Unconventional but very comfortable: Jones Plus LWB

• Assess weight distribution

Many cyclists carry too much weight on their hands for comfort. Here's a simple check, which takes account of core strength. Colin Thomson (who posts as 531colin on the Cycling UK Forum) makes this excellent suggestion whenever bike fit comes up there. You'll need to put your bike on a turbo trainer or have someone to hold your bike.

Sit on the bike with your hands on the brake hoods. Now, without changing the angle of your torso, remove your hands and put them behind your back. If you can't hold the same position: the handlebar is too low and/or too far forward; the saddle is too far forward relative to the bottom bracket; or both.

One of the simplest adjustments you can make to weight distribution is to slide the saddle back on the seatpost, which slackens the effective seat tube angle. Try it. Slide it back as far as it will go just to feel the difference. (You can always move it back.) More of your weight will now be carried by your backside than your hands. You may find that you want a commensurately shorter stem to maintain the saddle-to-handlebar distance, and you may need to lower the saddle slightly to maintain the saddle-to-pedal distance.

Some bike fitters will recommend that your saddle position is set so that your knee is over the pedal spindle (KOPS). That may work for you but don't worry if it doesn't. Keith Bontrager blew holes in it as a prescriptive measurement years ago. I prefer 'behind KOPS' and just slide the saddle right back on bikes with a seat tube steeper than about 72°.

BUYING PARTS TO FINE-TUNE YOUR FIT

If your bike's contact points (handlebar, saddle, pedals) aren't where you want them after adjustments, you'll need to buy new parts. Prices below are guideline minimums; you can spend much more.

• New stem: from £15

A new stem may be the only extra component you need to fix your bike fit. They're readily available in lengths from 35-120mm, and they exist in even shorter and longer lengths. Stem angles vary from about 6° to 35° or more. There are online calculators to help you work out where your handlebar will end up, such as **bit.ly/cycle-stem-comparison-site**.

If even a steeply angled, tall stem won't get the handlebar high enough, a stem riser – essentially a clamp-on section of extra steerer tube – may do so.

• New handlebar: from £20

The width and shape needs to be comfortable. A drop handlebar wider than your shoulders can feel unwieldy but narrower ones seem OK. I ride 38cm drops as I have a fairly slight build. But Chris Hoy also rides narrow drops on his road bike because they're aerodynamically more efficient and because he's used to narrow bars from track racing.

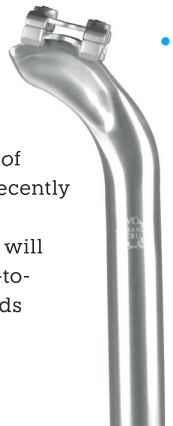
Flat bars have been getting wider and wider recently, which is great for steering leverage but can feel too wide for comfort. If you've tried them and they feel uncomfortably wide, cut them down. Cross-country racer Nino Schurter evidently has a 700mm bar, which keyboard warriors would decry as far too narrow. He does pretty well on it! If you don't like a straight bar, try one with more backsweep, like one of the alternative bars we tested recently (**cyclinguk.org/alt-bars**).

Changing the width of the bar will also change the effective saddle-to-handlebar distance. As your hands move horizontally further apart, your body has to lean further forward to compensate. So a new bar may necessitate a new stem.

Changing between a flat-topped handlebar and a riser handlebar will affect how upright you sit. 'Flat' bars are readily available with up to 75mm rise (see **funnmtb.com/products/upturn**), while riser drops are now a thing (see **geneticbikes.com/shop/products/handlebars/road/driser-16-bars** and **redshiftsports.com/products/top-shelf-handlebar-system**). You can use a riser bar as well as or instead of a higher-rise stem.

• New seatpost: from £15

Seatposts have the clamp in line with the post or offset by anything up to 30mm. This layback (also called setback) lets you put the saddle that much further back – or forward if you're switching from a layback post to an inline one.



• New cranks: from £45

Although cyclists' heights vary a lot, crank length doesn't: you typically see 170mm, 172.5mm or 175mm – occasionally 165mm. Cranks longer than about 10% of your