

Group Riding Techniques and Etiquette

Guidelines for riding with a group

- **Be Smooth and Predictable**
 - No sudden accelerations or slowdowns!
 - If a gap opens in front of you, try to close it gradually
 - Sharp braking should be used ONLY in emergencies
 - Do not move out to pass the rider in front of you without checking to be sure that you don't have another rider in your 'blind spot' (coming up behind you on the left)
 - Riders should verbally communicate upcoming stop signs: "SLOWING", "STOPPING"
 - If you're getting too close to the rider ahead:
 - Shift into an easier gear
 - Soft pedal
 - Sit up higher to catch more of the wind
 - Move over slightly to catch more of the wind (but don't overlap your front wheel with the next rider's back wheel, and again, watch out to be sure there is not a rider coming from behind who you would be cutting off)
 - Try not to coast – when the riders behind you see you coasting, they will slow down too and cause an accordion effect
 - If all of the above do not slow you down enough, feather your brakes
 - It's better to roll over minor obstacles like small holes or sticks than to make a sudden move over or slam on your brakes.
- **Communicate**
 - Hand signals and verbal signals
 - Right turn, left turn
 - Slowing, stopping
 - Pointing at obstacles and calling them out (you need to point before going by the obstacle or you are not giving the rider behind you enough warning)
 - Car back
 - Move over for obstacles ahead (example, "Walker up")
- **Be considerate of other riders in the group.** If the entire group doesn't make it through a stoplight before it turns red, slow down to wait up for those who didn't make it through. This will also encourage lawful behavior, in that riders won't feel so pressured to run a red light if they know the group is going to wait up for them.
- **Let other riders know when you are passing them.** Avoid passing on the right. Avoid riding with 'overlapping wheels'.
- **Watch out for squirrely riders in the group and increase your following distance.** Conversely, learn who is a "steady wheel" and try to position yourself behind those riders.

- **Don't use aerobars when in a group.** You need to have good control of your bike and have your brakes within close reach.
- **Hills:**
 - The front person should pedal on downhills, or else everyone behind will be catching up to them too fast.
 - The group may need to slow down after uphill to allow slower riders to catch up.
 - Be careful when standing to climb when riding in a group – this can jerk your wheel back into the rider behind you (good to give a verbal signal – “Standing”)

Skills Practice

- Riding in a straight line.
- Drinking while riding in a straight line.
- Checking behind for traffic while riding in a straight line.
- Riding with different hand positions (on top of handlebars, on brake hoods, in the drops) and being able to change hand positions.
- Drafting – practice riding with your front wheel 1-3 feet behind the rider in front of you.
- Riding side by side – practice riding side by side with one other rider as close as you can. Try touching shoulders or elbows if you are comfortable with that.

Safe and efficient cornering technique

- Lean into the turn
- Outside foot down
- Do not start pedaling when you are in the leaned over position (you might hit the pavement with your inside pedal)
- Hold your line going through the turn; there may be other riders to your right or left who you don't want to cut off
- Be more cautious if conditions are wet or there is gravel in the corner

Safe braking techniques

- Figure out which brake handle controls which brake (usually Right = Rear, but not always)
- Never use just the front brake
- In an emergency stop, apply more pressure on the rear brake and shift your weight toward the back of the bike to keep from going over the handlebars

Traffic Laws Pertaining to Bicyclists

Bicyclists in are subject to the traffic laws applicable to the driver of a motor vehicle and are required to obey the following traffic laws:

- Ride on the right hand side of the road with the flow of traffic
- Obey all traffic signs and signals
- No bicycles are allowed on freeways

There are several special laws pertaining to bicyclists and their equipment:

- No hitching rides on moving vehicles
- Form a single line in heavy traffic
- At least one hand is on handlebars at all times
- Bicycles operated at night must be equipped with a lamp on front that produces a white beam of light visible at least 500 feet away. Also, the bike must have a red rear deflector
- Adequate brakes are required

Safety Statistics

Experienced bicyclists have an accident rate only 20 percent that of casual bicyclists. Bicyclists can prevent most accidents by knowing how to control their bicycles and by riding according to the established rules of the road. Ride to be visible and predictable. Give other drivers time to notice you and react to you.

Common Accidents

50% are falls
20% are collisions with cars
18% are collisions with other bicyclists
8% are collisions with dogs

Other frequent causes are . . .

Bicyclists turning out from the curb lane without looking back
Motorists turning right or left into the path of the bicyclist
Bicyclists or motorists failing to yield when crossing a stream of traffic

Bicycle-Motor Vehicle Accidents

Although only 20 percent of bicycle accidents involve motor vehicles, these are often the most serious. More than half of these occur at intersections. Of all car-bike collisions,

more than 25 percent involve a bicyclist riding the wrong way, a very dangerous behavior.

Helmets

Head injuries account for 75% of all deaths and permanent disabilities in bicycle accidents.

In Case of an Accident

Call the police IMMEDIATELY

Do not move any vehicle until the police arrive

Do not attempt to move any injured persons

Obtain the following information from all parties: Name and address of all involved vehicle operators

License plate and registration numbers

Name and address of all involved insurance companies

Name and address of all witnesses

Request a thorough police investigation

Ask for a copy of the accident report

Equipment checklist

Drive Chain Clean chain & gears

Tightness of chain

Derailleur adjustment

Brakes Alignment with rim

Tightness of cable

Cable condition

Pad alignment

Wheels Tire inflation

Tire condition

Wheel trueness

Grease in hubs

Cone adjustment

Clean rims