

Created by Leslie Mueller

Objective: interactive workout with climbing intervals

Working intensity: Zones 3–5a

Length: 60 minutes

Introduction:

This is a fun, interactive ride that involves a series of three “crossroads,” or forks in the road in which your students can choose the path that they will take. I have made each crossroad interval about 7 minutes in order to make the class length consistently one hour, so no matter what they choose it will take 7 minutes. Each time your students are given a choice, the terrain, intensity, and cadences will vary but the duration will be constant. This is a great ride to personalize and make your own, as there are endless directions you could go. I have outlined a few possibilities here but I hope you have fun developing some of your own.



At three points in the ride, you are going to give your students a choice, either the right fork or the left. You will explain what each direction entails and let them decide. I tell my students that whoever is the first one to shout out their choice the loudest, that’s what we go with. This keeps them on their toes and forces them to decide quickly! You can also ask for a consensus, giving them about a minute during the recovery song prior to the fork. Ask for a show of hands for each direction, and that is your choice. Then, whatever choice they’ve made, you will select that song.

For the music selection, I have chosen a variety of genres with details on how I would use the music, but I have also listed some other suggestions at the end that are appropriate length, bpm, and mood for many of the segments. Cue up your songs in your playlist in the suggested order of the playlist at the end of this profile, but as explained above, depending on the choices your students make, you’ll select the song (or songs) for that “fork.” This can be done quickly right before it’s time to ride that choice.

Warm-up

Whatever, Iris, 4:28, 93 bpm

Introduce the ride:

During today's ride, I will lead you through a series of climbs. At three points during this ride, the road will fork and you will have an opportunity to choose the direction we go. Will it be the steep route that we take, or the longer, meandering gentle slope? We won't have a lot of time to decide, so the first and loudest voice I hear will be the direction we go. But before we get to these forks or choices, we have some work to do. As soon as the next song starts, the road we are on will pitch up steeply for 1 minute, forcing us out of the saddle. It will then settle back to a manageable climb for 8 minutes, gaining steepness as we go.

First Climb (9 minutes)

Indian Summer, Big Bud, 8:59, 83 bpm

Sometimes Mother Nature can be cruel and today is one of those days. Load your bike with enough resistance so that it feels like relief to stand; come up and push hard with a cadence of 65–70 for the first minute.

Since 83 is a fast rpm for many people to stand with good form, I have my students ride this section with a little slower rpm, and then grab the beat of the song when they return to the saddle. It depends on the skill of your students. Many people may be capable of riding at 83 rpm while standing—it is your job to make this call. Also, since it is early in the workout, many students won't have a huge rise in HR but you do want them to push on this climb, attempting to get to high Zone 4, treating this segment as an opener.

After 1 minute tell them:

Settle back onto your seat, grab the beat of the song, and continue working your way up this hill at a moderately hard intensity with a HR of mid-Zone 3. Stay focused on matching the beat of this music, allowing it to carry you up this hill. Commit yourself to sustaining the 83 rpm cadence all the way to the top of this climb.

3 minutes into the song:

Add a little more resistance, but maintain cadence, taking the HR a little higher into Zone 3 for the next 2 minutes.

At 5 minutes warn them:

Get ready, it's about to get steeper!

At 5:25 say:

Add enough resistance to stand again for the next minute!

At 6:25 say:

As you return to your saddle, keep as much of the resistance as you can sustain while pushing up the final few minutes, but stay below your threshold. This should feel hard, but not overwhelming. It should feel like a real challenge to stay seated all the way to the top of this climb!

First Recovery (3+ minutes)

Hey Hey Hey, Michael Franti & Spearhead, 3:47, 105 bpm

Congratulate them on a great start and give them a couple minutes to recover at the rpm that they choose as you introduce the first fork in the road. For the last minute of this song, ask them to match their cadence to the beat of the song, 105 rpm, simulating a downhill. This will lead them to the first fork in our road.

