

NEWBURY VELO



Ride Leader Guidance



Table of Contents

Welcome

- The role of ride leaders
- Equality in cycling

Before the ride

- Your route
 - Table 1: Newbury Velo Group Ride categories
 - What makes a good route?
 - Route inspiration
- Ride leader kit
 - First aid and kit
 - Leader equipment
- Pre-ride briefing
 - Assessing riders
 - The bike 'M' check
 - Know your riders
 - Risk Assessment

During the ride

- Positioning
- Setting the pace
- Group riding
- Safe stops
- Changing plans
- Responding to emergencies
- Monitoring riders
- Roadside repairs
- Ride etiquette

After the ride



Welcome

This guide is based on British Cycling's best practice training for ride leaders. By sharing this information with our ride leaders our aim is to ensure that we provide safe, enjoyable, and inclusive group rides that are suitable for all club members.

The role of ride leaders

The job of ride leaders is to facilitate a group ride; they are not there to act as cycling coaches or instructors as this could distract from the job of ride leading and compromise the safety of the group and themselves. The scope of the role includes ride planning; delivering a safety briefing; navigating the ride safely and all that these tasks entail. Ride leaders may have to address issues of safety (e.g., riding in a dangerous position on the road) and provide simple guidance to riders (e.g., where to look when riding).

Equality in cycling

We have an opportunity to promote cycling as a friendly, open, and welcoming activity for all. And that starts with leaders in the sport, like you.

We want to encourage people from all walks of life to get on their bikes and being welcomed into a safe and inclusive group ride is just one way we can do this.

As a club we are committed to promoting equitable behaviour across all our activities. That means:

- Treating everyone fairly
- Eliminating discrimination
- Using language, policies and procedures that are free from bias
- Meeting the needs of different individuals, groups, or communities
- Creating conditions that are inclusive to the wide range of people that make up our community
- Being sensitive to safeguarding issues and properly reporting them



Before the ride

Sunday group rides start at The Clocktower, Newbury (what3words location is [///credit.caring.vision](https://www.what3words.com/location/credit.caring.vision)) and leave at 08:30 a.m. sharp unless otherwise stated. If a rider has let you know that they are on their way you may choose to wait a few minutes. As the ride leader it's good practice to turn up 5-10 minutes early.

The maximum group size for road rides is 10, including you. By encouraging riders to sign up for rides ahead of time we should have a good idea of whether any groups are likely to exceed this limit. However, riders can and do turn up without signing up, in which case you'll need a plan B, which is usually to have a backup ride lead and stagger the starts using the same route or reverse it.

Routes typically finish at The Clocktower or the designated café. The Pineapple in Rowan Way is a particularly friendly place for cyclists and whilst other cafes are available, many rides will tend to congregate at this excellent cafe at the end of rides. There is a club discount of 10% there for members.

If bad weather is forecast (ice, heavy rain, strong winds) then the ride leaders will typically assess the risk on Saturday evening and come to a group decision, which could be to call all rides off, allow selective rides to go (e.g., more experienced groups) or reassess on Sunday morning. If in doubt the decision should be safety first.

The Participation Directors will be your base contact for the ride in case of emergencies and you should let them know when you are safely back at base.

Your route

First, your route needs to be legal for cycling. That means sticking to public highways and if you're off-road then you need to exclude footpaths from your route.

Second, you need to consider the time and speed constraints for the specific Newbury Velo group ride that you are leading.

For example, if you're leading a Latte ride, you'll need a route that takes between 2.5 and 3 hours riding at 14-15 mph (about 23 kph). That typically means a route distance of between 35-45 miles (56-72 km). See the table below for a summary of group ride categories, speed, and distance guidelines. Note that these are guidelines. There are some good reasons for varying the distance.

Some reasons to opt for a shorter distance route, include:

- Cold, wet winter weather



- Strong winds
- If your route includes a lot of hills or narrow, winding country lanes
- To allow for mechanicals, rest stops, regrouping
- To provide some variety for different rider strengths. For example, perhaps some riders would opt for a shorter Macchiato but may not feel up to the challenge of a 90km ride.

