm, sometimes just a fast rhythm.

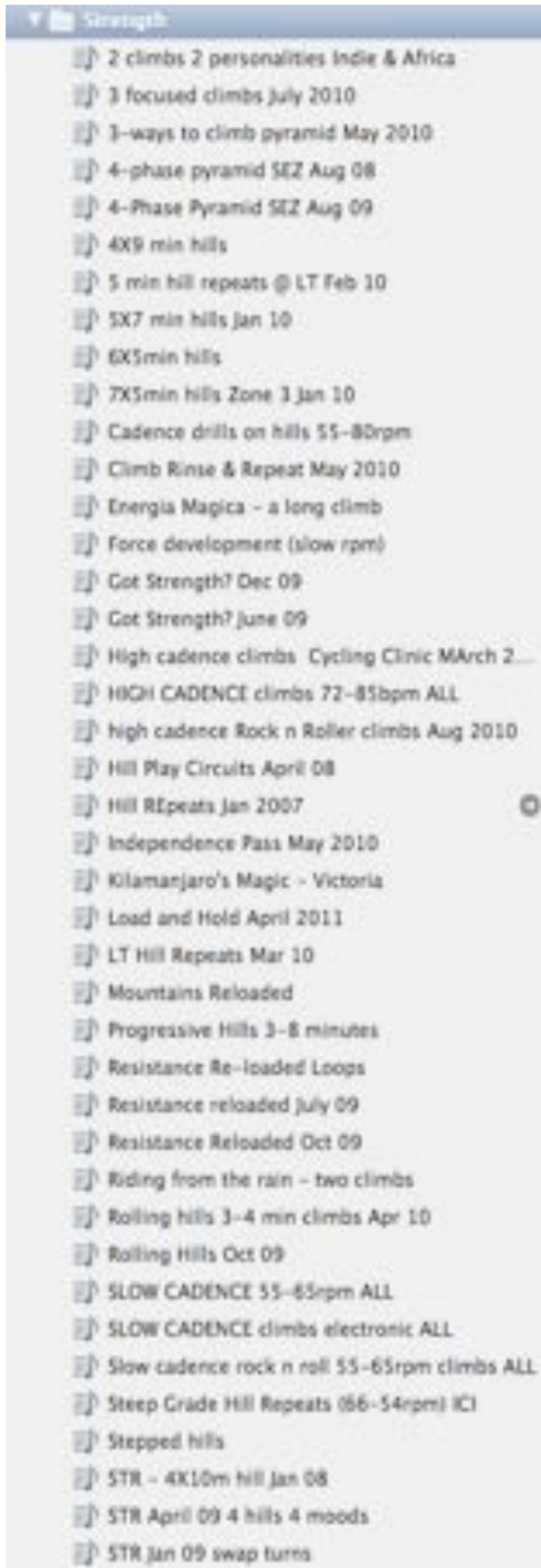
- “sprint songs” (a general collection)
- “fast flats” (these are any song with a higher bpm and/or a high energy that I might use for a fast flat, cadence work, race day, field test, etc)
- each interval or HIT class is named as a playlist with the date created, e.g. “Interval Aug 08”, “Time Trial Feb 09”, or “Rolling Hills Race Day Jan 11”, “Field Test Mar 10”.

### ***Varied Profile Playlists Folder***

In here I put all my varied profiles that aren’t a specific energy zone or training type.

- Out and back rides
- Loop rides
- Pedal Stroke or Cadence drills
- Pyramid or ladders

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### ***Strength Folder***

- Within the STR folder I have a “Strength” playlist – this is a general playlist for all songs good to climb to – it contains many hundreds of songs of all genres.
- “Strength favorites” - where I go to look when I’m planning a special ride or conference session.
- Each strength class is named as a playlist, e.g. 5X9 min hills Jan 10, Got Strength June 09, LT Hill Repeats, Rolling Hills APR 09, etc.

### ***Theme Rides Folder***

- I enjoy theme rides. Here is where I categorize music and playlists that I use for Christmas, New Years, Valentines Day, Halloween, Summer Fun, St Patrick’s Day, etc. It’s very helpful to come back the next year and have these songs already in one spot. I’ll add to them all year long as I discover new ones.

### ***Stage Races (like the Tour de France, Giro d’Italia, Tour de California, etc)***

- Each playlist is named for the stage, e.g. TdF09 Stage21, or TdF Alpe d’Huez 10, Tour of California Stage 12 Feb 09, Giro Stage5 10.

### ***Some other playlists that have helped me be far more efficient in finding my music easily:***

- 1980’s, 1970’s, 1960’s
- Classic rock for Spinning
- Blues for Spinning
- Classical for Spinning
- Soundtracks for Spinning
- Drums (sometimes you just want drums! It’s nice to go to one spot where they are stored.)
- French music (I use a lot for my TDF Rides)
- Warm-ups
- Cool Downs
- Short recovery songs - this is a recent addition that I've found very helpful. I like to use short songs of 3-minutes or less for recoveries between intervals and found that I was repeating them a lot because I couldn’t quickly find all the ones I had in my library. Now that I've organized them in one location (and continually adding more) I have greater variety.

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

### ACTION ITEMS

- However you decide to organize your music... **Do it!** It will have a huge impact on your continued motivation and speed of playlist creation. But do what feels comfortable and makes sense to you. My way may look like too much work, but may inspire you to create your own method of categorizing your songs and playlists.
- Once you have a lot of songs in a general playlist from which to draw for your classes (such as endurance, strength, tempo, etc) you can click on the “Time” column at the top of iTunes window, which will rank all the songs in that playlist in order of song length. If you are looking for a 5-minute climbing song, voila! They are all right there in front of you! (Note that this is not permanent – you can change the order in which any playlist is ranked at any time, by song title, artist, date added, etc.)
- It is OK to use the same songs in different playlists, because in a different profile with different song combinations and different coaching, it will have a different feel.
- By organizing your music, you can easily see which songs you've used in which playlists. This will help you from utilizing a song too much.
- Shelve a song when you have *really* overused it (you'll know). Wait a year or so and you'll often treat it like a newly discovered song, especially if you have new students who haven't heard it in your playlists.
- Keep a record of when you use a playlist, and refrain from using that same one (in its entirety) with the same class for a few weeks or months. Use it as often as needed with different classes.



## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

### #8 PROFILES – HAVE A LOT OF THEM!

Having a wide variety of profiles to select from may be the one of the most important contributors to keeping your motivation as an instructor elevated. One of the common denominators that I hear from bored or unmotivated instructors is that they are bored with their tired-out profiles, or they don't know how to make their own.