Introduce the first fork:

In a moment, we will reach our first fork in the road. Here are your choices: If we go to the right, we will face a steep climb that we will want to ride aggressively to maintain our momentum and get it over with. It will take us about 4 minutes to get to the top of the steepest part, and it's hard enough to push us over threshold. The second part of the climb is not nearly as steep, so we will get some relief. (Zone 3 intensity for the final 3 minutes.)

Option #2: If we go to the left, we will ride a series of switchbacks that winds up the mountain with less brutal grade than our first option, but we will be climbing the entire 7 minutes at a consistent pace. Your choice...what will it be?

Let them decide, either going with the first person who yells out their choice, or giving them about 30 seconds to vote. When they do, immediately cue up the song corresponding to their choice.

Excellent! To the right (left) it will be! Now in the meantime, before we get there, grab the beat of this song, raising your cadence to 105 as we go down the hill approaching our next climb!

First Fork: (7 minutes)

Option #1 The Road to the Right: 60–66 rpm followed by 70–75 rpm

Starting Over, The Crystal Method, 4:02, 132 bpm

Somebody Told Me, The Killers, 3:16, 140 bpm

Tell Them:

Here we go! This is 4 minutes of steep and in your face, so load your bike! The next 4 minutes should hurt!

Have them stand on a steeper grade with a little more resistance for 30 seconds, then add a little more at :30, at 1:45, and again at 3 minutes, finishing strong in the saddle.

As the second song starts, coach them to back off a little but to keep their intensity in high Zone 3 or even low Zone 4.

Tell them:

Take your rpm to 70 as you decrease the resistance a little. Keep your intensity up in high Zone 3. You are still climbing! This is not recovery. After what we just did, a slight easing up of the road is welcome but it is still hard work, just not as hard.

Option #2 The Road to the Left: 65 rpm

Sweet Disposition, The Temper Trap, 6:45, 130 bpm

Here we go! Load your bike, forcing your legs to slow down as they are challenged with the increasing grade/resistance. Grab onto that beat!

Have them stand for 30–60 seconds at minute 2 and minute 4. Then finish the climb with 16-count jumps, decreasing to 8-count jumps, simulating increasingly shorter switchbacks.

Second Recovery: (4 minutes) 90 rpm

Bonzo's Montreux, Led Zeppelin, 4:18, 90 rpm

Zone 2 for 2.5 minutes, then add resistance to take it to Zone 3 for the final 90 seconds. Introduce the second fork in the road during the final 60–90 seconds.

Tell them:

We are fast approaching our second fork in the road. Here are your choices: Option #1 is the road to the right, a 3-minute flat to downhill followed by a 3-minute standing climb at threshold or higher—a real leg burner. Or if we go left, it will be 7 minutes of super fun rolling hills. What is your choice?

Second Fork: (7 minutes)

**Option #1 The Road to the Right: Flat, downhill followed by steep 3-minute climb
Unstoppable, E.S. Posthumus, 3:04, 110 bpm (the downhill)**

Tell them:

This road starts flat and then drops downhill. Load your bike so that a cadence of 80 rpm feels moderate to easy. You should be able to pedal with control but you feel as if you have something to push against.

At 1:10, bring it up to 90 rpm.

At 1:57, take it to 110 rpm to the finish of the song. Remind them to sit firm in the saddle and stay ahead of the pedals, adding resistance if needed to make up for the flywheel.

Are You Gonna Go My Way, Lenny Kravitz, 3:32, 124 bpm (the steep standing climb)

At 15 seconds into the song, tell them:

Come out of the saddle and GO FOR IT! No holding back for the next 3 minutes!

Just let them climb in their element!

Option #2 The Road to the Left: Rolling hills, 71 rpm while climbing & 100 rpm while descending.