Table 1: Newbury Velo Group Ride categories

	Mochaccino	Skinny Latte	Latte	Cappuccino	Macchiato	Espresso	Dirty Chai
Speed	12-13 mph ~20 kph	14-15 mph ~23 kph	14-15 mph ~23 kph	15-16 mph ~25 kph	17-18 mph ~28 kph	20+ mph ~30+ kph	Depends on terrain
Time	1.5-2.5 hrs	1.5-2.5 hrs	2.5-3 hrs	2.5-3 hrs	2.5-3 hrs	2.5-3 hrs	Up to 3 hrs
Distance	18-32 mi. 29-52 km	21-37 mi. 34-60 km	35-45 mi. 56-72 km	38-48 mi. 60-77 km	42-54 miles 68-87 km	50-60 mi. 80-95 km	Depends on terrain
Typical max. ascent	500 m	500 m	600 m	800 m	800 m	800m	Depends on terrain
Features	Perfect for beginners and anyone who wants a relaxing social ride. No drop.	Bridging between Mocha and Latte or for those who need an early finish. No drop.	Slightly faster social ride for those who want a little longer in the saddle. No drop.	Faster and longer in the saddle for more experienced cyclists, but still no drop.	Higher pace ride for fitter and stronger riders, typically taking faster roads rather than country lanes. No drop.	Training ride for experienced riders, which may not be run as a 'no drop'. RL will make this clear at the briefing.	Off road sections suitable for mountain or gravel bikes.

What makes a good route?

A good route has:

- Light traffic
- Safe places to stop for a breather and refuelling
- Flowing sections so that the group isn't having to stop/start too much
- Variety to challenge riders; some fast sections, climbs, descents



- Options to shorten the route in case you need to cut the ride. It's a good idea when you plan the route to look for shortcuts in case you have mechanical problems, or a rider is struggling

For less experienced riders you should be wary of:

- Steep climbs and descents – these can be intimidating for less experienced riders and present a risk for those using clipless pedals and who may have too small a granny gear
- Faster roads with heavy traffic

If you're leading a faster group, you may want to include bigger roads to make it easier to keep the pace up. That might mean compromising on traffic levels as these roads are often busier.

You may not tick all these boxes every week, but it's worth looking at your route with these best practice goals in mind.

Ideally you will have recently ridden the route before you lead it; if not, you should at least be familiar with many of the roads on the route.

Route inspiration

It's hard to come up with new routes every week. The good news is that Newbury Velo curates a library of excellent rides on the club website. There are also some excellent route planning apps available, including RideWithGPS, Strava and Komoot, which offer features such as road surface types (to save you accidentally routing a road ride over a bridleway) and heatmaps showing which roads are most popular with cyclists.

Ride leader kit

You should be appropriately equipped to lead a ride.

First aid and kit

Ideally, all ride leaders would be appropriately first-aid trained or have a first-aid trained rider in the group. In some circumstances new ride leaders may take rides without first-aid training. In the case of an emergency, you may be called on to provide first aid even without training. Typically, the ambulance call handler will give you advice over the phone, for example, on how to stop bleeding or administer CPR. There are some excellent first aid apps available, including a 'First Aid for Cyclists' app published by St John Ambulance. Even if you are an experienced first aider it is worth having this app on your smartphone as it offers some excellent advice on how you can treat emergencies even if you don't have a comprehensive first aid kit.



Whether trained or not, leaders should carry appropriate first aid equipment. The kit may vary between different riding environments. Leaders should follow the advice of the club's first aid trainer as recommendations change from time to time.

Leader equipment

Aside from first aid equipment, you should consider carrying:

- Fully charged mobile phone with St John First Aid app and what3words (essential)
- Bike pump
- Tube patches
- Spare tube (for your own bike)
- Multi-tool
- Tyre levers or a tyre seating tool
- An emergency gel

A fear of punctures is one of the most common reasons inexperienced riders avoid going for longer bike rides. Some road bike tyres can be difficult to remove and replace, so it's worth considering taking a tyre seating tool so that you can be confident in helping riders fix their punctures.

