

# Christchurch Bicycle Club 2016

## Ride Etiquette and Safety

**Introduction** - When participating on club rides, please make yourself fully aware of what is going on; how to ride in a group; who is leading the ride from the start to finish (i.e. Leader and Backmarker). The aim of 'Ride Etiquette and Safety' is to enhance the safety and effectiveness of club cycling.

### In Summary

- **We ride at your level**
- **Be prepared**
- **Don't ride off the front unless the ride leader is happy for you to do so**
- **Ride two abreast when appropriate and safe to do so**
- **Stay close**
- **Don't 'switch' suddenly without signalling**
- **Relax**
- **Use hand signals**
- **Tell someone if you have a problem**

### Read more....

Newcomers to club cycling are often bewildered by the "secret hand signals and verbal communications" performed by experienced cyclists. This document explains the basics of riding in a group. The CTC publish the excellent [Group Dynamics](#) which is worth reading. British Cycling also has an extensive range of videos which demonstrate good riding skills including riding in a group, see [HERE](#).

### Why ride in a group?

Several reasons; it enhances social bonding, safety, and fitness. If you are a newcomer to cycling or the area, you won't get lost. By riding in a group you'll also learn advanced road and bike handling skills and be able to chat to more experienced riders. Generally speaking it is the best place to learn important cycling etiquette and skills.

### We ride at your level

Once upon a time club rides were fast, furious and selfish - if you couldn't keep up you would be left in the middle of nowhere. Things have changed and cycling is now one of the easiest and most sociable sports to access. CBC has several group rides. Choose the group with the pace and distance you feel comfortable with. There can be between 8 and 30 riders of all ages and gender on club rides. Depending on the group, ability and weather conditions on the day, average speeds vary between 10-15mph [18-24kmph]. The ride leader will use their discretion to split large riding groups into smaller groups to ensure safety and convenience of all road users. It is important that large gaps between the smaller groups are maintained at all times. Respect and be aware of traffic trying to pass.

### Be prepared

Always wear suitable cycle clothing (preferably our custom- made club kit) for the time of the year, and carry the following with you: a rain jacket, a pump, essential tools, spare tubes, 1st Aid Pack, emergency snacks for a three to four hours ride and plenty to drink. Carry a mobile

phone for emergencies only (if you have one) but please switch it off on the ride; also your ID and essential medical information and In Case of Emergency details, preferably on the club lanyard provided; money for a tea stop or train fare home. A map is useful and reassuring if you are on routes that are not known to you

Make sure your tyre pressures are correct! You can easily waste 50% of energy and effort fighting a poorly inflated tyre. Invest in a quality (gauged) track pump, and check your tyre pressures before every ride. All bicycle wheels run smoothly and efficiently when tyres are inflated to the correct pressure [PSI pressures can be found on the tyre sidewall]. Pressing down on the top of the tyre with your thumbs is not good enough.

### **Don't ride off the front**

The main principle of group riding is to ride together. