

Group Ride Etiquette and 14 Useful Group Riding Etiquette Tips.

Group Rides

Group Rides are a key part of why cyclists join the Club, the way we organise, manage and conduct ourselves on club promotes the camaraderie and enjoyment of all participants, and is a key element in maintaining our club's ethos of being friendly and sociable. We all share a view that while people like to be challenged when cycling, it is important that our rides stay within our coffee class of the ride in terms of distance, speed and difficulty and that individuals are not unduly pushed beyond their riding ability.

Club rides are led by experienced and trained ride leaders. They will provide route guidance and make sure the ride is conducted as advertised. They are not there to assist in fixing mechanicals, but will of course offer advice if required. The ride leader will plan the route, and advertise it in advance, usually on Spond and also on FaceBook. Every member is responsible for their own safety, and the roadworthiness of their bicycle.

Group rides are fun and friendly! It's great meeting at the clocktower for the Sunday morning club rides. Sometimes, it's a road ride; other times, it may be a gravel or mixed surface ride. Remember, some new riders might be at the group ride. If you're new to group riding or want to make the new folks feel more welcome, it's important to remember good group ride etiquette.

Ride Leaders

The Ride Leaders instructions should always be followed. The leader will always be a club member, and they will endeavour to ensure that the ride is well-organised conducted safely. All cyclists on the should assist the ride leader in their duty.

14 Useful Group Riding Tips.

Point out hazards

Flat tires are rubbish for everyone, especially when you're in a group that stops to wait for the affected rider. Minimise flats by physically pointing to holes, glass, and random car parts. This hand signal needs to travel back, so pass it on so the people behind you get the message. Different groups

have different habits but try to reserve audible warnings for really dangerous situations.

Be proactive about safety and pacing

Nobody likes being barked at constantly, and certainly not during a nice group ride. But there are sometimes when it's good to speak up. The riders at the back should let the group know when they need to move to single file to better share the road with cars or when a particularly large vehicle (like a bin lorry) is coming. Calling 'car-back' or 'car-front' alerts the group to approaching vehicles. If you are at the back, please don't call drivers through. You don't know what hazards one of the group ahead may be about to navigate, or the proficiency of the driver. Leave it to the car driver to decide, and call out 'passing' when they do.

The riders in about the third row of a double paceline are in a good position to call for an adjustment to the pace. At this point in the group, you can tell if the riders around you struggle with the speed or the wind direction. Riders in the first and second rows can sometimes misjudge their pace and position relative to the rest of the group.

It's everybody's responsibility to watch out for potential bicycle-car collisions. If you see something, say something!

Stay off the brakes.

You'll need to make minor speed adjustments in a group ride, and if you can, to do this with air resistance rather than braking whenever possible. That means sitting up a bit and/or moving out into the wind to slow down, tucking into the draft, and pedalling a bit more to speed up. When you tap the brakes, you slow more abruptly, signalling the rider behind you to tap their brakes, and so on. There are times when you need to and should use the brakes but try to make minor speed adjustments without braking to avoid a jerky riding experience for everyone around you.

Pull longer, not harder.

If you're the fast rider of the group, don't ramp up the speed when you get to the front. It's not nice and makes the pace uncomfortable for your friends. Instead, ride the group's pace and stay at the front longer. You'll get the training you want and give the rest of the group extra time in the draft.

Pull shorter, not slower.

If you don't have the fitness to take a long pull at the group's pace, you should still rotate through like everyone else but pull off quickly. No rule says you have to take a pull equal to the rider before you. The rule is that you need to pull at the group's pace. Don't slow down because then everyone stacks up behind you. For a smoother experience for everyone, keep it short and pull off.

Pace the climbs for the middle of the group

It can be hard to keep the group together when the pack hits rolling hills, especially when Bradley Wiggins drills it on the front. When drafting is less help to the riders in the middle and rear of the group ride, the riders at the front need to consider everyone when establishing the climbing pace.

If you are quicker up the climbs waiting at the top of longer climbs is the way to go. But to try and minimise the frequency of these soft pedal periods or stoppages, try to set a comfortable pace for the middle of the group. This may mean it's easy for the fast riders at the front and challenging for some folks at the back. Still, this pacing strategy is good for keeping the group as close together over most hills.

Learn how to blow your nose.

If it's time to spit or blow your nose, do it when you're at the back of the group. If you have to do it around other people, aim down to the road not out to the side. Put your head down and clear out under your arm, almost as if you're aiming for the end of your handlebar.

Shift as you stand up

When you stand up to pedal, your weight shifts and your cadence almost always slows. This can result in what's known as a 'kickback', where your rear wheel seems to kick backwards toward or into the front wheel of the rider behind you. It freaks people out, but if you end up tapping or overlapping wheels, it can cause a crash. To avoid this, shift up once or twice into a harder gear as you rise from the saddle. With your full bodyweight over the pedal, you can push a bigger gear at a lower cadence and maintain your speed without causing a kickback.

DON'T...

... pull so hard you drop yourself

Most of our group rides are 'non-drop', which is great. However, try not to make them wait for you because you were riding like a world champion. If you take monster pulls at the front and then get dropped, you're not making any friends. Learn to gauge your efforts and keep something in the tank to make sure you can latch onto the back of the group and stay on a wheel.

... show up late and unprepared

We've all been late to a group ride at some point and needed to remember something important (like food) before. It happens, but it shouldn't happen often. Be on time and be self-sufficient. This includes tools, a tube and a pump. You may have tubeless tires and sealant or, if you prefer, CO2 cartridges. When the sealant doesn't seal, and you're out of CO2, a tube and a pump will get you going in minutes. We're all nice

people, and we'll give you a tube or some food if you need it. Just try not to need it!

... half-wheel your friends

The right way to ride in a double paceline is handlebar-to-handlebar, not half a wheel ahead of the rider next to you. Half-wheeling annoys people, especially when you accelerate to maintain the half-wheel advantage despite your partner's attempt to pull even with you. It also messes up the spacing for everyone in the paceline behind you, resulting in overlapped wheels and potential for crashes.

... sprint away from stops

When the light turns green, gradually build the speed back up to where it's supposed to be. Don't be that rider who does a track stand sprint at every traffic light. Depending on the size of the group, the guys at the back will only start moving once you're 50 meters down the road, and then they're going to be maxed out trying to get on a wheel.

... run stop signs and red lights

Just don't do it. Besides being unsafe, against the law, and damaging our club's reputation, it's also disrespectful to all the groups working hard to convince communities to improve cycling infrastructure and enhance cyclists' safety.

... Get The Whole Group in Trouble or in Danger

When you decide to join a group ride, it's like joining the Musketeers: all for one and one for all. The whole group needs to move with one mind for safety and efficiency. This is most important when you are at the front. Can the whole group make it through the green traffic light? Is there enough space in traffic for the whole group to turn right? Though everyone has to be responsible for themselves, try not to make riders at the back decide between a dangerous situation and staying with the group.

At some point on some group ride, a car will pass too closely, or some unhappy person will yell at the group from a car. Escalating these situations can be dangerous, and during a group ride, you are potentially endangering more than just yourself and involving other people in a situation they may not want to deal with. Individual cyclists and groups should defend the right to safely share the road. Just remember that how you do that will reflect on the entire group. Be an adult, even when others are not.

In the long run, most of these habits become second nature, and the longer you ride with the same group of people, the more you will be able to anticipate how the whole group is going to behave and the more

comfortable you'll be riding close together in a nice, tight pack or pace line.

Have fun out there!

Further reading on group riding: [British Cycling website under Top-Tips for Group Riding](#)