Pre-ride briefing

Before you set off you should spend a few minutes assessing and briefing the group.

Assessing riders

Many of the riders who turn out on a Sunday morning are experienced, regular group riders, which in most respects makes the job of leading much easier. New riders have typically been 'pre-screened' by the Participation Director, either by email or phone, to gauge their level of experience and fitness and guide them towards the right group.

However, as ride leader you may be the first person to meet new riders face-to-face. Before you set out you should quickly check that they:

- Have a roadworthy bike. If you're unsure about its roadworthiness, offer to do a quick bike safety or 'M' check (see below).
- Are wearing clothing that's appropriate. If they turn up for a Cappuccino (or faster) ride wearing trainers, or don't have a jacket for an 80 km winter ride, then it might be worth having a quick chat.
- Have a properly fitting helmet in good condition
- Nobody should be using earbuds during the ride



As a ride leader you can refuse to take a rider if you think that they will be unsafe or are not equipped to complete the ride.

The bike 'M' check

The M check is a quick bike safety check (figure 1). It's good practice for all riders to regularly check their bikes before each ride and the M check gives you a framework so that you don't miss anything important. The diagram below shows which parts you need to pay attention to. There are plenty of good videos online that show how to perform an M check.

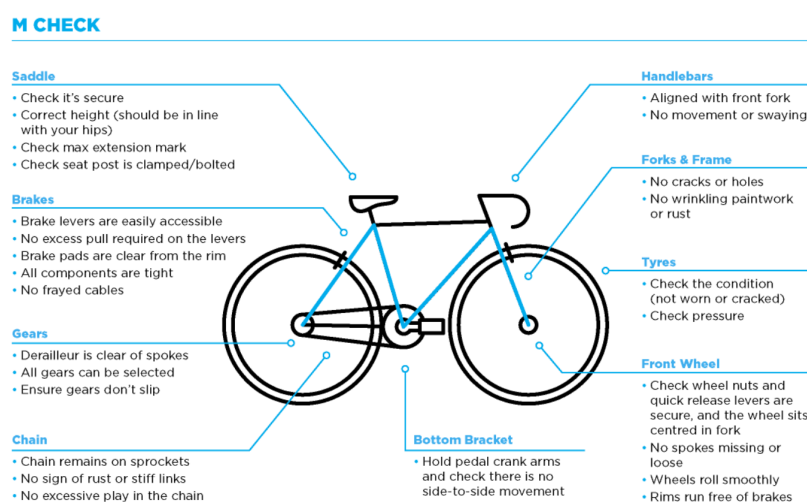


Figure 1: The 'M' check

If you find something wrong with a rider's bike that will affect their safety or ability to complete the ride, it's not your responsibility to fix it. Of course, you may choose to help them fix it if the problem only requires a minor adjustment to sort out but failing that the rider should not join the ride.

Know your riders

To facilitate safe participation, ideally leaders should know about any specific (health, behavioural disability) requirements, medical conditions, or other needs of the riders.

However, it is very difficult to collect this kind of information formally without compromising GDPR/privacy/confidentiality guidelines. Therefore, we will ask riders to volunteer any medical information that they think is relevant to ride leaders at the start or within the first few miles of the ride. As a ride leader and first aider it can be important to know if someone is carrying an EpiPen or asthma inhaler, for example.



In an emergency, you can access health information and the rider's 'In Case of Emergency' (ICE) contact from their mobile phone. On the lock screen there will be an 'Emergency' button when it asks for the passcode. Clicking on this will reveal essential information without having to know the passcode (figure 2).

