

Zwift – All you need to know

You can get straight on & ride, but there a fair few thing it's worth getting up to speed with:

Zwift is a game. But as per real life, how fast you travel is a function of how much power you put through your pedals, how much you weigh and how big your frontal area is. When climbing, power to weight is the key ratio, on the flats, your absolute power becomes more important and finally on descents your weight and frontal area comes into play (for instance someone who's 5ft 6 and weighs 70kg, will come down a hill quicker than me at 6ft and 65kg, even if putting down the same power).

In the document below, there are a number of links which take you through to various website articles which give you greater detail. This is designed to pull the different threads together so you know where to start or what's available.

- Apps (Zwift Companion and Discord)
- Websites (ZwiftPower.com and ZwiftInsider.com)
- XP Points and Levels
- Sweat Drops and the Drop Shop
- Challenges
- Courses, Free rides, Workouts, Group Rides & Races.
- FTP and Race Categories
- Power-ups
- Equipment
- Kit (and the Garage)
- Thames Turbo on Zwift

Apps (Zwift, Zwift Companion and Discord)

1/ Zwift itself - Obviously. Where you do your running and riding, choose your Routes or Workout, choose which kit to wear, which bike to ride etc. This can be installed on your Phone, Tablet or Laptop (preferred)

2/ Zwift Companion App - This allows you to control a lot of on screen functions in Zwift whilst cycling from your phone. Which is much easier. It also allows you to see and sign up for forthcoming events, Follow people, see if friends are also riding and even join them on a ride and join Meet Up's. Your phone and Zwifting device must be connected to same Wi-Fi.

3/ Discord – is the app of choice for conversations between friends / groups during rides. TTTC has voice channels to chat during workouts or co-ordinate/encourage during races. We have a Thames Turbo Chanel.

Websites

Zwiftpower.com – This is where all the official results are collected. You'll need to register your profile, and it will store all of your activities in a log.

<https://www.zwiftpower.com/team.php?id=2455>

ZwiftInsider.com – the definitive everything-you-wanted-to-know-about-Zwift site (you'll see the links later)

Zwifthumb.com – does everything you'd wanted from an integrated app in tracking your progress, understanding different routes – unfortunately, it's not integrated (Zwift's fault, not its)

XP Points and Levels

You get XP points based on how far you ride (20 points per km) - these move you on levels - the higher the level you are, the more features you unlock (the ability to buy quicker frameset

or wheels or different routes, such as the Alpe du Zwift). <https://zwiftinsider.com/points-levels-unlocks/>

Each time you ride a new route for the first time, you get your XP points doubled. When choosing a route, consider these <https://zwiftinsider.com/routes> (so quick doubling up of levels). You'll race through the early levels, but higher levels take more distance (1-12 will go quicker than 24-26).

In addition there are a whole set of challenges and badges to collect which give you bonus XP points. <https://zwiftinsider.com/route-achievement-badges/>



Sweatdrops and the Drop Shop

Whereas the levels will unlock frames or wheels to buy, sweat drops are the currency with which to buy them. Like real life, some frames/wheels are lighter or more aerodynamic than others. It's marginal, but in a race, you'll be grateful for a few extra seconds.

You also (separately) are awarded sweat drops for how much effort you put in and you earn them faster climbing than on the flat. <https://zwiftinsider.com/how-drops-work/>
<https://zwiftinsider.com/what-to-buy-at-each-zwift-level/> (so if you have 191,700 drops get the Enve 3.4 wheels)

You will also see "Ride Ons" the thumbs up. Unlike Strava where Kudos is meaningless, these actually help you – as soon as you receive one, you start earning drops at a quicker rate for 20ish seconds (and easy to return the favour to the giver). When cycling with Companion open on Map on your phone, clicking on the circle around your position, gives thumbs-up to all close (and you'll some them back)

Challenges

Finally there are challenges which unlock special bikes - before your first ride, click menu and you'll see a California map, click on this, Select a Different Challenge and choose Climb Mt Everest.

