



Riding Safely

A few basic rules all riders should follow:

Derived from the Central Bucks Bicycle Club

Must Haves

Helmet

Water Bottles

Spare tube and pump or CO2 cartridge(s)

Copy of your insurance card and identification

Signals

Signals help the people in a pack to avoid potholes and road rash. They generally can't see issues until it's too late. A point with your hand is generally enough to warn the other riders. Call out if it is something particularly nasty. Something short and understandable (like "hole") is best. Other standard "calls" in the club:

"Slowing" – Signifies intent to slow gradually (NEVER STOP SUDDENLY)

"Stopping" – Signifies intent to stop soon (not suddenly); preceded by "Slowing"

"Tracks" - Railroad tracks

"Glass" - Broken glass in the path

"Hole right/left/center" – Hole or poor riding surface

"Gravel" – Gravel ahead. May include left/right/ahead, etc.

"Stick" – see also "Debris"

"Car right/left" - A car is coming from that direction

"Car back/up" - A car is coming from the rear (or front)

"Passing" – Vehicle is passing or about to pass the group

"On your left/right" - I am close at your side or intend to pass on your right (or left)

"Debris" – Branches, rocks, droppings, etc. are strewn on the road ahead

"Water" – Puddle or other form of water; warns riders of 'spritz'

"Horse/Deer/Squirrel" – An unpredictable animal spotted; preceded by "Slowing"

"Rider-Up" – Another cyclist is ahead of the group. Move left to avoid

"Walker/Jogger Up" – A person is approaching and moving opposite the traffic. Move left

"Soft Pedal" – Suggest group slow, usually to allow other riders to catch up

"Regroup"

A slap your own rump with your right hand and point left behind your back indicates to move left as there is something on the side of the road ahead. A hand extended to the side, fingers curled slightly and wiggle your hand – same as "gravel" or "debris"

Intersections

Always obey traffic laws.

Do NOT call out "clear" to indicate that an intersection is free of cross traffic. Let the other riders check for themselves.

Be mindful of how long it takes the entire group to get through an intersection and let that inform your decision about going through if you are in front. Given that, sometimes the whole pack can't make it through an intersection. The cyclists that make it through in the first wave should try to slow up a bit to let the second wave catch up before picking up the pace. Don't take unnecessary chances to avoid getting dropped.

If you are the last one through call, "all through" when you've crossed so those ahead know they can begin picking up the pace.

The above is way better than having to ask, "All here?" which is effectively passing the responsibility to someone else to determine if everyone is there.

The group should wait for you.

Stay to the right

Stay to the right of the road unless you are riding double or are passing. This will allow others to pass on your left without going into the lane of oncoming traffic. This is particularly important on the hills where the pack breaks up. Stay out of the lane of oncoming traffic. Cars travel fast and can appear suddenly. Try not to pass on the right. If you must, give an "on your right" signal.

The opposite of breaking up on hills is clustering on hills. This happens when a few riders slow down more than those behind but do not leave room for passing. This leaves those behind with little room to maneuver and can become difficult as cadence decreases and wheels overlap. Again, leave room to pass to the left, especially on hills.

Dealing with cars

Share the road - We have an obligation to ride in a manner that keeps conflicts to a minimum. The vast majority of the drivers are considerate of bikers. Ride in a manner that you would like to see when you overtake a group of bikers.

Communication - Avoid shouting at motorists or using nonstandard hand signals.

Riding double - Riding two abreast is okay only when the traffic is light and can be seen well in advance. But be prepared to single up quickly to allow any traffic to pass. The rider on the left should drop behind the rider on the right. The line of riders on the right will have to spread out to allow room for the riders moving in. This means the riders in the front must speed up and the riders in the rear slow up.

Stay in your lane - Stay out of the lane of the oncoming traffic at all times. Cars approach too fast for safety and drivers do not expect a rider in their lane. Avoid riding three abreast for this reason. It places the rider on the left too close to the oncoming traffic.

Stay out of the right hand turn lane when you are at an intersection waiting for the traffic to clear. This allows traffic to turn right while the pack is waiting for an opening.

Signal turns - Riders should always signal turns. Let the traffic know what to expect. Signal like you mean it. Some rider's signals are so anemic that they could go unnoticed. All riders in a pack should signal. One or two people in a pack of twenty or so is not very convincing to drivers. It can lead to confusion.

Left turns - Left turns are one of the more dangerous maneuvers for a bike in traffic and should be done with care, following the rules of the road. Remember, the car behind is anxious to get around and may be tempted to pass. Begin the turn well in advance. Signal the turn and when the traffic behind is clear, move to the left hand side of the lane. Do not pull in front of a car expecting it to slow down for you. If the driver happens to be fiddling with his radio, you will be another customer for the local ambulance company. Stay left of your lane to the intersection and turn left when the oncoming traffic is clear. Before turning, glance over your left shoulder - a car may decide to pass you on the left as you turn.

