



## CYCLING GLOSSARY

**Abandon** – When a rider quits during a race

**Attack** – A sudden acceleration to move ahead of another rider or group of riders

**Big Ringing It** – A “big” gear – when the rider has his chain on the larger of the two front chainrings – allows a rider to go for maximum speeds. This gearing is most often used on flat or rolling terrain

**Bonk** – Total exhaustion caused by a lack of sufficient food during a long race or ride

**Bonus Sprints** – On each stage, race organizers designate several locations along the course where bonus points are given to the first three riders that cross the “line.” These sprints create a “race within a race” during each stage

**Break/Breakaway** – A rider or group of riders that has left the main group behind

**Caravan/Race Caravan** – The official and team support vehicles in a race. Each team has a car in the official race caravan. The team cars follow the peloton and riders will often go back to their team car for food, extra clothing or to speak to their team director

**Circuit Race** – A one-day race with multiple laps around a single, closed route

**Commissaire** – Similar to judges or referees in other sports. The official in competitive cycling, usually seen with a copy of the racing rules, stopwatch and clipboard

**criterium** – A multi-lap, one-day race on a closed, short course, typically one mile or less

**DNF** – Abbreviation for “did not finish”

**Domestique** – A team rider who will sacrifice his individual performance to help a designated teammate. Duties can include giving up one's bike for another rider, supplying refreshments to teammates and catching breakaway riders. French for “servant”

**Draft** – To ride closely behind another racer, saving energy by using that racer as a wind break. Riding in front is very strenuous and affords a great energy-saving advantage to the rider behind

**Drop/Dropped** – When a rider has been left behind by another rider or group of riders

**Echelon** – A staggered, long line of riders, each downwind of the rider in front, allowing them to move considerably faster than a solo rider or small group of riders. In windy sections where there are crosswinds, a large peloton will form into echelons

**Feed Zone** – A designated area along the route where riders can grab “musette bags” filled with food and drinks as they ride by. There is an unwritten rule in the peloton that riders should not attack the field while going through the feed zone

**Field Sprint** – A mass sprint at the finish among the main group of riders in a road race

**Gap** – The amount of time or distance between a rider or group of riders and another rider or group of riders

**General Classification (G.C.)** – The overall leader board in the race, representing each rider's total cumulative time in the race. The rider with the lowest time is number one on the G.C.

**Grand Tour** – Refers to three-week major cycling stage races: Tour de France, Giro d'Italia (Tour of Italy) and Vuelta a España (Tour of Spain) are Grand Tours

**Gruppetto** – A group of riders that forms at the back of the field on mountain stages while riding at a pace that allows them to finish just inside the time limit (see Time Cut). Usually, the gruppetto is comprised of sprinters and other riders who are not climbing specialists or race leaders. Gruppetto is Italian for “a small group”

**Hammer** – To ride hard. Also, to “put the hammer down”

**Jump** – A quick acceleration, which usually develops into a sprint

**KOM** – Abbreviation for "King of the Mountain," an award for the best climber

**Lead Out** – To intentionally sacrifice one's chances of winning in order break the wind and create an opening for a rider behind. This is a racing tactic whereby one rider races at high speed to give a head start to the rider on his wheel. This tactic is most often used in a field sprint

**Mechanical** – Slang for a problem with the bicycle. “He had a mechanical”

**Mountain Climb Classifications** – Large mountain climbs are normally classified according to their difficulty. Category 4 is the easiest, followed by Categories 3, 2, 1, and the Hors Catégorie (which is the hardest). Mountain climbs are classified according to their length and the average gradient of the road's incline

**Off the Back** – When a rider or riders cannot keep pace with the main group and lag behind

**Off the Front** – When a rider takes part in a breakaway

**Paceline** – A string of riders that moves at high speed with each individual taking turns setting the pace and riding in the draft of the others. See also "Train"

**Peloton** – The main field or pack of riders in the race. French for “a group moving forward”

**Point to Point Road Race** – A one-day race in which the route travels between two separate points. The most prestigious of these races are known as “Classics”

**Popped** – Word used to describe one's legs losing all power. Also, blown; had it; knackered; stuffed

**Prologue** – One type of beginning for a stage race, which is a relatively short time trial

**Puncture** – Flat tire

**Road Rash** – Skin abrasions resulting from a fall or crash onto the road

**Saddle** – The bike seat

**Sitting Up** – When the rider is no longer riding in the most aerodynamic fashion

**Slipstream** – The area of least wind resistance behind a rider

**Stage Race** – A bike race held over successive days, with a different course each day. Stage races can last anywhere from three to 21 days. The rider with the lowest total time (or accumulated points) after completion of all the stages wins the overall race

**Team Leader** – The rider the team supports in order for him to win a stage or race

**Time Cut** – Mostly applicable to the Grand Tours. On each stage, all riders must finish within a certain percentage of the winner's time in order to remain in the race. Those who are unable to make the cut are disqualified from the race

**Time Trial** – A race in which riders start individually and race against the clock. The fastest over a set distance is the winner. Riders can pass each other on the course, but they are not allowed to draft off of each other. Also known as the "race of truth"

**Train** – A fast moving paceline of riders

**UCI** – Abbreviation for Union Cycliste Internationale, the international governing body of cycling

**Wheel Sucker/Wheelsucking** – Someone who sticks to the rear wheel ahead of them and refuses to go to the front of the pack

**USA Cycling** – America's governing body of cycling. USA Cycling supervises the activities of all cycling disciplines (road, mountain, track, cyclo-cross) and establishes criteria for the U.S. Olympic Cycling Team

**Velo** – French for "bicycle"

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