



Compare the SIG Programs

Below is a summary of the key characteristics of each SIG (Special Interest Group) to help you choose the one best suited to your cycling experience and fitness level. Details on each SIG can found by clicking on the column headers.

	C-SIG	B-SIG	A-SIG	A-Classic SIG	D-SIG
Number of rides	9 (including a classification ride)	10 (including a classification ride in Central Park)	10	10	10
What kind of cycling experience do I need?	First, you must know how to ride a bike (no, we're not kidding!) and be able to control the bike. Second, you must be able to maintain a minimum average pace of 9.5 miles per hour for 5 laps of the Prospect Park loop (18-20 miles). Third, you should be willing to commit to attending all rides, to follow instructions from your ride leaders, and to have fun. Being a beginner cyclist is an advantage, in a way. We like to start at the beginning and train you our way. Having no previous bad habits to overcome is good!	We assume you have at least basic familiarity with the shifting and braking system on your bike. In terms of basic fitness, you should be able to complete a 40-mile ride, with a lunch break and 1 or 2 pit stops along the way. (If you've never done a 40-mile ride, try to simulate one in Central or Prospect Park.) In terms of speed, you should be able to complete 4 laps around Central Park (approximately 26 miles) in 2 hours or less. On top of that, you should be open to coaching, serious about safety, and eager to have fun.	The A-SIG is designed to remove the mystique from becoming an "A" rider. Group riding experience (B-SIG, C-SIG, or equivalent) is highly recommended. You should have some experience with road rides of at least 40 miles in rolling (or hillier) terrain; you must put in the training necessary to match the fitness level and physical efforts of your fellow participants; and you must want to learn and be coached.	Group riding experience in rotating pace lines is strongly recommended but not required (B and C SIG graduates are welcome!). You must be comfortable and confident operating a road bike over significant distances. This includes shifting, and experience riding with clipless pedals. Training outside of the weekly Saturday rides is critical. The A-SIG Classic is serious training, and it will require an equally serious commitment of time and effort from you. Participants must be willing to accept coaching and critique from leaders and want to learn and ride safely.	Group riding experience in rotating pacelines is required. While completion of the A-SIG or A-Classic is not mandatory, the skills taught in those programs (or acquired elsewhere) form the foundation for safe, cooperative group riding on unpaved roads and trails. You need to have done enough dirt riding to know it's something you enjoy, and are willing to make a major commitment to develop the necessary skills. Weekday training will be essential. Participants must be open to coaching and critique from leaders, and want to learn to ride safely on dirt.
What type of bike do I need?	Road bike is highly recommended although hybrids and mountain bikes are accepted	Road bike is highly recommended although hybrids are accepted	Road bike	Road bike	Road, cyclocross, gravel, or adventure bike with drop handlebars, fitted with minimum 32c or wider tires. (The ideal tire is a slick or file tread around 32-35c; aggressive knobby tires not needed.) Deep gearing (ie compact crank, 11-32 cassette - or equivalent) strongly encouraged.

Will I ride with the same people every week?	Yes, we divide riders into groups with different riding speeds, depending on each rider's classification time. You will ride with this group for the entire SIG.	Yes, you will ride with the same 12 or so riders and 3 or 4 leaders every week. You will be grouped with those of similar speed and ability.	No. Groups vary every week in order to expose you to different types of riding and coaching.	No. Groups vary every week in order to expose you to different types of riding and coaching.	No. Groups vary every week in order to expose you to different types of riding and coaching.
How far will we ride?	Rides progress from approximately 15-25 miles to 55-65 miles.	Rides progress from approximately 40 miles to 85 miles (with option for a century).	Rides progress from approximately 40 miles to 100 miles.	Rides progress from approximately 40 miles to 100+ miles.	Rides progress from approximately 40 miles to 90 miles.
How fast and hard will I ride?	Groups typically begin at 10-14 mph and progress to 13-16 mph towards the end of the C-SIG. All groups start slower and ride for fewer miles, then gradually build up speed. The speed of the faster C-SIG groups is usually approximately the same as the slower B-SIG groups, but with less distance and fewer hills.	Participants will be divided into groups based on their results in a timed classification ride of 4 laps around Prospect Park. The pace levels of the groups are 16, 17 or 18 mph-that's cruising speed on flat terrain, not average speed over a whole ride. All groups start at slightly slower speeds over the first few weeks.	The A-SIG begins slowly in order to focus on skills. We focus on uniform/consistent effort, not speed, but by the final weeks you will be riding >20 mph on flat terrain. The A-SIG will challenge you physically and mentally; while we strive to avoid pushing you to your limits, the very nature of our curriculum will in all likelihood extend those limits.	We ride at a slightly faster average pace than the A-SIG. Be prepared to ride 10 mph with us when learning to paceline-the time you spend riding that slow will help foster the skills you will need to ride 21 . . . 22 . . . 23+ by the end of the SIG. You will push yourself harder and farther than you ever imagined you could.	On paved roads, expect to ride at speeds similar to the A-SIG and A-Classic, 20+ on flat terrain by the end of the program. Unpaved surfaces will be tackled with the same level of effort, but average speed on them will be lower.
How hilly are the routes?	Generally flat and rolling terrain. Based on the group's ability, some challenging hills may be included at the discretion of the ride leader. Ride leaders provide encouragement and regroup as necessary.	Our routes progress from "moderate" to "challenging." What does that mean? The first few rides (40-50 miles) will entail about 2,500 ft of climbing. Rides in the middle of the program (55-65 miles) will range from 3,000-4,000 ft of climbing, and the later rides (70- 0, or 100, miles) will range from 4,500-5,500 ft of climbing. Don't worry if that sounds daunting--if you stick with the program and get in your midweek workouts, you should be fine.	We ride some of the most well-known climbs in the area with >6000 ft of vertical gain on longer rides.	We ride some of the most well-known climbs in the area with 6000+ vertical gain on longer rides.	The routes can be very hilly; several explore the Hudson Highlands and the Taconics. We ride some of the least-known, most-memorable climbs in the region.