Think about it; if you are bored from doing the same thing all the time, this will show in your teaching. Your class may become bored with what you have to offer, and it's very hard to stay motivated if you think your class is bored. Your students read your motivation from your body language, the energy you project and your verbiage. Having new profiles can keep you motivated and interested, and therefore, help you stay *motivating* and *interesting*! With a lot of profiles, your students will talk about you after class, and will no doubt say things like, "I love Mary's class. Every time I come it's something new and exciting. She has so much variety!"

Alas! Creating your own profiles can be a time consuming endeavor, that's a fact. It does take practice, and everyone will improve with practice. But there is nothing wrong with using someone else's profiles. In fact, that is exactly one of the primary goals at ICA. We give you the profiles so you don't have to expend brain cells to come up with your own. The good news is that by using profiles that are already proven to be effective, fun and that utilize proper training principles, you will discover ways to repurpose them and also will be inspired to create your own profiles in much less time. You will learn what works best, and what is inadvisable in profile design, simply from doing these very effective profiles.

If you take profiles from the forums or other sources, make sure they follow solid training principles before using them with your students. This includes proper warm-ups, correct interval work/recovery ratios, intensity parameters, and safe and effective movements on the bike (i.e. no contraindicated movements).

#### REPURPOSE YOUR PROFILES

What this means is to take the same class format, the same terrain, and simply change a few things. It might be changing the objective to a more mental one versus physical. Or altering a strength ride from a slower cadence higher resistance focus to a higher cadence lower resistance focus, or add more/less standing movements than the original. You can take a profile that focuses on higher intensity training at or around threshold and lower the intensity to Zone 2 and 3, changing the focus to aerobic work (especially helpful if you are in a base building period early in the year). The exact same profile with different music and verbiage will feel completely different. Name it something different, put different music to it, coach it differently, and your students aren't likely to notice it's the same one you taught a few weeks or months ago!

#### WRITE YOUR PROFILES AND COACHING IDEAS DOWN

Every time you teach a profile, if you come up with a way to do it differently, or even a totally new concept in the middle of class, take a few minutes and write it down in a notebook you keep in your gym bag after class so you don't forget it. I find that my true creativity comes out while I am riding, while I am in the moment of teaching or even when out on my bike outside. I have

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kicked myself many times for not jotting down a new idea or inspiration that occurred to me while teaching or riding, thinking that I will remember it later. I've even recently started to use the voice memo function on my iPhone on my drive home after class, speaking my new idea directly into my voice recorder. This is a great way to keep track of your new ideas for a profile or to remember that amazing cue you came up with in the middle of class.

From these recorded reminders or from notes that you write to yourself, you might create an entirely new profile or alter a previous one. This is a magical way to morph your profile library into dozens, perhaps even a hundred new and interesting ways to teach your classes.

### ACTION ITEMS

- Have a wide variety of varying profiles in your collection.
- Become a member of ICA to be inspired with exciting audio profiles every month. It is an amazing source that gives you the in-depth coaching and cueing tips on what to do, how to do it, and even how to coach the ride. This will provide that spark of inspiration and may very well be the step that catapults your teaching to the next level. Your students will think you are a genius!
- Be inspired to create your own profiles. Make sure each one has an objective, and that you understand how to manipulate the cycling variables of cadence, resistance and movement, and the training variables of intensity, duration, frequency and recovery.
- Get profile ideas from the forums. Before you use them, make sure they follow proper training principles and utilize safe and effective movements first, or use their template for the ride and make the necessary changes in how you plan to teach it.
- Repurpose your existing profiles: Any one profile can turn into two, three or even four different profiles depending on your own presentation and interpretation of it.
- Keep a notebook handy for when you come up with profile ideas. You are most lucid in the middle of teaching a class, so make sure to write down any ideas you may have had immediately after teaching your class. Your source of inspiration may come from many other sources as well. If you have an idea in the middle of dinner, write it down now so you can expand on it later!
- Downloaded the iPhone app called Voice Memo (or the alternative on your cell phone), where you can record your ideas immediately if you have no paper and pen handy.
- Believe in yourself and your ability to create meaningful rides for your students. A confident coach is an inspired coach is an *inspiring* coach!

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### #7 ORGANIZE YOUR PROFILES

A surefire way to be less than motivated to teach your class is when you feel unprepared. After 15 years of teaching Spinning, I know the feeling well! The night before, or the hour before your class, your mood sinks as you frantically rush to try to put together a profile and playlist, or search through stacks of paper, or your gym bag or computer for a profile you found online a few months ago but have no idea where you put it. *Been there, done that!* It's not fun and counterproductive to feeling prepared.



The best way to counter this common frustration is to *be organized*. Like organizing your music, it might take a little more time up front as you compile all your profiles into a binder or two along with their corresponding playlists, but the long-term time savings and reduced frustration will be more than worth it and help keep you motivated.

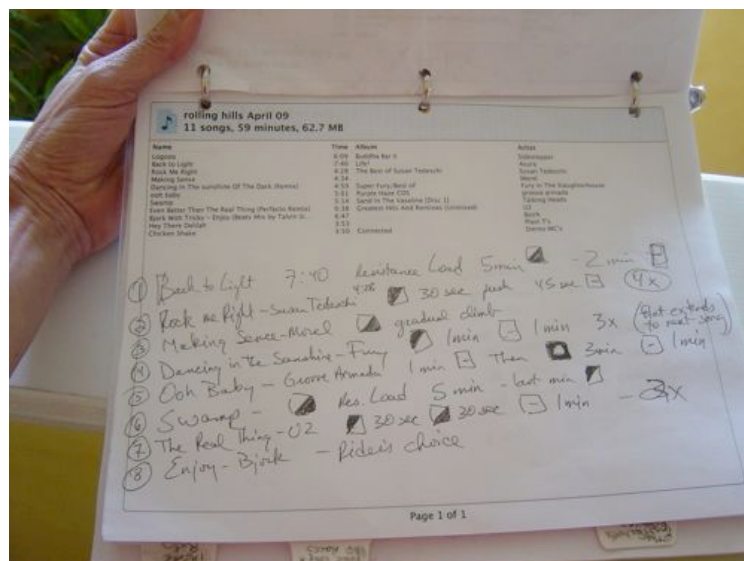
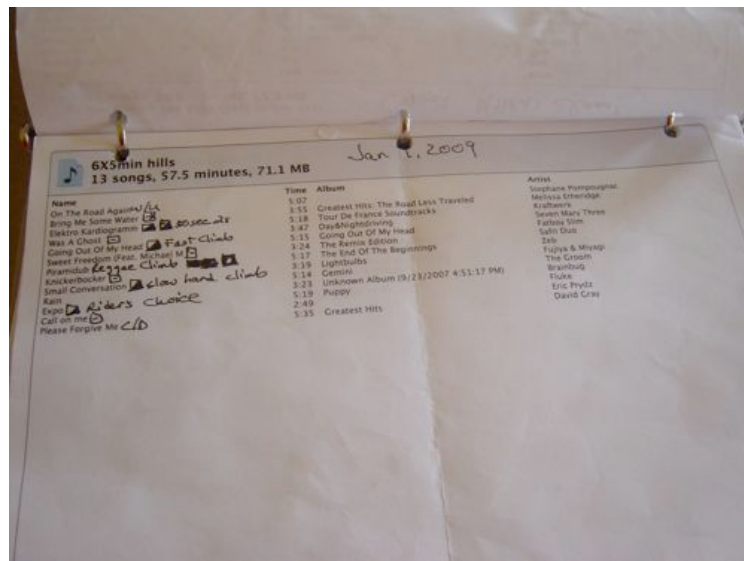
When I am feeling unmotivated to come up with a new profile, I'll go through my binder and find one I haven't done in awhile. You may be surprised to hear this, but I have taught for over 15 years, and have been a Master Instructor for 12, and have only had an organized profile book in the past six years! Prior to that my profiles were floating around crumpled up in the bottom of my gym bag, or I was constantly printing out new ones from my computer. I resorted a little too much to winging it. With a lot on my plate, organization has been the key to staying motivated and saving me hours of time and tons of frustration. Often, as I search for a profile, I end up creating a new one based on some of the ones I have been scanning. So not only does creating a profile book keep you organized and keep frustration to a minimum, but it often engages your creativity.