Passing cars - Think twice any time you are tempted to pass a moving car, whether on the left or right. If a car is going slow enough to pass, is probably going to do something other than go straight. It may turn into you as you pass. Be sure that you know what it will do before you pass.

Riding to the front of a line of cars at a stop light and or stop sign should be avoided. Ever notice how many people don't bother to signal? Cars can turn into you just as you start to pass. Another thing about passing cars at an intersection; those cars probably just passed you. Now they will have to pass you again you once you are through the intersection. A cyclist at the front can also slow up cars going through the intersection when the light turns green. Their patience may wear a bit thin in heavy traffic.

Stopping - Every once in a while, the pack needs to pull over while someone adjusts a brake or visits nature. Move to the side of the road and out of the lane of traffic. There is no excuse for causing congestion when we are not even riding. This seems obvious, but a surprising number of people camp out in the lane of traffic when the pack comes to a stop.

Regrouping

Listen for the leader to announce in advance where regrouping will occur. This is typically after a significant climb or decent. When regrouping, find a driveway or wide shoulder to pull over, out of the way of traffic. It is often helpful to move across an intersection and regroup on the other side, letting riders come across a few at a time rather than grouping up and then crossing.

Pedestrians

Don't surprise pedestrians. When overtaking them (or other cyclists) call out "on your left/right" well in advance. Be as polite as possible so that you don't sound like you are forcing them off the road. Let them know where you intend to go and then be ready for them to jump in front of you; sometimes they will!

Animals

Animals of any kind are unpredictable. If you see one, assume they will jump in front of you, so slow down. Call out "Slowing" and then "Horse/Deer/Squirrel", etc. Never approach a horse unless the rider acknowledges you can and make sure the animal knows you are present by speaking to the rider. Slow or stop as needed.



Ride Rules - Safety Tips - Motorist Tips

Derived from the White Clay Creek Bike Club

RIDE RULES

- The wearing of a helmet (ANSI and/or Snell approved) is required on all club rides.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early and be prepared to leave at the time stated.
- Make sure your bike is in proper working order before you arrive. Carry a spare tube, patch kit, pump, water bottle, and I.D. (emergency information). Sign the ride sheet and list an emergency phone number.
- Ride in a safe manner and obey all traffic laws, single/double file as appropriate to the roadway/traffic conditions.
- Each rider assumes his/her own risk on all rides. Those who ride ahead are on their own.
- Always notify the Ride Leader when leaving the group.

BIKE SAFETY

Riding a bicycle has the potential for serious personal injury. Please ride safely, responsibly and courteously. What you do has a direct impact on you, as well as other riders and the club. All responsibility lies solely with the individual rider and not with fellow riders, the leader, the club, or any of its officers or members. Ride leaders will not assume responsibility for minors. **WEARING AN APPROVED HELMET IS REQUIRED!**

- Obey all traffic signs & signals.
- *** Ride in a straight line (hold your line), unless road conditions dictate otherwise.
- Use the correct lane at intersections.
- Don't block cars that want to turn right.
- Ride with traffic.
- Use hand signals at all turns.
- Leave gaps between bikes for cars.
- Don't swerve between parked cars.
- Move off the road when stopped.
- Ride in a single file when cars are nearby.
- Keep a safe distance between other riders.
- *** Don't overlap the wheel of the bike in front of you.
- Check behind you before changing lanes
- It is recommended that you use a rear view mirror (3rd eye).
- Help others to ride safely by announcing: When you are passing, Road hazards, When cars are approaching, When you will be changing lanes.
- Keep focused on your riding!
- Any Questions? Ask the ride leader!

HELP KEEP DRIVERS FRIENDLY

Car back - ride single file or double file as appropriate to the roadway and traffic conditions. When indicated that a car is trying to pass, you are to ride single file and let the cars safely pass.

Avoid busy roads - if you ride on a busy highway, the chances are you will ruffle the delicate feathers of already edgy commuters. Examine a detailed map of your area and you'll probably be surprised at the many quiet roads available nearby. Be careful about provocative actions - when stopped at a red light, do not irritate a driver by leaning against their car or by riding in circles in front of them.

Return the favor - cyclists come to appreciate little unexpected courtesies from motorists. We all nod or say thanks to the driver who has the right-of-way but waves us through anyway. Try returning the favor. An example would be to motion a driver to make his turn in front of you if you'll be slow getting underway. Who knows? That driver might look a bit more favorably on the next cyclist down the road.



How to Ride in a Paceline

Derived from Fred Matheny of www.RoadBikeRider.com

Solo rides are a great part of the cycling experience. Nothing beats cruising along and looking at the scenery, or attacking a climb at your own pace and intensity.

But riding with a small group can be even more fun. You cover ground faster, meet people, and experience the thrill of shared effort.

