

# RIDE FASTER & CRASH LESS



Ready to hit the trails on your new bike? Or looking to introduce your youngsters and e-bike riding spouse to the joys of singletrack? MTB coach **Kate Slegrova** shares some key bike skills to help everyone enjoy the ride.

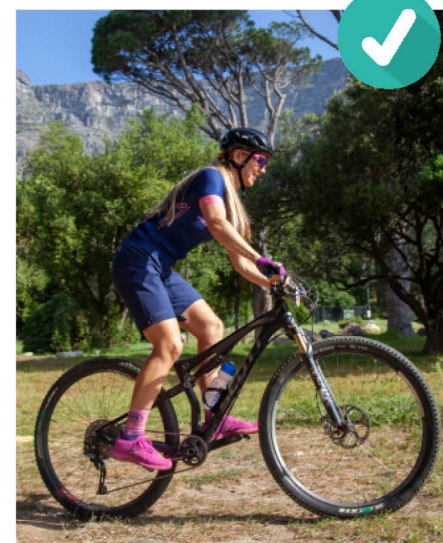
**S**o you've bought yourself a new mountain bike and you want to shred some trails with your mates. Or perhaps you've invested in an e-bike so you can ride more kilometres and join your partner on a weekend adventure. But you're not quite sure what you're doing, and how you're going to handle drop-offs and switchbacks so you

can keep up with your more experienced friends and family. Well, first of all, I would really recommend you spend a few extra bucks on getting MTB skills lessons with a good coach. Good technical know-how is fundamental to enjoyable mountain biking. Don't be shy because you feel you should already know how to corner... Most coaches are friendly and only want

to help you get the best from your steed. My second piece of advice is get a dropper seat post. If you want to ride trails, have fun, be safe and fast, purchasing a dropper seat is money well spent. You can ride without one, but it's much more work to stay safe and ride fast without a dropper seat post. I thought I didn't need one but when I finally got one I was much faster on the downhills.

## TOP TIPS

- 1 Maintain levelled feet on uneven terrain, singletrack and downhill.
- 2 Keep your index fingers on your brakes.
- 3 Always look forward to what is coming and where you want to go.
- 4 Speed is your friend if you stay in control.



### NEUTRAL POSITION

Slightly bent elbows, feet levelled, hips above your saddle, slightly bent knees. We use this position on non-technical terrain or between low ready positions to take a short break. You are safer and more ready to tackle obstacles in neutral position off the saddle than when you're sitting down.



### LOW READY POSITION

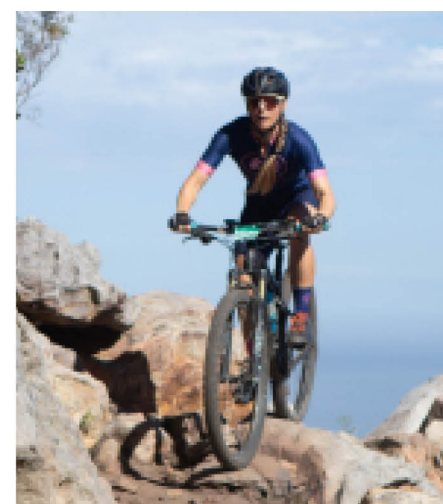
Your elbows and knees are bent, your centre of gravity is lower down keeping you safer, the bike moves under you back or forward or side to side. We use this position when going down steep hills, balancing through rock gardens and drop-offs, and a side-to-side low ready position when cornering.

**DON'T** bring your knees in too much (above right). They should be wider apart so that the bike can also move from side to side. Here the elbows are bent a little too much and the heel is not dropped.



### RATCHETING

Ratcheting is a slow speed drill which is very useful on rocky trails or going over narrow bridges. Practice it first in a safe environment, such as on grass or in a parking lot. You can do this seated or standing, although I prefer standing. Move your pedals only about half way up and half way down (not a full pedal stroke) and stand in neutral position as illustrated in the picture above.

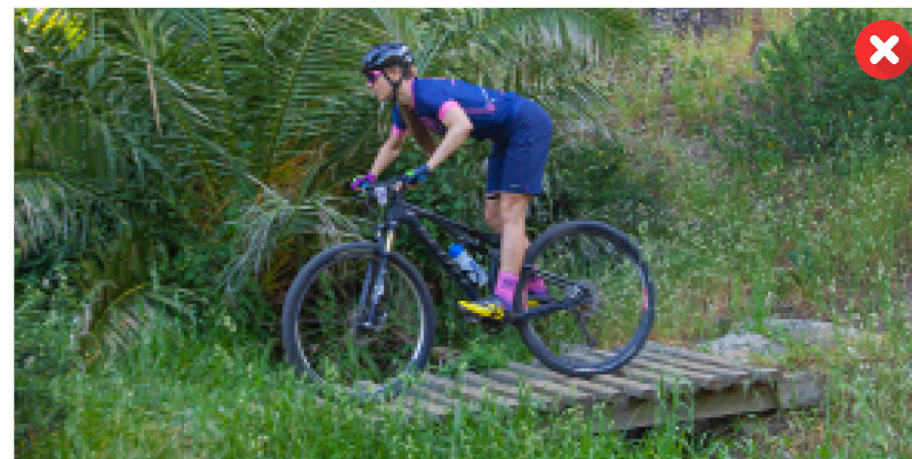


### SHIFTING

Never change gear going uphill when you're applying force on the pedals, especially on an e-bike, as this could result in a broken chain. Lighten the pressure on the pedals, change gear, and only then pedal hard. Try to look ahead and anticipate what's to come so you can get into a lighter gear before you start the steep climb.

### BRAKING

Always use your index finger on each brake to maintain a good grip on the handlebars with the rest of your fingers. If you can't reach your brake levers properly, get them adjusted at your local bike shop. Modulate the brakes evenly – yes, both brakes. Drop the heel on your forward foot when braking and stay in low ready position.



### RIDING OVER BRIDGES

This can be intimidating but it's actually not hard. All you need to do is look ahead in the direction you want to go. You just need to follow the bridge in the same way as you would a narrow path. If it's on a downhill, low ready position applies.

**DON'T** look to the side of the bridge or you're in danger of riding off it.

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