#### ACTION ITEMS:

- Print out or write out each of your profiles. Either give it a creative title, (preferred, because it's easier for you to remember) or you might simply title them as Strength #1, Endurance #8, Interval #12, etc.
- Purchase a couple of binders. The lighter weight they are, the more likely you'll carry them in your gym bag. Use dividers and categorize your classes in a way that's meaningful to you. It might be *Interval, Endurance/Aerobic, High Intensity, Theme Rides, Hills, Strength*, whatever categories work for you.
- Another option is a 4X6 index-card holder and cards on which you handwrite your profiles, or tape your printed out profile. I know some instructors who will then laminate these so they can have them on their bikes during class.
- Print out profiles from ICA, and others you find online on forums. Jot down your own notes or modifications on each one.
- For each profile, print out your playlist and put it in the binder with that profile. Over time you will end up with multiple playlists for each profile (e.g. Rolling Hills #1, #2, #3, etc). Name the playlist the same thing as your profile so you can easily find it and you know what to do with the songs.

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- For simple profiles, I handwrite my profile directly on the iTunes printout for the playlist (see photo examples below). No one says it has to be fancy!
- Jot down the dates you teach each profile at each facility to avoid repeating it too soon. Not only do I write it down directly on the profile/playlist itself, but I also keep a running log of the profiles I teach in each class in a separate small notebook. This way I have only to glance to see what I've taught for each class for the past several months.
- One of the benefits of having an audio profile from ICA is that you can upload it to your iPod and listen to it while driving to your class, so you can be inspired just before you teach. We hope our mp3 profiles will inspire you to create even more profiles on your own.



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### #6 BE PREPARED WITH EVERYTHING ELSE YOU NEED TO TEACH

Aside from having an organized method of filing your profiles and playlists, make sure you are prepared in every other way. Knowing that you have everything you need when you arrive in your cycling studio will reduce your stress when you head to the gym, which in turn will help keep your motivation level high. There is nothing worse than the sinking feeling of getting halfway to the club and realizing you forgot (insert important item here)!

Some of these tips may sound like common sense and you may laugh if you have already been doing these for a long time, but I bet that the only reason you do them now is because you made the same mistakes! I admit; I have learned many of these through personal experience over my many years of teaching... that means many mistakes. I was left to discover them on my own without a comprehensive list such as this. Oh how I wish someone had told me these things as a new instructor! If you are a new instructor, take heed – you will encounter these in the future. I guarantee, someday you will be thanking me for this list if it helps avoid a painful mistake.

#### ACTION ITEMS

- Always have a backup CD if you use an MP3 player, especially if your MP3 player is more than a year old. The first time your iPod freezes up on you, you'll thank me.
- Always have a Plan B in mind for your class. It could be that your CD is scratched and you have to switch CDs/profiles at the last minute, or the ride that you had planned is not possible, such as a high intensity Race Day when you have only new students in class. Don't let on to your students that it is a big deal – they'll never know. Just go with the flow as if this is what you were panning all along! As the commercial used to say, "Never let them see you sweat!"
- If you use an iPod, your Smart Phone can act as a backup iPod if the first one has a problem or dead battery.
- Do you teach after work and take your gym bag with you? Get in the habit of double-checking it before you leave for work or the night before.
- If you are a cyclist, make sure to have a pair of cycling shoes solely for your indoor cycling. Early in my Spinning life, I cannot tell you how many times I "forgot" my cycling shoes because I was transferring them back and forth from my Spinning bag to my car to my garage after using them on a bike ride. Now, mine always stay in my gym bag *no matter what*. Your indoor cycling shoes do not have to be expensive ones, just comfortable and breathable.
- Spend the money on decent bike shorts. A bad chamois sucks. Shorts that don't last suck. Cheap quality anything sucks. You will be sitting on that saddle a lot – good padding can improve your experience; you'll be more motivated to teach if you are comfortable.
- For those that teach early morning, lay out all your clothing that you need the night before, before you go to bed. Fill your water bottle at night. Then when the alarm goes off at 4:30 am, you are prepared. Since I rinse my HRM strap daily, I drape it over my gym bag to dry at night so I won't forget it (again)!
- If you are new to instructing, you may want to have a checklist as you prepare your gym bag – it will soon be committed to memory. Shorts, jersey, jogbra (if applicable), socks, shoes, heart rate monitor (watch AND strap – perhaps an extra one to share with new students), profile book, iPod (*fully charged – maybe even an extra charger*) and/or CD case, water bottle (two?),

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bandana, clothes to change into after class, plastic bags to store your wet cycling clothes (recycle them as often as possible), etc.

