

## **Basic Guidelines for Group Rides**

When first riding in a group you may be slightly unsure as to what is going on; where you should be riding in the formation or who is in charge etc. There are a few rules to riding in a group safely and effectively. There's also some basic etiquette you need to know, just so you don't upset anyone. So here we explain all you need to know about group riding.

### **Why ride in a group?**

For several reasons; social, safety, sporting and fitness. If you are new to the sport or the area, if you ride in a group you shouldn't get lost. You'll learn road skills and be able to chat to more experienced riders; generally speaking it is the best place to learn about how to get into the cycling part of triathlon.

### **Find a ride suitable for your level**

Please remember that the more people that turn up on the day, the more likely it is that there will be a group that fits your needs. You are quite welcome to use the e-group to let people know you are going and what sort of session you are looking for – hopefully you will get a positive response.

The club currently has two rides on a Sunday, setting off at 8.30 and 9.30.

08:30

Meet at Elmers End (the triangle green)

35+ miles; 2.5 – 3 hours – Average speed 16-18 mph

09:30

Meet at Elmers End (the triangle green)

25+ miles; 2 – 2.5 hours – Average speed 14-16 mph

If it is your first time riding with the club, make yourself known to one of the people organising the ride so that you can be looked after. Each group will aim to go at the pace of the slowest rider. If in doubt when selecting your group, please select the slower, shorter ride.

### **Be prepared**

Wear plenty of warm clothes and carry the following with you: a rain jacket, a pump, essential tools, spare tubes, food for three to four hours and don't forget to take more water/energy drink than you think you'll need (most people carry at least 2 x 500ml and some 2 x 750 ml even in the winter). A mobile phone is a must and it's worth taking the numbers of other people on the ride in case of emergency. Also consider taking some ID, plus money for a tea stop or train fare home. You shouldn't need a map, but take one if you need some added reassurance, or if you are unfamiliar with the main routes that we cover.

Make sure that your tyre pressures are correct as you can waste a lot of energy and effort fighting a low tyre. If you are unsure go to your nearest bicycle shop and get them to check but as a rule of thumb modern road bike wheels and tyres will run happily and

efficiently at 100psi or if you squeeze the tyre you should get very little or no top to bottom movement.

Always bring a sense of humour. Things rarely go to plan, but that is one of the joys of these ride outs.

**WEARING A HELMET IS COMPULSARY ON CPT RIDES.**

You may not want to wear one but there will always be people around you who are uneasy and nervous about riding with someone that would want to take this unnecessary risk. It is their ride too.

### **Ride single file in town**

Contrary to the belief of some road users, riding double file is legal but experience suggests it's not practical until we get a little further out.

### **Stay close**

The benefits of riding in a group are more than just social. You will cover more ground with less effort in a group, saving around 20% of your energy when sitting in the bunch. So stay close to the rider in front to maximise the slipstream and allow riders around you to also use it to best effect. If you are nervous about hitting the wheel in front, ride 6 inches either side of it and don't stare at the tyre, try to look up, this way you will relax more and see any problems before they arise.

However, if there are more than 4 of you, be prepared to leave a gap or two so that any traffic can safely leap frog past – there is nothing worse than being at the back with impatient cars behind you for what seems like an eternity!

### **Don't switch suddenly**

Hold your line and keep a steady cadence, this is for the rider who may be riding behind and needs to be close and confident that you won't move suddenly or wobble. The riders in front should not stop suddenly without warning, but always be prepared for any sudden moves.

### **Relax**

Try to relax your upper body as much as possible. This will help prevent fatigue and also prevent you from making sudden changes in direction. Bend the arms a little and keep your head up.

### **Riding off the front**

Depending on the type of group you are riding in, the main principle of group riding is to ride together. So attacking off the front is not a good idea as it will often upset the discipline and pace of the group. Sometimes there will be a long hill or section where there will be some hard riding allowed. Often there may be a sprint for a town sign, but remember to be sensible. This isn't a race and there are riders in the group who may be dropped or start to suffer if you want to do your level 4 effort 30 miles from home.

### **Tell someone if you have a problem**

You may be feeling a bit shy about it but tell the riders around you if you have a puncture, mechanical problem, or just aren't feeling too good. Don't drift to the back and

off it without telling anyone. It is normal practice for the faster riders to wait if a slower rider is dropped, for example, on a hill.

### **Punctures**

The group may ride on and then retrace so they keep warm whilst you fix your flat. If you are a slow mechanic ask for help. There will be experienced riders who can fix a flat in quick time, so don't feel afraid to ask if it will save the group time. However, everyone attending club rides should be able to fix a puncture without assistance, in case they get separated.

### **Send the message to the front**

If you are riding at the back and a rider is dropped for whatever reason, tell the riders in front of you and ask them to shout up to the front. The pace can then be adjusted to suit the problem or the group can stop. Once riders have been left behind, finding them and regrouping can be a pain.

### **Other general shouted instructions:**

*'Car down' or 'Car up'* A general warning of a car trying to pass or one coming around a corner. A car coming towards you is usually *'Car down'* and a car approaching from the rear which might try to overtake the group is usually *'Car up'*.

*'Easy'* If this is shouted it usually means there is a bad junction or potential hazard ahead and to pay attention yourself, it's often very easy to rely on the ride leaders to warn you of pending problems in the road. This is especially important if you are in a large group and it will take a while to get around the hazard.

*'On your left'* means that there is an obstacle on the left and the group will move to the right to avoid it e.g. a single parked car, walkers or obstacles

*'Single out' or 'Single'* When a car is behind and needs extra space to overtake, or if the group is approaching a narrow road or overtaking a line of parked cars.

*'Stopping'* The group is stopping – usually for traffic lights or busy junction.

### **General hand signals**

*Hand up in the air* Usually signifies that the rider signalling is stopping (e.g. for a puncture) or there is a hazard in the road that the whole group may have to stop for.

*Pointing out holes in the road* This is essential. You must point out drain covers, holes, dead badgers, glass or anything else which may cause harm to a cyclist. Basically if you have to go around it tell the rider behind about it before they hit it.

*Indication directions to riders behind* Whether it is slowing down or turning at junctions, large groups need everyone to indicate for other road users, so let them know what you intend to do.

*Waving for parked cars, horses and pedestrians* When overtaking riders will sometimes wave a hand behind them. This signifies there is a hazard that means the group will have to move out. They will do this by waving in the direction you will need to move. Remember you are expected to do the same so the rider behind you has seen the obstacle.