

HOW TO HANDLE CLIMBING:

Just as there is standard body positioning for descending there is a certain climbing position that will greatly improve your climbing ability.

Nothing can be more frustrating than blowing a climb which you should have made, so read on and we'll try to help you minimize the number of times you have to get off and walk your bike up the hill.

The first thing is to anticipate the need to shift into a lower gear before your pedaling rpm (referred to as cadence) slows down too much. Remember that your gear shifting mechanism will always work best when your cadence is the highest. You want to avoid shifting "under load" - meaning when your rpm's have dropped significantly and you're pushing the hardest on the pedals. So, downshift into a lower gear which you feel you can maintain as you climb just before the hill starts. Obviously, the more you practice the better you'll be at judging the best gear to be in.

As the hill steepens, you need to flex your elbows and bring them into your body as you bend your upper body forward at the hips (imagine putting your nose on the handlebar). This will cause you to lean towards the handlebar and will also force your rearend into the saddle. This position lowers your center of gravity, distributes your weight to the front and rear tire, and allows you to make the slight weight shifts forward or backward on your saddle that you'll need to maintain traction and power. Most inexperienced riders don't bend their upper body towards the bar enough, so remember, as the pitch steepens, lean more towards the handlebar. Avoid lifting your rearend off the saddle and standing on the pedals - this will only take weight off the rear wheel, use up more energy and will likely cause you to lose traction and spin your rear tire. If you do stand up, stay as low to the saddle as possible to maintain as much weight on the rear tire as possible.