- Other things to always have in your gym bag: metronome (for cadence checks), stopwatch, plumbline (you do have one to check knee alignment, don't you?), energy bars, Nuun or other electrolyte replacement if you teach long or back-to-back classes, a few dollars, extra backup CDs, batteries (in case the mic goes out), an extra dry erase pen (if your club has a dry erase board on which to write your profile. The pens at my club dry out all the time. I later email the director to get more, but at least I can write my profile down).
- Notebook for writing down coaching cues and ideas that you come up with while teaching (we discussed this back in Tip #8). How many times have you said something brilliant and inspirational in the moment during your ride, but you forgot it later? Write it down immediately after class, and keep a record of your favorite motivational cues. Also use this notebook to record new members' names and emails to put on your mailing list (see Tip #3)
- If you are at a club where you need to provide your own microphone, make sure to add that to the list, and be prepared with extra batteries and foam covers.
- Do you sub a lot? Keep your prepared gym bag with you or in your car at all times, just in case.
- On that note, make sure to have a sub list with phone numbers handy in your bag in case you need a sub in a pinch; better yet, program them into your cell phone.

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### #5 BE GOOD TO YOURSELF – TAKE TIME OFF BEFORE YOU’RE FORCED TO



Each and every one of us has encountered the feeling of burnout in our lives. It’s human to feel this way. How you deal with the situation will determine how long it lasts, and the depth to which you sink into it.

To avoid chronic burn-out, or to nip it in the bud when you feel it coming on, make sure to take some time off every now and then. Without fail, you will come back refreshed. I’ve taken off as long as a whole summer, or a month when I travel for my bike tours, and I always love teaching again upon my

return. I am convinced this is one of the reasons I’ve kept my passion for teaching as strong and as long as I have – over 15 years. I admit to some periods where I was convinced I was *DONE* with teaching Spinning. Thankfully I rekindled my passion!

For some of you, taking time off might not be very feasible because your teaching is an important part of your income. Nevertheless, to avoid burnout and for your overall mental, physical and emotional health, you may want to temporarily decrease the number of classes you teach.

If you are teaching a lot of classes a week, the lack of motivation and feelings of burnout may be caused by too much intensity and/or too much volume. It could be a sign of chronic overtraining, which could potentially be dangerous. You must be very careful with this as it may lead to adrenal fatigue or even failure. Some signs to watch out for are weight gain (despite the fact that you are training a lot), difficulty sleeping, moodiness/irritability, chronic heavy legs or general fatigue that doesn’t go away with rest, heart rate anomalies (it doesn’t rise with increased effort or it rises too fast with very little effort), or elevated resting heart rate.

If you have ever said to yourself, “why am I so fatigued? I’m supposed to be fit!” take a very close evaluation of how much exercise you are actually doing – sometimes we think we are doing less than we actually are. Being “fit” does not exempt you from overdoing it.

It is far better to take a week or a month off now and get this under control than for it to grow into adrenal fatigue, which may take several years to recover from. This is not an idle warning or as rare as you think – I’ve worked with several instructors who went through this and the medical costs were very expensive. If you don’t decide to take the time now, your body will decide to take far more time off for you...through sickness or injury.

If you have a high level of stress in other areas of your life, in some cases, your teaching will be a welcomed respite and physical outlet. However for some, it might actually increase the stress level significantly. Remember, your body doesn’t know the source of the stress – it is registered in the brain and body as a chemical reaction. A highly stressful job or relationship causes the same chemical to be released as a hard training session, cortisol. For this reason, a hard training session

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after a particularly stressful day may actually do more harm than good. The effect of excess cortisol is catabolic and stimulatory, and elevated levels for extended periods negatively affect virtually every aspect of physiology. If life is throwing you some curve balls, you might want to take an inventory of what is important, and take some much-needed time off. You can always come back!

For less drastic cases of burnout, in which case you might just be bored with what you are doing; inspire yourself by taking classes from a variety of instructors. Take notes, writing down what you liked about the class and what did not work for you. Also, pay special attention to the other tips in this guide; you may simply need to invest more time and effort into your personal growth and education to inspire yourself and rekindle your passion.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Teaching and training can be a stressful combination. Take some time off from teaching every now and then. For some instructors, a week will be sufficient; for others a month or more is needed. If you don't have an actual vacation planned, then simply take that week off and relax at home.
- Get plenty of sleep. You are already training a lot, lack of sleep can add to your de-motivation. It is when you are sleeping that you generate HGH, Human Growth Hormone, which is essential for recovery. For most people, less than eight hours of sleep, especially when your training load is heavy, is detrimental to many systems in the body.
- Always train with a heart rate monitor and balance your workouts during the week. It is extremely important to make sure that you are staying below your lactate threshold for most of the time on the bike and in your other workouts if you teach and/or take other classes or ride/run outside. Too much intensity and/or too much volume can lead to overtraining, or worse. That's not to say do not push yourself occasionally – just monitor how often you do it.
- If you teach a lot of classes during the week, become very good at either faking the intensity, and/or teaching off the bike. This is an important skill to acquire as an indoor cycling instructor. Some students want to see their instructors “suffering” along with them. But if your teaching load is high, you must explain to them why you cannot do that. Students who care about you will not care if you push hard, or even ride the bike.
- Do an inventory of what is important to you and your family. It may be time to tweak or reduce your teaching schedule, if only temporarily.
- Go to other instructors' classes for new ideas.
- If you are bored with your club and students, consider looking into teaching at another facility if it is an option. A new facility with new eager students often provides that needed inspiration to be your old amazing self again! Plus, all of your profiles and playlists will be new to them.



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### #4 DO SOMETHING GOOD OR FUN IN YOUR IC PROGRAM

Organize a special class, or series of classes, a contest, or create a fundraising event utilizing your indoor cycling program. Promote it a couple of months in advance, advertise it well, and get your club, your peers and your students excited. Obtain support from your manager and make it a club-wide program. For fundraisers, find sponsors from local merchants and/or from your membership base.

Inspiring others to do something they doubted they could do has wonderful crossover effects on your own motivation. It gives you a deeper sense of self and of service. Isn't it wonderful how we can use our passion as an indoor cycling instructor to inspire others, and in the process inspire ourselves? What a fantastic tool we have in indoor cycling! Are you aware of how wonderful this tool is that you have at your fingertips?