Once you've climbed 8,800m, the height of Everest, you are rewarded with a fast climbing bike - Emonda. <https://zwiftinsider.com/climb-mt-everest/> Then just keep climbing, on 50km

you're rewarded with Tron – the bike with the neon wheels and the best all-round bike – though not the best climber.

The other challenge is the climbing Alpe du Zwift (unlocked at level 12 – OR riding with a friend or riding an event). At the top (provided you're not holding a Power-Up) you get the wheel of fortune which offers you gloves, a helmet or Mellenstein Lightweight wheels (the best climbing wheels in the game) or bonus XP points.

Courses, Free rides, Workouts, Group Rides & Races.

What you do on Zwift divides into 4 types of ride:

Free Ride - Choose your world from a choice of 3 – Watopia or one of the “real life” guest worlds (and these really do accurately reflect the hills and undulations of the real life rides) <https://zwiftinsider.com/schedule/> and then choose your route – neatly sorted by distance or elevation gain – you can find out about routes on zwiftpower.com/routes or zwiftinsider.com/routes. You'll see others on the same piece of road, and work with them and draft (so long as you're not on a Time Trial bike)

Workout - At any time of your choosing on any course. Click on Training under Ride Type and you'll have a menu of individual workout sessions or multiple training plans to follow.

Group Rides - With a leader who'll be communicating what you should be doing; these are less likely to be flat out and good for social endurance.

Races - In two sub categories you have draft legal races where the start is furious and you want to get in a group or a Time Trial which is point to point and you cycle on your own, no drafting, usually on a Time Trial bike. All events are listed out on zwiftpower.com/events or in the companion app, with course details. With the draft legal races, regardless of the distance 15 or 150km and race category, these will ALWAYS go off at 100mph before settling down, so make sure you're warmed up ready for the start.

FTP and Race Categories

For most races, you will be divided into race categories based on likely ability (not age).

<https://zwift.com/news/12012-zwift-how-to-choose-your-cycling-race-category>

And these are based on your power to weight ratio (w/kg). Take your FTP (how much power you can sustain over an hour. Zwift takes an approximation of taking 95% of your best 20 minute effort) and divide by your weight in kgs. Zwiftpower will track your best 20 minute efforts and give you a classification based on your best 3 efforts over a 90 day period.

There are several tests for finding your FTP – my preferred option to start is a ramp test – few are good at getting 20 minute effort pacing spot on.