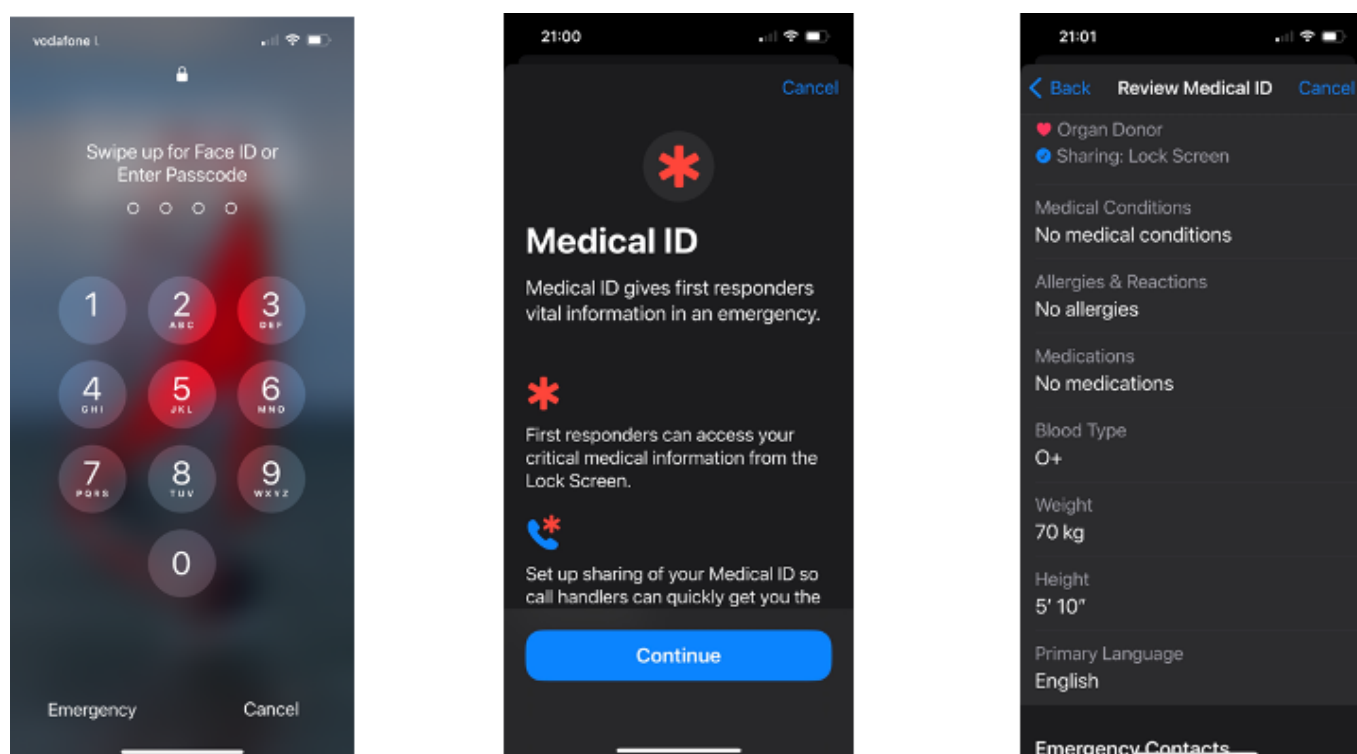


Figure 2: Accessing a rider's medical ID

Talk to participants as they arrive to assess their mood and confidence before the ride commences. Be warm, welcoming and create a relaxed atmosphere to ease any anxiety a participant may have.

When leading riders under 18 years old, each rider should be signed out on the register by a parent in the presence of the leader in line with safeguarding protocol. The principle of *loco parentis* applies. Riders under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout the ride – this should not be the ride leader.

Before you set off



Some riders will have downloaded and studied your route, others will have just rolled out of bed and won't have a clue what's in store. It's nice, therefore, to let the whole group know what to expect. It's good practice to tell everyone:

- Who you are – **introduce yourself!**
- **Which group** you're leading, so that riders know that they're in the right place
- **Route distance** (km and miles)
- Amount of **climbing** on the route (metres and feet)
- Average **speed** that you're targeting (kph and mph)
- That the ride is a **no drop** – and to let you know if they're struggling at any point
- General **direction** that you're heading in and main villages on the route
- Any **hazards** to look out for, e.g., potholes, wet leaves
- Whether anyone will **leave the ride** early, before reaching the café stop

No matter how experienced your group, it's always worth reminding riders of some basic group riding etiquette:

- Everyone should keep to the Highway Code – especially the latest rule changes about giving way to pedestrians, horses etc. While in theory cars should always give way to cycles, it's risky to assume that all drivers know or care about this rule.
- Climbs can quickly separate riders as everyone finds their own pace up hills. Ask the faster climbers to 'soft pedal' at the top or to find a safe place to stop and regroup. If you know the climb you should be able to call out where you'd like the group to stop. You should be leading from near the back on long climbs to ensure that slower riders don't feel under pressure.