A few examples of special classes, series or fundraising events:

- A Race Across America simulation.
- Create a Tour de France program (ICA provides numerous posts on how to simulate exciting TDF stages in your indoor cycling classes).
- Organize a two-month base building or periodization program early in the year.
- Begin a weight-loss program or contest and tie it in with your IC program, the personal training department and a nutritionist.
- Create a fundraiser for your favorite charity. "Spinathons" and "Cyclingathons" have become very popular and create a lot of positive energy at facilities. For the Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, my club mobilized 3 other local clubs and quickly put together 6-hour rides that each raised over \$15,000. The sense of accomplishment was phenomenal. The need in this world is extensive so there will never be a shortage of beneficiaries. Find something that speaks to you, you will be more likely to be passionate about it. Some ideas:
  - Haiti will need earthquake relief for many years to come.
  - Raise money for your favorite medical cause such as cancer, AIDS or MS.
  - Involve your community and raise funds for your local Hospice or youth program.
  - Raise money for a member of your club or in your community who has suffered a tragedy. There is no greater feeling than helping someone close to you.
- Use your IC program to help your students train for a half or full century ride. Members will have much more fun and be more likely to commit when they are training with a group of like-minded people with the same goal.
- Commit yourself to do something that you've never done before as well, perhaps your first triathlon or century. Training along with your students is incredible and fulfilling motivation.
- Create a club-wide triathlon training program.
- Inspire your club members to go on a bicycle tour in Europe and create a training program for the 4 months prior to the trip (contact Jennifer Sage at [Jennifer@vivatravels.com](mailto:Jennifer@vivatravels.com) for a proposal for a bicycle tour for your group – bicycle tours are her "other life". You may get to go for a greatly reduced cost, or even free, if you have a big enough group. Check out [www.vivatravels.com](http://www.vivatravels.com)).

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### ACTION ITEMS

- Ask your students if they would like to prepare for an entry-level triathlon, century ride or bicycle tour. It's best to start inspiring them to think about it in the fall for the next summer, and to start the training program shortly after the New Year.
- Expand the programming options at your club by creating or coordinating special rides, contests, theme classes, or 6-8 week training programs for weight loss or performance improvement, or simply to increase attendance.
- Do a Spinathon at your club, perhaps even engage other nearby clubs. ICA will be providing suggestions on how to organize an event and find sponsors.
- Find other instructors to help you in this goal. Teamwork adds to the feelings of accomplishment and minimizes the work you will have to do.
- Engage students to help in the project and/or to fundraise. Many of them are looking for more ways to be involved. You'll be surprised how helpful and eager your students can be.
- For more ideas, Google "How to create a fundraising event" or "How to find sponsors for a fundraiser".
- Go to [active.com](http://active.com) for ideas and to create an account for your participants to sign up there.



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### **#3 KNOW YOUR STUDENTS, AND STAY IN CONTACT WITH THEM**

Get to know your students better. Find out their goals, find out what they like or dislike about your classes. You will be much more likely to maintain your own motivation when you know their motivation for coming to class. By staying in contact with them via emails, a newsletter or a blog, you can provide additional training information that is tailored to their specific goals. They are more likely to continue coming to your class when they know you care, plus they will sing your praises. This is an excellent way to promote yourself and your class, and in the process, increase your class numbers. Now that's a motivating idea!

There are several ways to connect with your students on a deeper level.

1. Distribute an information form to your students to collect their name, birthday, email and goals. From the information that you gather, you now have more information to talk to your students about before and after class. When you know their goals, you can ask them about how they are progressing, and even customize some of your teaching, or tell them how to modify what they do in your class. This shows them how much you care and will help inspire them even more to reach their goals. As a result, you will be far more motivated yourself.

*People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.*

If desired, take another step in this process and do what many successful salespeople do to remember their prospects and clients even better. Keep their information from the form that they filled out in a notebook in your gym bag or car. After you've had a conversation with them before or after class in which you've learned more about them, write it down on their form. This can be small things such as their daughter is about to graduate, they just got a promotion, they just bought their first bicycle, etc. Just by writing it down you are far more likely to remember, and the next time you see them, ask them, "how was your daughter's graduation?" It's little things like these that draw you closer to your students, and them to you. This is more than just getting to know your "friends" in your classes. We all have friends. This effort takes it to the next step and encompasses all of your regular students, and helps to convert those occasional students to regulars. If you have long-term goals for teaching, and plan on staying with a group of students for a long time, I believe this is essential, and will most definitely set you apart from many other instructors!

2. In your information form, ask them if it's OK to put them on your mailing list. Then create a distribution list in your email program, and send out occasional emails or a newsletter with your planned classes, some training tips, fun trivia, music requests and more. Let them know when you will be out of town, and give the name of the person subbing for you. Also, let them know when you will be subbing other classes – they might very well follow you to that class. You are creating a fan base - your students will follow you if you inspire and lead them!

3. Create a blog (or even use your personal Facebook account or create a Facebook Page) to promote your classes and schedule, provide heart rate training information, explain physiology in a little more depth than you can in your class, provide them fitness and training links, discuss

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music and announce special events, subs or class changes. Blogs are easier than trying to create a website; in fact, more people and companies are using blogging formats *as* their website.

Using some of the very easy blogging platforms available, anyone can set one up very quickly. You do not need any website creation experience. My suggestion is to use [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) for your blog. I've used several blogging platforms and have found that Wordpress is by far the best.

The next thing you will want to do is to market your blog. If you already have your students' emails, let them know the address to your blog, or create your own business card with your blog address to hand out to your students. Inspire your students to sign up for the RSS feed to be notified when you add a blog post. Ask your class to get involved and to post their favorite rides and music or to ask you questions on fitness and training. They will appreciate you much more, and *you will appreciate you*, and what you do for them, much more than before. This is a HUGE way to stay motivated and inspired year after year!

Besides, who knows what this could lead to?! Maybe even a side income if you can monetize your blog.

4. Give your students a survey. Create an evaluation form giving them the ability to tell you what they think about your classes. Ask for suggestions on what you can do better, music ideas they might have, and also ask them to tell you what they appreciate about your class. Does this idea scare you? For many instructors it would. But imagine if you found out information that allowed you to grow, to improve? What if you discovered how much they really love you, more than you even thought? Won't that be empowering? Take their suggestions into consideration!

You might also discover some key areas in which they need more education. For example, if they express a love of only high intensity interval classes, and a dislike for endurance-based profiles, then this opens up an opportunity to educate them. You need to find a balance of giving them what they want and giving them what they need.

You can create your own survey that you distribute in class but you will also need to provide a way for them to return it to you anonymously. If it's not anonymous, you will not receive credible results. Some will be happy to leave their names, but others won't take the survey if they can't be anonymous, so your results may be skewed. If it's a hardcopy survey, you can manage this either by mail (in a self-addressed, perhaps even self-stamped envelope) or have them leave the envelope for you at the front desk (with management approval). This method may require management involvement, and your group fitness coordinator may even want to create an evaluation for all the instructors.

Perhaps a better way is to create a free survey online at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). It's free for a limited number of participants, or it might cost a small amount of money if you have a lot of students who answer. This way it is easier to limit it to just your students in your classes and you do not have to involve the front desk. Again, it could be information that will really surprise you.

