



Left: Chris Kendall Photography

height may give an awkward pedalling action with lots of knee bend. Shorter cranks suit shorter riders and anyone with limited knee articulation but can also be used by cyclists who don't 'need' them. I'm 177cm tall but prefer 165mm cranks as they're easier to spin faster, which suits how I pedal. In fact, I've now got some 155mm cranks on test.

• New pedals: from £20

Unless you're confident you can set clipless pedal cleats up just right, go for some with plenty of float, such as Speedplay, Time ATAC or Crank Bros Eggbeaters. If you'll be using pedals with less float, you could try putting your bike on a turbo trainer, closing your eyes, putting your cleatless feet on the pedals in whatever angle feels natural, then photographing the results with your phone. You can then use this as a guide to setting up the cleat angle – bearing in mind that turning the cleats inwards angles your feet outward. However, cleat angle is one of those situations where a good bike fitter can prevent niggling problems further down the line.

For the fore-aft position of cleats, the accepted theory is to put them inline with one of the metatarsal joints to get it under the ball of your foot. I forget which as I've had more success by just putting the cleats as far back as they'll go on the shoes, which seems to prevent foot fatigue and improve power generation.



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If you don't like a straight bar, try something with more backsweep, like one of the alternative bars we tested recently
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Flat pedals cause few bike-fitting problems as you can place your foot however you like. The facility to do this may instantly solve knee and hip problems caused by incorrectly set cleats. I don't get knee pain but use flats most of the time anyway as the pros (practicality, comfort) outweigh the only con (marginal efficiency loss).

AND FINALLY...

It's tempting to think that there's a bike fit holy grail out there, with one perfect set of measurements for you. That's unlikely. Most of us have what bike fitter Phil Burt calls a 'bike fit window' – a range of measurements within which we can be comfortable.

Changes to the setup of your bike may feel odd at first, simply because it's different from what you're used to. Give it a few rides. If it's not working after that, change it back or make some other adjustments.

Lastly, take any bike fit advice, including this article, with a pinch of salt. If you're comfortable, your bike fit is fine and you're doing it right. ●

Sitting comfortably

There's more to being comfortable than having the contact points in the right position for you. Other bike changes that will make a difference include:

• Wider tyres

Assuming there's clearance, switch up a tyre width. If your road bike has 25mm 700C tyres (25-622), try 28mm. If your mountain bike has 2.25in tyres, try 2.4in. Wider tyres can be run at lower pressures, which is where the comfort comes from. Going tubeless also helps, as tubeless tyres can be run at lower pressures.



• Anatomic saddle

It's impossible to say without experimentation which saddle will suit you best, but the more you're leaning forward, the more you'll benefit from an anatomic saddle with groove or hole in it to relieve pressure.

ISM saddles (ismseat.com) seem to work well for riders who experience persistent pain, which is, in general, a more pressing issue for women cyclists than men. See cyclinguk.org/saddle-comfort-women.



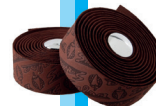
• Ergonomic grips

Flared grips like those by Ergon (ergonbike.com) spread the pressure better and can prevent pinched nerves in the heel of your hand.



• Gel bar tape

The traditional method of improving hand comfort for racers riding on the cobbles was two wraps of bar tape. This might work for you but it can feel bulky. A better solution might be gel bar tape and/or gel pads underneath your bar tape.



• Suspension stem/seatpost

These have come into vogue again on the back of the gravel bike boom. They can work well for damping vibration or 'trail chatter', but aren't a replacement for suspension forks and rear shocks for technical mountain biking.

