Beginner/Intermediate Group

SHIFT LIKE A PRO

Knowing how to shift the gears on your bike will make your ride much easier and hopefully these tips will make your ride more enjoyable.

SHIFTERS
You have two shifters-one on the right handlebar and one on the left.
Older bikes may have the shifters on the top tube, but it's the same principle.

The shifter on the **left** controls the front gear settings by the pedals.
Changing this setting makes a big difference in your pedaling.

The shifter on the **right** controls the rear gear settings on the rear wheel.
Changing these won't change things too much- used more to fine tune your pedaling. This is the shifter you will use the most.

The sprockets that are closer to the middle of the bike (small front-large rear) are your lower gears, also known as shift down, downshifting.

The outer sprockets (Large front-small rear) are your higher gears, also known as shift up or upshifting.

WHEN TO SHIFT
Uphill – shift down
If you are going uphill and it's too difficult, so shift down.

Downhill- shift up
If your legs are spinning the pedals way too fast-then shift up.

So do you shift on the left or right?
Remember if it's a big change use your left shifter, if you need a small change use the right.

TIPS AND WARNINGS
Look ahead. Try to anticipate and shift before you have to. Shift in anticipation of the hill.

Don't use extreme gear settings- cross chaining. Don't use large in front and back or small in front and back. No Large-Large, No Small-Small. This is very bad for the chain and your gears.

SHIFTING AND CADENCE
Every cyclist has an ideal "cadence" (pedaling speed) and an ideal amount of resistance from the pedals. When you are pedaling at your ideal cadence, you are putting out the greatest amount of power that you are able to sustain efficiently. You select your cadence by shifting gears. The gear needed to allow your ideal cadence will depend on the slope of the road, the wind conditions, and your own condition at any given time. (From: Sheldon Brown-Everything you wanted to know about shifting you bicycle's gears, but were afraid to ask. www.Sheldonbrown.com.)

Higher gears put more resistance on the pedals. If you select a gear too high your cadence will slow.

Pedaling slower than your ideal cadence is a waste of energy and can lead to muscle strain and joint damage.

Lower gears make the pedals easy to turn, so it becomes easier to spin at a fast cadence.

Pedaling faster than your ideal cadence can allow you to generate an extra burst of speed, but you can tire yourself out.

Sources:
http://bicycleuniverse.info/eqp/gears

http://sheldonbrown.com/gears.html

http://www.ehow.com/