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### ACTION ITEMS

- In order to get to know your students' goals better, have them fill out an informational form.
- When you know their goals, ask them from time to time how they are progressing.
- Offer modifications in your rides for people with certain goals. For example, someone riding a century ride will probably not benefit from very high intensity intervals a few days prior to their event.
- On your form, collect their email and with their permission put them on a mailing list.
- Stay in contact with your students and promote your classes via emails, a newsletter or a blog.
- You can purchase a book on simple blogging at your local bookstore or on Amazon. There is also a plethora of information online on blogging – simply Google “How to start a blog”.
- Create a survey to handout or online at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) to find out what your students like or dislike about your class, teaching style, music, etc. Be prepared that not everyone will love you, but you might also discover how much your students do appreciate you. It will also reveal areas in which your students (or you) may need additional education. Learn and grow from the information, but also take it with a grain of salt.

### SAMPLES

#### Information form, example of what data to collect and what your privacy policy is:

Name:

Birthday (month/day – no need for the year) [This is so you can wish them a happy birthday]

Do I have your permission to put you on my mailing list for a newsletter with occasional updates, training information, class announcements, subs, special events, etc. I promise it will never be more than X times a month, and that I am the only one with access to your email. I promise I will never share your personal information with anyone.

If you would like to be on my mailing list, please give me your email:

How long have you been a member of XYZ club?

How long have you been coming to indoor cycling classes?\_

What is your primary reason for attending indoor cycling classes?

What are your goals in the next year? (for example, weight loss, improve general fitness, improve performance, training for a specific event, learn to ride outside, etc)

Do you wear a heart rate monitor?

Why or why not?

Would you like to know more about heart rate training to improve your weight loss, fitness and performance goals?

#### Anonymous Survey example

Your answers to the following questions can help me be a better indoor cycling coach and to help me design my profiles and playlists to meet the needs of my students.

How long have you been coming to indoor cycling class?

From the following list, please indicate your most important reasons for attending indoor cycling classes (check your top three):

Lose weight

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Improve/maintain general fitness  
Improve performance  
Improve my cycling technique and fitness  
Training for a specific event  
Social  
Fun  
Other

Why do you come to my class (as opposed to another class)? (e.g. convenience, the only time that suits you, you prefer my style, my music, my profiles, you have no other option, it's the only time you can get babysitting, lucky, no reason, etc)

Do you wear a heart rate monitor?

Why or why not?

Please tell me what you like best about my teaching style?

Now, please tell me what you like the least about my classes? (it's ok, I'm here to improve!)

In general, do you like my music? Why or why not?

What kind of music do you prefer?

Have I helped expand your musical preferences through the variety that I try to offer?

What would you change about my classes?

What is your favorite type of class? Why?

What is your least favorite type of class? Why?

Anything else you would like to comment on regarding my classes?

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

### #2 EXPAND YOUR COACHING TO INCLUDE VIZUALIZATIONS AND THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Are you bored with your own coaching? Do you find that you say the same things all the time? Do you feel like your instruction tends towards the superficial, more of a “rah-rah” style, rather than an inspirational coaching style? Do you go to other motivating instructors and take their classes, but can never remember the incredible things they said that inspired you to ride harder and stronger, to move past your fatigue, to accomplish something you didn’t think possible, or to visualize and then overcome the challenging mountain that was facing you?



Perhaps you appreciate classes that utilize visualization techniques and that have a mind-body component to them but you cannot see yourself saying “those things” to your students. On the other hand you know you could inspire far more students if you could get down to that deeper level of consciousness and help them overcome their self-imposed limitations and challenge themselves to improve, to stick to their program, to push past obstacles, to accomplish their goals, and more.

But perhaps you don’t really know how to, or the words just don’t fit well in your mouth, or it seems too esoteric. Perhaps your comfort level with using this vocabulary has not *yet* been established and you think your students won’t be open to it. I say “yet” because I believe every single person can incorporate more inspirational cueing into their teaching style, and learn to tap into the mind-body connection, without coming across as esoteric. When you can reach this point, your own motivation for teaching will be set on fire! You will be empowered to continue down this mind-body learning path, I guarantee it. Why? Because you will without fail see huge results with your students. You will connect with them on a deeper level. They will note that you are different than the other instructors and will spread the word about you. You will set yourself apart from the rest of the crowd.

If I may, let me give you my own example. 15 years ago when I began my Spinning journey I was amazed at the potential that an indoor cycling class could have – I didn’t have to just yell out commands like in a Step class. I could be a real coach, I could inspire! Any time I had an opportunity to attend a Master Instructor’s class I would go out of my way to do so. I actually became a Master Instructor myself early in the program (1977), yet I still had so much to learn. I admired the MIs who could talk on that mind-body level, yet I did not feel comfortable doing it myself with my students. To be honest, at times I felt stupid. After one class at my club in which I made an attempt to utilize visualization, a co-instructor said something to me like, “uh oh, Jennifer, you’ve swallowed the Johnny G Kool-Aid!”

First of all, I now realize that instructor was shallow (he is no longer teaching), but at the time I allowed myself to be affected by the comment. On my own level, I realize that the reason I felt uncomfortable with it was for two reasons: one was because I hadn’t yet developed the confidence

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

and *belief in myself* that I could do that, and two, I hadn't yet made the mind-body experience a part of my life, a part of who I was. It's also because I was repeating the words someone else had said, instead of letting the words come from my heart. Once I learned to let go, and *speak from the heart*, everything changed. But to get to that point, the confidence had to be there, as well as a wide vocabulary of cueing and coaching verbiage from which to draw.

The first step was to begin reading (and reading and reading), and taking lots of notes. Every Master Ride I went to I rarely rode the bike – I either sat on the sidelines or put a notebook on the handlebars and wrote down every word the MI said. I kept notebooks of every session I attended at WSSC. After a year I began presenting at WSSC myself, but I still took other sessions the entire weekend and continued absorbing and learning. My early collection of notes is still in my file cabinet! Every class, every lecture, every session with Johnny G, plus notes from all books that I was reading I still have to this day and have referenced often over the past 14 years. All those words I wrote down, the inspiration, the cueing, the coaching, are now imbedded deep in my brain and are a part of who I am, so when they do come out, they are through the filter of Jennifer Sage. They are no longer anyone else's words but my own.

And YOU can do this too! And when you do, I promise that it will catapult you to a level of passion for teaching that you only dreamed of. This is the kind of passion that comes from the heart and exudes from your pores. This is the kind of passion that translates to everything else you do in your life, not just teaching your indoor cycling classes. It will help you in your own personal goals and aspirations, whether physical or otherwise; it will help you in your communication skills with your family and your peers; it will open your eyes to a new way of thinking.