How fast we will go?		Participants will be divided into groups, based on your classification ride, averaging 16, 17 or 18 mph on flat terrain.	We focus on consistent effort, not speed, which is determined by the group and the terrain/weather conditions. The A-SIG begins slowly in order to focus on skills. By the final weeks you will be riding +20mph on flats. The A-SIG avoids putting participants into the "red zone" (above 80% of max heart rate).		On paved roads, expect to ride at speeds similar to the A-SIG and A-Classic, 20+ on flat terrain by the end of the program. Unpaved surfaces will be tackled with the same level of effort, but average speed on them will be lower.
Will I learn to ride in a rotating paceline?	No. We teach single file group riding, and we start with a healthy gap between bikes. The gap will narrow over the course of the SIG, but you should be comfortable riding within the group.	Yes, we teach pacelining but not until the 5th or 6th week. After that, whether and how much each group will paceline is up to the leaders' assessment of the group's ability and its desire to do so.	Yes, pacelining is a core aspect of the A-SIG. After week 3, all rides will be done in a rotating single or double paceline.	Yes, pacelining is a core aspect of the A-Classic. After week 3, all rides will be done in a rotating single or double paceline.	No. You need to bring that skill: the ability to safely ride in a rotating paceline is a prerequisite for enrolling in the D-SIG.
How much will I need to train during the SIG?	It is very important to your enjoyment of the C-SIG training if you can get out and ride a few times during the week to maintain the conditioning that you are building.	One or two midweek workouts are highly recommended, with one of those preferably a training ride. Full details and suggestions for workouts can be found in the B-SIG Riders Guide. Shortly after the SIG begins, ad hoc groups will start forming for early morning/late afternoon rides in Central & Prospect Parks.	Yes. One or two high-intensity, mid-week training rides (15-20 miles) as well as at least one low-intensity dedicated recovery ride are recommended in the weeks prior to and during the SIG.	Yes. One or two high-intensity, mid-week training rides (15-20 miles) as well as at least one low-intensity dedicated recovery ride are recommended in the weeks prior to and during the SIG.	Yes. One or two high-intensity, midweek training rides (15–20 miles) as well as at least one low-intensity dedicated recovery ride are recommended in the weeks prior to and during the SIG. At least one mid-week ride each week should be with an A-level paceline group.
What type of bike do I need?	A road bike is recommended, although hybrids and mountain bikes are acceptable. Not permitted in the C-SIG: recumbents, tandems, single-gear bikes, BMX bikes, aero bars, or pedal assist bikes.	Most folks will have road bikes, but hybrid, cross and mountain bikes are acceptable--provided they have smooth (not knobby) tires, don't have suspension and have a full set of gears. Note: No aero bars and no single speed or fixies allowed! Your bike should accommodate two water bottles (unless you ride with a camelback-type backpack). A basic cycling computer is required by the third week.	Road bikes with integrated, brake-hood shifters only, no exceptions (no hybrids; no bar- end or bottom-tube shifters). No aero bars. No "bar mitts" (we need to see your hands! No ear buds or headphones. Two frame-mounted bottle cages with water bottles filled with water and/or sports drink. A simple bike computer that at the very least displays distance + speed is necessary; one that also displays cadence is preferred. GPS not required	Road bike, no exceptions. No aero bars. Two bottle cages with water bottles filled with water and/or sports drink.	Road, cyclocross, gravel, or adventure bike with drop handlebars, fitted with minimum 32c or wider tires. (The ideal tire is a slick or file tread around 32-35c; aggressive knobby tires not needed.) Deep gearing (ie compact crank, 11-32 cassette - or equivalent) strongly encouraged.

<p>Do I need clipless pedals?</p>	<p>It is not required that you have clipless pedals. If you are new to clipless pedals, it's best for you to start C-SIG without them. Once the SIG starts, talk with your group's ride leaders for guidance on this and tips for making the transition to clipless pedals.</p>	<p>It is not required that you have clipless pedals. Most participants will have them, and they are a good idea, but plenty of folks complete the B-SIG without clipless pedals. If you are new to clipless pedals, make sure you are comfortable clipping in and out before you start the SIG.</p>	<p>Yes, with sufficient riding experience to clip in and out with ease.</p>	<p>Yes, with sufficient riding experience to clip in and out with ease.</p>	<p>Yes. SPD-style pedals or equivalent (Eggbeaters, Frogs) and shoes that facilitate walking are strongly recommended, as there will be portages.</p>
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