Paceline riding isn't difficult to learn. Here are the basic skills:

1. Ride in a Straight Line

Start by learning to ride like you're on a rail. Practice by holding your line during solo rides. Put your wheel on the road's white edge line and keep it there. Relax your upper body, keep a light grip on the handlebar, and fix your peripheral vision on the line. Keep your actual focus 20 or 30 feet in front of the bike. Remember, the bike will go where your eyes go.

2. Following a Wheel

Drafting another rider saves you at least 15 percent in energy output. It's foolish to be bucking the wind all the time when you're with other riders. Share the work by drafting them and letting them draft you.

Position your front wheel 1 to 3 feet behind the rear wheel you're following. The closer the better, in terms of the draft, but closer also requires a lot more attention. When necessary, turn the cranks without putting pressure on the pedals ("soft pedal") to maintain correct spacing. It's confusing if you leave more space than described because other riders drifting back will be uncertain if you are looking for them to drop in front of you or if you are just catching back on. "Dangling" loosely around the pipeline is frowned upon, be in or be out.

Use the brakes sparingly. Jerky braking creates chain reaction problems for riders behind you. If you need to brake, feather the levers lightly instead of clutching at them. If you are coming closer to the rider ahead of you, come off of center and to the left of the rider ahead instead of feathering your breaks. You may overlap wheels briefly. Within a few strokes the rider ahead will pull forward and you can drift back into your spot. The rider behind you will expect you to drift back into your place.

If a gap opens, 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.

Look past the rider directly in front. Don't stare down at his rear wheel or you won't see things that may cause him to brake or swerve.

3. Paceline Pointers

First rule: Be predictable. Close riding demands that everyone be on the same wavelength. There must be a basic understanding of what is and is not expected behavior in a given circumstance. Experience helps.

Don't accelerate when it's your turn at the front. Note your cycle computer's mph and maintain the group's speed when the lead rider pulls off. Another strategy is to note your heart rate or power meter if you have those. As the elevation changes you will slow down or speed up but you want a similar effort level with manageable increases in effort on raises.

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. This enhances the drafting effect for the whole group. It also keeps everyone as far out of the traffic flow as possible, making paceline riding possible even on busier roads. If you want to pretend to be a racer you can flick your elbow on the side you want the rider behind to come through on. Alternatively, you can give a little wave with two fingers. Do take a peek back before you pull off to make sure the rider behind isn't overlapping on that side.

As you come abreast of the last rider in the line, pick up speed and then slide over behind his wheel as he comes past. It's helpful for the last rider to say "last" to let you know to pull behind. Take a look to be sure anyway but you don't have to look until you hear "last". When done correctly you won't need an energy-wasting acceleration in order to latch back on. Once in the caboose position you can take a drink or stand to stretch without disrupting the paceline's smoothness.

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.

Ride smoothly and predictably. Unless you are at the back of the paceline, don't stop pedaling. It allows the rider behind to run up on your wheel producing the Slinky effect in the paceline and possibly causing a crash. Adjust your gearing to maintain your cadence, which will not be constant as you progress through the paceline, which is due to the variable effect of drafting.

Do not stand in the paceline. Your time to relieve pressure points by standing on the pedals is after your pull as you slide back down the paceline and attach to the end.

Aero bars should not be used in a paceline.

Maintain the pace set because it is a team effort. If you have someone that wants to ride faster than the group can, let them go and maintain the team effort. People can blow pacelines apart, when by pulling faster than the group could go. This is rude and frustrating and no one benefits. If the paceline is going 20 mph, maintain 20 mph during your pull, even if you can pull 28 mph.

If you run up on the wheel ahead, move out of the paceline slightly to catch wind and slow you down or gently feather the front brake as you are getting closer. Some prefer feathering the rear brake but the pros feather the front to prevent alarm from spreading throughout those following.

Your time of your pull is indirectly proportional to the effort required. If conditions are tough, short pulls. If conditions are easy, longer pulls. If you tire, go through the paceline but rotate out, when it is your pull. This can range from 30 seconds to several minutes.

Put weaker riders behind stronger riders. Remember, it is a team effort and will only be as strong as the weakest rider. Help that rider.

As you pull off the front, slide to the rear while remaining near the paceline. In a crosswind, pull off into the crosswind to shield those still working harder than you in the paceline.

In wind, the paceline should form to allow riders to find that "sweet spot" to benefit from drafting. Be careful with this on high traffic roads.

In a double paceline or on any ride with others, pick your line and maintain it. Do not veer, suddenly. You don't want to run into another rider or cause an adverse reaction causing them to go down and/or take another rider with them.

When riding double paceline the riders in the front either pull off to the outsides and let the double line come up between them or alternatively the rider to the right pulls forward and drifts back with the left rider on the left side.

You want to ride smoothly and predictably. A cyclist that cannot or does not ride smoothly and predictably makes others nervous. Don't ruin your day and other people's day because you aren't predictable.