Of course, I had intentions of doing something substantial in my career with Spinning<sup>®</sup>/Indoor Cycling, so you may not go quite to the lengths that I did (unless you too have those intentions). Nevertheless, even if you are a part time instructor who aspires to motivating and connecting with students on a deeper level, you can take many of these suggestions and apply them in your own situation. This tip is about expanding your knowledge of, and belief in, the mind-body connection, and then, incorporating it into your teaching style, through the filter of YOU. You will be building a treasure chest of verbal cues and inspirational coaching based on the belief that everything we do begins in the mind and then travels to the body, and the two cannot be separated.

### ACTION ITEMS

- For ICA members, listen to my audio recordings of my profiles and read the transcripts on ICA. In these recordings I'm giving you all my cueing and coaching tips, many of which come from those 14 years of notes still in my file cabinets. It's all there for you to use and to put through your own filter, modifying the words as you see fit.
- When you go to a conference or Master Class, bring a notebook and pen on the bike with you. For the more motivational instructors, you may want to forego the ride and take notes the whole class. The words they say are there for you to use!
- Read the following books on the mind-body connection and sport. Buy them, don't borrow them so you can use a highlighter, write in the margins, mark your favorite pages, underline



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and circle the things that speak to you the most. And copy anything into a separate notebook that would make an empowering statement in the middle of a challenging indoor cycling class or that you think might make a great visualization. I guarantee you, these books are so full of content for your teaching and coaching, you will never, ever run out of ideas!

- *Working Out, Working Within*, Jerry Lynch, Chungliang Al Huang
  - *Thinking Body, Dancing Mind*, Jerry Lynch, Chungliang Al Huang
  - *Running Within*, Jerry Lynch
  - *Flow in Sports*, Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi
  - *Mind/Body Fitness*, Tom Seabourne
  - *Mind Body Mastery*, Dan Millman
  - *Mental Training for Peak Performance*, Steven Ungerleider
  - *Mind Gym: An Athlete's Guide to Inner Excellence*, Gary Mack, David Casstevens
- When using inspirational coaching for the first time with your students, don't go overboard. Use a few cues here and there. Add a few more each time. Try them out, rephrase them, and imprint them in your mind, until they become second nature.
  - Take note of your students' reactions. I bet it will be very positive.
  - Believe in yourself. Start to think of yourself as an inspirational coach. Let it become a part of who you are. Confidence builds from *belief*, and you are not going to take this step until you first *believe*. You may think it's the other way around, but it's not!
  - One of the astounding things that you will notice as you continue down this path, is that with your belief in yourself, and in your growing confidence, you will find your sources of inspiration coming from within your own self far more than you ever experienced. The most amazing, motivational cues will come out of your mouth in the middle of a hard climb, things that are totally unplanned and ad-libbed, completely from the heart. You will think, "wow! I don't know where that came from but it really worked!" When that starts to happen (and I promise you it will) then you know you are solidly on this marvelous path of being an inspirational coach, not just an instructor barking out orders.



# Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

## #1 STAY EDUCATED AND UPDATED

John Wooden, the famous UCLA basketball coach, is famous for the following two quotes:

**“It’s what you learn after you know it all that really counts”**

**“If I’m through learning, I’m through.”**



Yet, in all the years I’ve been involved in fitness and indoor cycling, it seems that a large part of the instructor base do not feel they need continuing education. Is it because they think they already know it all? Or that they don’t make enough money to warrant it? Or because they don’t feel like it’s important enough to spend the time and money? Or that “it’s just Spinning, who cares”?

What about the personal feeling of satisfaction when you expand your knowledge, making you more effective in your role? This is applicable in any career or hobby (or in fact, anything that we do in life), but it’s especially important in the vast, exciting and constantly changing field of exercise science, fitness and all that goes along with that.

When I worked as a trainer for the Spinning<sup>®</sup> program for 12 years, my Master Instructor peers and I often felt like we were preaching to the choir at continuing education workshops and conferences, because we knew the ones that needed it the most were not there. Knowledge of exercise physiology is not static, and especially now, I think the past few years have been very exciting with the advances in understanding of training. Sadly, very few instructors know much about exercise physiology, even the basics. I am happy to say that I think ICA members will probably know more than 99.9% of the instructors out there, simply through the content provided (blog posts, audios, videos, webinars, eBooks, and more). But it’s still such a small percentage of educated instructors who seem to care.

Not only does increased knowledge inspire you and keep you motivated, but you also improve your ability to motivate your own students. Is your motivation to teach waning? When was the last time you attended a conference or indoor cycling workshop? When was the last time you took an online or home study continuing education course? How about attended a Master Ride by a Master Instructor? Do you regularly go to other instructor’s classes? Do you read books on exercise and training?

If there is one thing that I hope I can convince any and all instructors to realize, it’s the importance of staying educated through reading, and through continuing education, Master Classes, or conferences. This, above almost all else, can keep your motivation level high. I don’t know of any instructor who hasn’t walked away from a conference or Master Ride feeling excited and empowered to take that information, that inspiration, those coaching cues back to their classes. I

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

bet most of their own students notice a marked difference in their teaching those weeks following that learning experience.

### THE INDOOR CYCLING ASSOCIATION IS YOUR #1 OPTION

Please forgive the plug for ICA, but I am so convinced that this option is such an astonishing convenient, effective and affordable new method of becoming educated in this industry that I feel it's important to start with this suggestion. If joining is not an option, that is completely understandable, I've provided other suggestions below for increasing your knowledge in your chosen passion.

I've gotten to know the fitness and indoor cycling industry pretty well over the past 14 years as a Master Instructor. What is lacking in the industry is quality, updated and scientifically based education that is accessible and inexpensive for instructors to learn how to be a better coach. With the Indoor Cycling Association membership program, I am attempting to fill that gap. ICA is the filter that provides you with the most relevant training and coaching material available. We read those books, articles, forums, blogs and magazines for you, so you don't have to spend hours and hours searching through material that may or may not be helpful to you and your teaching. We find the most experienced experts in the industry to write the content so we can deliver the most relevant and scientifically accurate training in the industry. The cost of joining is so little per month (a couple of cups of coffee), and being a member for a year is far less than attending one conference, taking 1.5 workshops, or a couple of Master Classes, yet you get the equivalent of *all of that put together and much more*, week after week, month after month.

### OTHER SOURCES FOR EDUCATION

The most important way to stay current and educated is to *read, read, read!* Read endurance coaching and training books for cycling and triathlon to improve your understanding on how to improve performance and fitness, and read the motivational books listed in Tip #2 to inspire yourself and your students better. Join indoor cycling forums, read fitness and training blogs, connect with other IC instructors on Facebook. You may be surprised what you find and the connections you make.

