

Trek Bicycle Store Victoria

Hill Climbing Clinic

The most important thing to understand about climbing is there is no one correct method to becoming a great climber. Different people will find different techniques suit them best. One individual will climb best using a very high cadence, whereas another might find it easier to push harder gears. Experimenting with the different techniques will help you decide what works best for you.

There are 4 different positions for climbing – two seated and two standing. In all the positions, it is important to keep your cadence as constant as possible, and, if necessary, to shift into easier gears to achieve this rhythm.

Seated Position 1: In this position you are seated far back on the saddle. Your arms are in the centre of the bars (not the hoods or the drops). Push down with your legs and pull up on the bars with your arms. Your feet will be angled (heel down as you push).

Seated Position 2: In this position it is easier to bring up your cadence and slide to the front of the saddle. Your hands will be on the hoods (possibly in the drops) and your feet will be flat. Think of using a fuller pedal revolution focusing on the up pull through the back half of the spin. This doesn't mean that you don't push down at all, but the pulling motion allows you to use one muscle group while another recovers. This position is also useful for going into an easier gear and spinning your legs in order to clean them out and get them ready for the next pitch.

Standing Position 1: This is a power position, used if you need to accelerate or raise your cadence, or both. In this position you stand with your arms firmly gripping the hoods or in your drops. The key to this position is pulling the bar with your arms, not just going all out with your legs. This requires a great deal of upper body work — you should be pulling with your arms enough to feel them fatigue! In this position you also tilt the bike a fair amount as you pedal. The bike is leaned to the opposite side of the pedal that is being pushed down.

Standing Position 2: This is a resting position. Your hands should be on the hoods, your body weight forward over the handlebars with your elbows locked. Think of your locked arms supporting most of your body weight kind of like leaning against a counter; use the weight of your body to push down as you pedal. This position is used when the incline offers an opportunity to ease up your exertion, and you want to rest your muscles before the next pitch.

Remember that different types of climbs will favour different techniques. Experimenting is the best way of finding out which position works best in each situation.

With ascending comes descending. It is best to grab the bars in the drops, since in that position you have better use of the brakes (keep equal pressure on both the front and rear brakes). Initially you may want to stay in the hoods, you don't have the same control or braking power so you will have to control your speed and not allow it to get too high. While descending, keep your feet flat and level with each other. This gives you better balance. Brake before, not in, the corners. Braking causes the wheels to want to straighten out, and since you will be leaning the bike into the turn, braking in the turn could cause you to lose your balance. When cornering, keep your outside leg down at the bottom of the pedal revolution with pressure on that outside pedal. Push down on the handle bar with the opposite hand (the inside hand). When cornering your body weight should stay centered over the bike, this will allow your tires to get the most possible traction. The steeper the descent, the farther back you will shift your body weight. This allows you to still use your front brake.

Remember the best way to become a better climber is to climb more hills.

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