Risk Assessment

Much of the information above is aligned with the club's generic risk assessment processes. When planning and leading a route, leaders will assess the risks to participants, which will include (but not be limited to) the following criteria:

- Suitability of the route to participants' experience (eg gradients, road surface)
- Traffic levels
- Weather conditions
- Distance
- Participants' equipment including bike and clothing
- Participants' experience of group riding



During the ride

You've planned it, briefed it, now you can ride it. As ride leader you have some things to look out for during the ride.

Positioning

A good rule of thumb is to lead from the:

- front of the group on descents – so that you can call out any hazards
- back of the group on climbs – so that slower climbers don't feel under pressure
- middle, or float about, on the flat – so that you can easily monitor the whole group

It's also useful to be at or near the front when approaching junctions.

Adopting this positioning lets you assess and call out risks that crop up; call out the turns for those that don't have the ride loaded, look after slower riders, support them on the climbs, and keep a general eye out for everyone.

Setting the pace

It's important that you set the pace and don't let stronger riders hijack the ride, which is one of the challenges of leading experienced riders. When riding on the flat it's easy to control the pace but throw in some ups and downs and things quickly get complicated. Most bike computer head units let you display average moving speed, which is a quick way to ensure you're on track when you have slower climbs, faster descents, headwinds, and tailwinds.

Another (more manual) approach is to work out milestones when you're planning your ride, so that you aim to be at your first distance milestone by 09:30 and the next by 10:30.

Group riding

Once set off, you need to monitor the group formation, considering:

- Riding at the speed that you expect the rest of the ride to be ridden at – ask participants if they are happy with the pace as well as observing – is anyone struggling?
- For the road you're on, should you be riding two abreast or single file?
- Is the group riding together? If not, what adjustments can you make?
- You may need to be assertive, even stop the ride and give some extra briefings to help them ride more effectively. Experience shows that it pays to be assertive in the early stages; the riders will soon settle down once they know what's expected of them.
- Are riders observing good ride etiquette (see below)?
- Is everyone riding safely? Narrow country lanes can be hazardous if riders are two-abreast on a blind bend.



Safe stops

You will have thought about appropriate stopping places when you planned the ride, but you may need additional unscheduled stops. Choose safe places where riders can get off the road out of the way of traffic. If you're going to take a breather at a junction, move everyone off the road. Bonus points for stops that are safe and have a photogenic view.

If you have an enforced stop because of a puncture or mechanical issue, you may need to move to a safer place to fix the bike. Avoid blind bends and busy roads – if necessary, walk for a bit to ensure that the group is not in danger.

Changing plans

You may need to change your ride plan in the case of:

- medical emergencies
- fatigued riders
- mechanical failures
- bad weather
- your chosen route is closed/altered

Part of managing a ride is managing risk and being responsive to the need to change. Ideally, you should consider this during the ride planning process and will have designated route contingencies. As the leader, if an incident occurs then you need to manage it calmly, quickly and with authority, resolving the situation whilst maintaining the safety of the group.

Responding to emergencies

The most likely emergency you will have to respond to on a group bike ride will be because of a crash or medical event. Whatever the cause, if a rider is unconscious, bleeding heavily, has broken something or if you are at all unsure about their immediate safety you will need to call 999 and get an ambulance. You need to give the call handler your exact location, which can be tricky if you are on a rural road in the middle of the countryside.

