

Group Ride Tips

For all group rides, our biggest concern is that the rides are safe.

The information listed here is basic information, which we all need to keep in mind.

HELMETS ARE MANDATORY — NO EXCEPTIONS!

Come Ready to Ride

This means your bike is in good working condition, which includes the following:

- Tires are appropriately inflated
- Bar tape is in good condition and not unravelling
- Chain is in good condition (no rust)
- Gears are working properly
- Wheels are straight and true (no broken spokes)

If you cannot ride safely and within your limits for the group you have chosen, please make the safe choice for everyone involved and continue on individually, or sit up and wait for the next group to come along if there is another one following the same route. **If you don't know the route, it's always a good idea to have it downloaded to your GPS unit or have a cue sheet printed out.**

Aerobars are allowed on group rides BUT:

Only use the “aero” position when you're off the front (i.e. no one else is in front of you) or when you're WAY behind the group (i.e. by yourself). Do not ever use the “aero” position when in the pack (i.e. Don't be the guy 5th in line tucked down low and tight on your “aero” bars)!!! We have seen it dozens of times where “that guy” is trying to roll in the pace line while being all “aero”, and we have seen it lots of times where “that guy” is either way sketchy or in some cases that guy hits the deck. Don't be “that guy”! Seriously, stay off the “aero” bars and kindly keep your hands on the handlebars where the brakes are. You should have maximum control for everyone's safety (including your own).

Also a quick point. Being in the draft in 5th or 10th position in the paceline going into your aero position isn't going to gain you much speed since you are already out of the majority of the wind by virtue of being in the draft. The only thing the aero position will do here is to make you a lot less stable and a lot more sketchy.

Fixed Gear Bikes are allowed BUT:

Fixed gear bikes need to have at least one functional brake if your intention is to ride in the pack and participate in pacelines. Now with that said, unless you are very adept at fixed gear riding and have pack riding experience, we would much rather have you show up on a regular road machine and save the fixed gear for a nice solo ride.

Point obstructions out in the road:

Keep an eye out for the other riders, traffic, snakes, sticks and other objects that could cause issues.

Ride 2X2:

As much as possible ride 2X2 (provided there is room).

Ride to suit the conditions:

Be mindful that what is considered safe and acceptable when riding solo might not be safe or acceptable when riding in a group. Also please be mindful of the riding conditions (weather, traffic, and other cyclists) so as to keep the group safe. Example: If rolling through heavy auto traffic, it's probably best not to sprint for a traffic light.

Feedback:

Be open and respectful to feedback from other group members. Be a good rider and take the advice. The advice comes from a good place... we want you and everyone else to be safe, and to learn from collective experience.

Ride in a predictable fashion:

Close riding demands that everyone be on the same wavelength. NO QUICK CHANGES OF DIRECTION; KEEP TO YOUR LINE. Maintain a consistent direction of motion and avoid weaving. We are on a group ride, not a race. Keep your actual focus 20 or 30 feet in front of the bike. Remember, the bike will go where your eyes go. Keep your head up. Don't become fixated on the rider in front of you. Regularly glance 3 to 5 riders ahead. Take care when looking back as you should expect bike movement.

Pace Line:

In a pace line or riding 2x2, don't accelerate when it's your turn at the front. Note your mph (if possible) and maintain the group's speed when the lead rider pulls off. After your own bout against the wind, pull off to the side agreed upon and stay close to the others as you soft pedal and slide back to the rear of the paceline. It keeps everyone as far out of the traffic flow as possible, making paceline riding safe even on busier roads.

Pace Line (part II):

As the current leader pulls off, his or her speed must remain the same before slowing to ensure the new leader an opportunity to safely take the lead of the pack. Once the retiring leader is safely over (typically to the left), he or she slows to efficiently return to the back of the pace line. As the retiring leader nears the back of the pace line, it is very useful for the end rider of the pace line to tell the retiring leader that they are approaching the end of the line. Once the retiring leader gets near the end of the pace line, it is useful to get out of the saddle and bring the speed back up to the pace line speed. This out of the saddle approach serves two purposes. First, it helps the retiring leader speed up and, second, it provides an opportunity to stretch their leg muscles.

Pace Line (part III):

Pulling through—The new leader must maintain the same speed without sprinting, speeding up or slowing down during the first few seconds of the transition. If the new leader wants to increase the speed, then the best results are achieved with a slow increase in order to keep the pace line smooth and efficient.

Signal to others:

Signal to others. Provide hand signals and/or yell to signal gravel, debris, other riders, cars, pedestrians, turns, and pace line rotations. Warn others of your intentions. If you need to stop or pull over indicate or shout your intentions and do it slowly. Move to the left or right and yell “slowing” or “stopping” before you brake.

Protect your front wheel:

If your rear wheel is struck, a fall is unlikely because it has nothing to do with steering the bike. However, if your front wheel is contacted, it will often be twisted off line faster than you can react. You’ll almost certainly go down. Help prevent this by never overlapping someone’s rear wheel.

Use the brakes sparingly:

Feather the levers lightly instead of clutching at them. Easy on your brakes. Most crashes are caused by someone braking sharply and the rider behind touching wheels with them. If you are getting too close to the rider immediately in front of you, try soft pedaling instead of braking to adjust the gap. If you need to brake, do it gently and gently tap on the rear brake.

If you get gapped:

Try to maintain steady speed. No surging. Don’t open gaps. Don’t make things worse by accelerating too hard, overrunning the wheel in front, then grabbing the brakes. Instead, ease back up to the rider in front. If you don’t become proficient at following a wheel, you can waste more energy than you save by constant yo-yoing.

Passing:

Always pass on the left. Don't pass on the right unless you know there is room and the rider in front absolutely knows you are coming.

Consideration:

We plan to stop for mechanical issues. Our goal is usually to NOT LEAVE ANYONE BEHIND! Also, be considerate of the riders behind you. If you must spit or blow your nose move out of the pace line enough so no one is directly behind you.

Be Wary on Climbs (especially at the foot of a climb):

A major cause of group crashes is riders who stand abruptly. They slow for a second, causing the rider behind to hit their rear wheel and spill. To avoid this danger, let the gap open a bit on hills or ride a foot to either side.