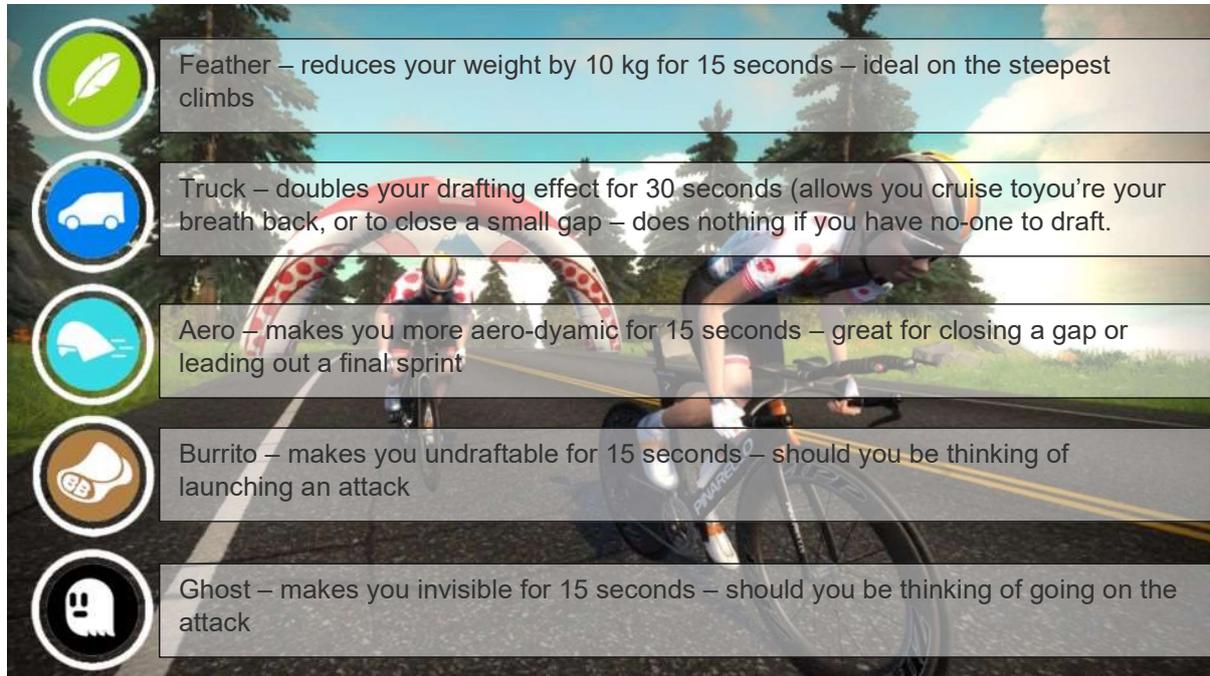
<https://zwift.com/news/4100-zwift-how-to-understanding-finding-your-ftp>

Broadly As are >4.0 w/kg, Bs 3.2 to 4, Cs 2.4 to 3.2 and Ds <2.4. These should lead to more competitive racing.

When choosing your races, it's worth not just considering the length and profile, but also how many others are in the race and whether “other categories are visible” – doing a race by yourself is decidedly less fun.

Also when you are racing, you'll invariably find someone who shouldn't have been in your race category, turning out unbelievable power or is unfeasibly light. Try not to worry about it – they're only cheating themselves, and you're only on Zwift to improve yourself.

Power-ups



Remember Zwift is a game. Power-ups are extra boosts you get whenever you cross a banner (start/finish point). In multi-lap crit races, you get one at the end of each lap, so use them! They make you lighter, faster, help you draft or allow you to attack.

<https://zwiftinsider.com/powerups/>

In Game Kit (and the Garage)

Before each ride, you may consider which bike and wheels you should be on – if you're riding the jungle, you want a mountain bike; climbing a mountain you want your lightest Road Bike frame or for a Time Trial, well, a Time Trial Bike.

Others may be more concerned about the appearance of their avatar and kit. Co-ordinating jerseys is quite useful for identifying other team members in a race/group ride.

Some jerseys are unlocked by progressing through levels, achievements, taking part in events, others can be "unlocked" at any time.

<https://zwiftinsider.com/kits/>

Thames Turbo on Zwift

Thames Turbo have a team page on ZwiftPower so you can see who else is in the group, how you stack up and see our latest results. <https://www.zwiftpower.com/team.php?id=2455>

On Monday's we have group rides/workouts together. To be invited, you need to be following Alan Lightfoot in companion. Instructions on how to join a meet-up can be found here :

<https://thamesturbo.co.uk/zwift-meet-up-with-workout-session-video-instructions>

TTTC has its own channel on Discord, allowing people to talk to the group during activities or send texts. Please ask for an invite link. <https://thamesturbo.co.uk/using-discord-on-zwift>

We have a Zwift WhatsApp group, for general queries, chat and discussions on group activities. Again, please ask to be added.

Finally a group named WTRL run two team competitions which run every Tuesday and Thursday evening. The Thursday is always a team time trial, with up to 8 entrants, where the time is taken from the 4th rider. The Tuesday alternates a normal race and a team time trial.

<https://wtrl.racing/zrl/Zwift-Racing-League.php>

Enjoy. And remember Zwift is only a game.