We strongly recommend that you download and familiarise yourself with the **what3words** /// app. This will give you a three-word code that will pinpoint your location within a 3m x 3m grid, which the emergency services can use. We will encourage all Newbury Velo riders to download **what3words** /// so that group riders can summon help if the ride leader is incapacitated.

If an emergency occurs:

- Don't panic – stay calm and think clearly



- Ensure that the rest of the group is out of harm's way. Your immediate priority is to ensure that you don't compromise anyone's safety
- If the casualty is in the middle of the road and you cannot move them to a safe place, ask other riders to locate themselves appropriately up and down the road so that they can flag down and alert oncoming traffic
- Ensure someone, preferably with first aid training, is attending to the casualty
- Ensure someone calls for an ambulance and gives precise location details
- Access the rider's phone to see if they have any known health issues

For less serious incidents, including accidents that aren't life threatening but incapacitate a rider, you may need to arrange a pickup for rider and bike by phoning their emergency contact, a friend, or failing that, a taxi to get them home.

Monitoring riders

Cycling is fatiguing and as riders become tired, dehydrated, or hungry, they can quickly lose concentration, with the risk that they become unsafe. If you see a rider struggling:

- Ask them if they're okay, and take a break if necessary
- Check they have eaten and had something to drink
- If they've run out of food offer them an energy gel (it's good practice to carry a spare gel)
- Consider shortening the route and/or dropping the pace

Roadside repairs

The most likely 'emergency' you will have to respond to on a group bike ride will be a mechanical failure, most commonly a puncture.

The group safety rule applies equally here; your priority is to ensure you're in a safe place to fix the bike. Move to the pavement or to the verge if you're on a country lane; ideally find a farm gate away from any blind bends.

Riders should turn up with a functional bike suited to the ride.

Note that as a ride leader you are not insured to carry out repairs to other people's bikes. Ideally, each rider should be responsible for repairing their own bike. However, you may be more experienced and choose to help with repairs voluntarily. You should not offer advice or to fix someone's bike if you don't feel confident in what you are doing.

In some cases, a mechanical issue may result in a rider having to be picked up. As a ride leader you should ensure that they have been able to contact someone to rescue them before you set off.



Ride etiquette

It's in the interest of all cyclists to display responsible road and trail etiquette. Remember when you are wearing club kit you are visibly upholding the brand values of the club, as well as the cycling community. In short, be nice. Specifically:

- Give way to pedestrians, horse riders or other road/trail users
- Thank other considerate road users (either on trail or road, such as a driver not rushing to overtake)
- Adhere to the countryside code
- Single out on narrow or busy roads, as per the guidance in the Highway Code
- Don't obstruct the road or trail
- Leave no trace – take your litter away with you

If you encounter poor or aggressive driving, stay calm and avoid using abusive gestures or language. Explain and educate if you engage with the driver.



After the ride

Riders may want to peel off from the group as you approach Newbury if they're not finishing at the designated café. It's good practice to establish who's going straight home and who's going for a coffee so that you don't lose anyone!

There are a just a few things to do at the end of the ride:

- Let everyone know your ride is safely back by posting a quick message on the Messenger group
- If there were any problems on the ride, a near miss or an accident, let the Participation Director know using a personal message or email, providing as much detail as possible
- There are several reasons to report incidents:
 - We can learn from them to improve safety – for example, if we identify recurring incidents or hazardous road sections, we may take action to avoid them in future
 - A detailed record of an incident will be vital in the (unlikely) case of legal action
 - We may need to inform British Cycling for insurance purposes
 - We may need to report serious incidents to the Health and Safety Executive

Now the fun bit... spending a few minutes celebrating the ride on the Newbury Velo Facebook Group is a great way to encourage more people to join a future group ride – so make sure you take a few snaps and videos on the ride!

Finally, think about how you managed the ride. Were there things you would do differently next time? Did you try something that worked well? What about the route – too short, too long, sections you would avoid next time? A few minutes spent reflecting on your ride leadership will help you improve your skills.



Thank you for being a Newbury Velo ride leader. We hope you get as much out of it as the participants do. We couldn't function as a club without people, like you, who give something back.

