



### THE RIGHT SIZE BIKE

Your bike needs to be roughly the right size to begin with. Bikes are generally sized by the seat tube length in either inches or centimetres. A road bike might be listed as 54cm, a mountain bike 18in. Often bikes are described simply as small, medium and large, so check geometry tables for seat-tube lengths.

When bikes had horizontal top tubes, sizing by seat tube made sense. You could work out whether you could reach: a) the pedals; b) the ground. Nowadays, seat tubes are truncated to accommodate sloping top tubes and they're seldom sized consistently between different bike types or models.

You can nevertheless get a good steer on your target bike size by using a guide that former technical officer Chris Juden wrote some time ago for this magazine. I'll paraphrase it. The medium-sized bike in most bike ranges is designed to fit the average height man. In the UK, he's 5ft 9in (about 176cm). If it's a women's-specific bike, medium will be designed for the average height woman, who in

**Above:** If you can easily hold your hands behind your back without changing your body position, it means your hands are only really resting on the bar, not propping you up. (Dan's heels are dipped as he's holding his position on flat pedals; he doesn't pedal quite like this) **Right:** Still a good starting point

the UK is about 5ft 4in (162cm). If you're around average height, the medium should more or less fit. If it's not listed as such, medium is the arithmetic mean of the available sizes – the average. So if a bike comes in sizes from 50cm to 60cm, 55cm is medium.

Bike sizes vary half as much as height. If you're taller or shorter than Mr or Ms Average, add or subtract half the difference between your height and theirs to the medium size that Mr or Ms Average would ride. If Mr Average needs the 55cm bike and you're 180cm (about 4cm taller), you likely want a frame that's 2cm bigger: 57cm. If the medium is 18in and you're 5ft 5in (4in shorter), you probably want a bike that's 2in smaller: 16in.

You might find yourself between sizes, wanting a 57cm bike when it's available in 56cm and 58cm sizes. Don't worry. Either might work for you. Bike fit is a dynamic issue that can be determined only approximately by static measurements. People have different bodily proportions and different levels of flexibility. It's not uncommon to find that you're more comfortable on a bike that's one size 'too big' or one size 'too small'.

I often size up with road bikes to get a taller head tube and thus a higher handlebar position. But I once met a guy taller than me who rode a really small road bike fitted with a 140mm stem and



All indoor photos: Neil Jackson Photographic

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