

Group test

FLAT PEDALS



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Don't get too attached to your clipless pedals: flats can work well too. **Richard Hallett** reviews four types

STRAP CHANNELS

Pedals may have channels cast or moulded into the body to guide and locate toe straps.

PEDAL WASHERS

Not usually supplied with pedals, pedal washers reduce the possibility of damage to the cranks and are vital when using pedals with full-width spanner flats.

PLATFORM AREA

Bigger is better, up to a point, as this spreads pressure from the shoe pressing on the pedal over a wider area, reducing foot fatigue.

GRIP

Shoes can easily slip off flat pedals. Teeth or pins projecting from the pedal surface reduce the likelihood of slippage but inevitably increase the risk of injury if the foot does slip off – or when pushing the cycle.

AXLE DESIGN

The standard 9/16in pedal thread (left-hand on the left-hand pedal) stops at a shoulder on the axle. On low cost models, the axle spanner flats may cut across the shoulder, creating an edge that can damage an aluminium crank.

MOST PERFORMANCE CYCLISTS ride with their feet attached to the pedals, hoping to keep the foot correctly positioned over the pedal axle, to prevent it slipping off under hard effort, and conceivably to allow the rider to pull up on the pedal upstroke. Where convenience outweighs performance, however, flat pedals are the way forward.

Flatties let you just get on and ride – in whatever footwear you fancy. This makes them the obvious choice for many cycling activities, such as short-distance commuting, bike share

schemes, or riding to the pub. For touring, there's no need to carry off-bike footwear. When mountain biking, it's easier to bail out on difficult singletrack.

Flatties allow self-selected foot placement on the pedal. Some cyclists might choose a position that's less efficient. But experienced cyclists can find a comfortable, efficient foot position and heel angle without having to worry about the niceties of cleat adjustment. It's worth noting that, even with the most supportive pedals, footwear with stiffer soles makes for more comfortable pedalling.

Reflecting on flats

Another advantage of flats is that it's usually easier to fit the pedal reflectors required by law after dark. See cyclinguk.org/cyclists-library/regulations/lighting-regulations

1 BBB EASYBASE £19.95
BBBCYCLING.COM

Perhaps best viewed as today's equivalent of the basic, old-school, rubber-block pedal, BBB's EasyBase employs a moulded plastic one-piece body with an abrasive, coarse sandpaper-effect surface on both sides to help keep footwear in place. Strap channels through the body facilitate the use of shoe retention straps. Reflectors front and rear combine with a lack of sharp edges to offer a safe, secure riding experience. Reassuringly, the steel axles run in ball bearings. The bearings are, however, low rent; they are not sealed and may not survive lengthy exposure to poor weather. The axle flats extend to the crank mating face and need washers if damage to the cranks is to be avoided. **Weight: 350g.**

2 MKS ESPRIT £32.99
ZYROFISHER.CO.UK

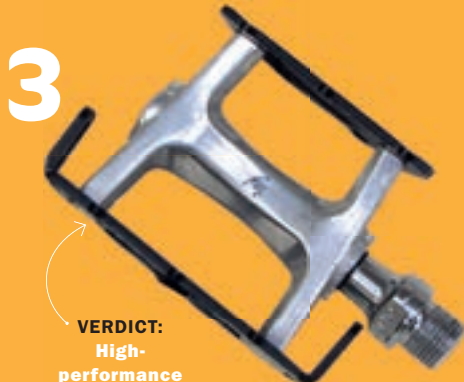
Featuring a visually pleasing cast-aluminium 'X-Wing' body supporting a one-piece, double-sided aluminium cage, the MKS Esprit exemplifies the high-end, old-school, lightweight road pedal. The replaceable anodised cage (it is attached to the body using countersunk hex-head screws) has pronounced teeth on both faces to keep shoes in place, and holes to assist with mounting toe clips if desired. The arms of the pedal body incorporate channels for toe straps, making this a versatile design that's suitable for a wide range of cycling activities. The beefy, chrome-plated boron steel axle turns very freely in bearings with just a hint of roughness; I've no doubt they will bed in nicely after a few miles. Hidden behind a seal, the bearings appear to be the traditional adjustable cup-and-cone type; there's a removable cap on the outer end requiring a special removal tool that allows access for maintenance. The axle has six spanner flats, a full-circumference shoulder, and a 6mm hex socket for easy installation and removal. **Weight: 350g.**



VERDICT:
Inexpensive, reflector-equipped commuter pedal suited to limited mileage



VERDICT:
Sturdy, attractive, and versatile



VERDICT:
High-performance pedal designed for use with toe straps



VERDICT:
Big, strong and supportive

3 FWE TRACK £24.99
EVANSCYCLES.COM

The bolt-on front and rear cage plates give the game away: these pedals are designed for use with toe-clips and straps. The replaceable front and rear plates are single-sided and offer no real support if used upside down, and their width suggests they are designed primarily for track use. Nevertheless, they can be used as conventional flatties, provided the rider takes care to flip the pedals the right way up. The competition-oriented design extends to the provision on the front plate of fixing holes for toe clip bolts, while the rear plate has closed slots sized to hold toe straps securely, preventing them from shifting when pulled tight. The nicely-finished cast aluminium bodies turn on super-smooth sealed cartridge bearings and immaculately-finished chrome-plated steel axles. **Weight: 290g.**

4 DMR V12 £65
DMRBIKES.COM

The latest version of the long-established DMR V12 mountain bike flattie is lighter than the original but retains its broad platform and shock-resistant, sealed, bush-and-cartridge bearing system. Studded with 10 threaded, replaceable pins per side, the platform is slightly concave, helping the shoe stay put in the pedal's natural environment of challenging off-road terrain. The pins' height can be adjusted for traction and feel. The cast aluminium body (there's a lighter magnesium version) is also notably shallow, keeping the foot as close as possible to the chromoly axle's centre line. The body has channels suitable for shoe straps but won't readily accept any type of toe clip. The black chrome finish on the pedals I tested adds £15 to the price of the standard pedal, which is offered in a range of colours. **Weight: 430g.**



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