Dance of the Witches, S.U.N. Project, 7:13, 142 bpm

This song has a lot of energy breaks that you will use to depict your rolling hills. Have them start the song climbing in the saddle. (Tip: Know the song well prior to using it so you can anticipate the energy breaks and terrain and position changes.)

At 1:00, stand for a minute.

At 2:00, sit, reduce resistance enough to surge with control to 100 rpm for 40 seconds, and then return to a standing climb.

Attempt to maintain momentum as you load your resistance and stand at 2:40.

At 3:34, sit again and go downhill, taking it to 100 rpm.

At 4:20, return to a seated climb.

At 5:12, stand one last time.

At 5:44, downhill until 6:28 when you finish with a seated climb.

Third Recovery: (3+ minutes)

Hold On, Alabama Shakes, 3:46, 87 bpm

Introduce the final fork in the road during the last couple minutes of the recovery.

Final Fork: (7 minutes)

Have them choose from whichever two options they didn't choose on the first two forks. Simply cue your music back to the song(s) in your playlist. They won't even notice and I like to tease them, saying, "*Wow it's amazing how similar this fork looks to the last two!*"

Final Climb: (5 minutes)

Thing of Beauty, Hothouse Flowers, 5:27, 124 bpm

Tell them:

No more forks, we are in this one together. Since we had some pretty steep downhills, we have to climb again to get back to our cars!

Use the first 2–3 minutes as recovery, but have them recover while climbing at 62 rpm with easy to moderate resistance. Gradually build this hill, adding resistance as you go, taking them back up to threshold for the last 2 minutes, standing for the final minute.

Cool-down

Iris, The Goo Goo Dolls, 4:50

Congratulate everyone for their genius at selecting the best choices, and for a job well done!

Crossroads Playlist (Title, Group, Album)

Section	Music	BPM	Time
Warm Up	Whatever Iris Awakening	93	4:28
First Climb	Indian Summer Big Bud Infinity	83	8:59
Recovery	Hey Hey Hey Michael Franti & Spearhead The Sound of Sunshine	105	3:47
First Fork Option #1 (Road to the Right)	Starting Over The Crystal Method Legion of Boom	132	4:02
	Somebody Told Me The Killers Hot Fuss	140	3:16
First Fork Option #2 (Road to the Left)	Sweet Disposition The Temper Trap Conditions	130	6:45
Second Recovery	Bonzo's Montreux Led Zeppelin Coda	90	4:18
Second Fork Option #1 (Road to the Right)	Unstoppable E.S. Posthumus Makara	110	3:04
	Are You Gonna Go My Way Lenny Kravitz Are You Gonna Go My Way	124	3:32
Second Fork Option #2 (Road to the Left)	Dance of the Witches S.U.N. Project Macrophage	142	7:13
Third Fork	(Whatever students choose from the remaining two options previously offered but not selected.)		
Third Recovery	Hold On Alabama Shakes Boys and Girls	87	3:46
Final Climb	Thing of Beauty Hothouse Flower Songs From the Rain	124	5:27
Cool-Down / Stretch	Iris Goo Goo Dolls Dizzy Up the Girl	~	4:50

Other Music Suggestions:

1. Silence (Fade's Sanctuary Mix), Delerium feat. Sarah McLachlan, 9:33, 65 rpm
2. Bottle Song, New R3hab, 3:56, 65 rpm
3. One Thing Leads to Another, The Fixxx, 3:19, 68 rpm
4. Devil Inside, INXS, 3:55, 76 rpm
5. Sapphire, Thunderball, 4:59, 88 rpm
6. Drink Me Hot, Chris Joss, 3:53, 88 rpm
7. I Walk Alone, Green Day, 4:24, 85 rpm
8. Let's Get It Started, Black Eyed Peas, 3:38, 106 rpm
9. Dance About It, Paper Tongues, 2:58, 68 rpm
10. Ubik (The Breaks), Timo Maas, 3:17, 66 rpm
11. Eternity, SLP, 5:33, 62 rpm