On the forums, ask questions about coaching, profiles, music, managing students, problems in class, etc. You can search for topics that interest you. It is important to understand that not every piece of advice or profile that you'll find on these free sites is quality advice, but over time, you'll discover the members who are the most respected and who provide sound advice. With general fitness magazines, online sources, blogs, etc, you do have to be careful with many of the fitness myths that are perpetuated. Don't get your information solely from the "University of Muscle and Fitness magazine". Although some information you'll read in fitness magazines might be somewhat correct, it is often not based on solid information or studies, and it is often counter to what endurance coaches know to be true.

### ACTION ITEMS

## Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor

- Make a commitment to yourself that this is the year you will learn more. Save a little bit of each teaching paycheck to invest in your education and growth as an indoor cycling coach.
- If it's an option, join ICA for everything you need to learn and improve your confidence as an indoor cycling coach.
- Go on the forums or ask other instructors from other clubs to let you know if they hear of any Master Classes near you. Make an effort to go if one comes to town.
- Better yet, bring in your own. Talk to your Group Fitness Director about hosting some Continuing Education workshops and/or a Master Class at your facility. This way you don't have to travel, and often instructors at the host facility receive a discount. (Contact me at [Jennifer@indoorcyclingassociation.com](mailto:Jennifer@indoorcyclingassociation.com) for more information on having me come to your facility to teach a Master Class or Continuing Education Workshop).
- If it is within your means, attend a fitness or indoor cycling conference.
- Indoor Cycling Blogs you can follow:
  - [www.sagecyclingandfitness.com](http://www.sagecyclingandfitness.com) My free blog for the Indoor Cycling Association
  - [www.chrispins.blogspot.com](http://www.chrispins.blogspot.com) Playlists for indoor cycling
  - [www.darcyknoblich.com](http://www.darcyknoblich.com) Playlists and tips
  - [www.tigerspin.blogspot.com](http://www.tigerspin.blogspot.com) Playlists and profiles
  - <http://mrbaldi.blogspot.com/> Instructor from the UK with excellent profiles
  - <http://spintastic.blogspot.com/> (medical student, ICA medical contributor, and Star 3 Spinning instructor Melissa Marotta)
  - <http://shannigans-aviewfromthebackofthepack.blogspot.com/> (Shannon, an inspirational and funny instructor)
  - <http://cyclingfusion.com/fanatics/> The Cycling Fusion blog
- Cycling and coaching blogs you should read regularly:
  - [www.joefrielsblog.com](http://www.joefrielsblog.com) Joe Friel's blog
  - [www.trainright.com/blog](http://www.trainright.com/blog) Chris Carmichael's blog
- Read the following books to expand your knowledge on cycling, training and physiology:
  - *Keep it Real* (in your indoor cycling class), eBook, (available at <http://www.indoorcyclingassociation.com/products>)
  - *The Cyclist's Training Bible*, Joe Friel
  - *Total Heart Rate Training*, Joe Friel
  - *Base Building for Cyclists*, Thomas Chapple
  - *The Time Crunched Cyclist*, Chris Carmichael (excellent information, but be careful how you apply this training concept with your average indoor cycling students, it could be too hard for most students.)



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### Bonus Tip – A website to avoid!

There is one indoor cycling website from which you should stay as far away as you can. It's called *Music for Cycling*. I'm giving it to you so you can see what to avoid as you peruse the internet. It's important to understand that there are a plethora of blogs, forums and websites available that do not preach proper training principles, and where the instructors know little about physiology, biomechanics and training (or basic rules of indoor cycling for that matter). When you read the "About" page of this website, the owner says she is MDA certified and praises the Spinning® program but nothing she does resembles true Spinning® (or safe indoor cycling). One wonders if the other contributors are certified at all (although I understand that a "certification" means little these days). As you check out this site, it will increase your own sense of accomplishment and motivation to continue teaching the awesome way that you teach, because you know (and I know) that you wouldn't do anything as silly and ineffective as these profiles!



I've looked at many of the profiles on [www.musicforcycling.com](http://www.musicforcycling.com) and have *not found a single one that I would recommend* – not one! But the sad part is that I am sure that their students *love* these instructors and their "kick butt" approach. Remember, most students are uneducated about fitness and training and are like lemmings – *they will follow you wherever you lead them!* Tell them that it is safe to do squats and weights on the bike and sprint in a hover position, and most will follow you down that treacherous path, and then brag about how great you are. It's a sad truth. None of these profiles adhere to training principles that we know to be safe and effective for endurance athletes and cyclists, but why should your indoor cycling students be any different than athletes? If it's not safe or effective for a cyclist, how on earth can you expect it to be safe or effective on an indoor bike for any other student? These profiles are full of contraindicated and even dangerous, but mostly just silly and ineffective moves, like hovers, isolations, leaning left and right, "flexing the abs," "hover surges" and more. Intensity parameters are non-existent, but by the looks of the moves, sprints, and attacks that fill most of the profiles, they are the type of *pedal-to-the-metal* excessively intense classes that wring students out with no greater purpose than that. Recoveries are almost nowhere to be found (some even openly brag that theirs have *no* recovery). One has the students standing the entire time. One has them hopping off the bike every 3.5 minutes to do core work. They cue by number of turns instead of by feel or effort level. There are 60-second "sprints" after 5 minutes of non-stop jumping. Some have what they call "DT" or "double time" which is none other than roadrunner weed-wacker legs. One instructor brags that her students are so advanced that she can "kill them".

Need I go on??

If you need to learn more about why these moves that I've just mentioned are dangerous and ineffective training, please check out the eBook *Keep it Real* available on [www.indoorcyclingassociation.com](http://www.indoorcyclingassociation.com) under Products.

## **Top Ten Ways to Stay Motivated as an Indoor Cycling Instructor**

### **Enjoy the Process of Growth!**

Armed with these ten (and a half) tips for maintaining your motivation and passion as an indoor cycling instructor, I am sure you will excel as a coach, and lead your students down the path of increased fitness, mind-body awareness and connection, and fun.

Please let me know if these tips have helped you, or if you have any comments or suggestions that I can add to further editions of this ebook. Perhaps you have a story to tell of an obstacle that you overcame, a mistake you learned from or a method you've used to increase your own motivation to teach. Please share!

If you are an ICA member, I hope you will encourage your peers to join ICA as well, so you can all increase your motivation and knowledge of indoor cycling.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at [Jennifer@indoorcyclingassociation.com](mailto:Jennifer@indoorcyclingassociation.com)

*I wish you the greatest success along this very rewarding path as an indoor cycling coach!*

*Ride on,*

*Jennifer Sage*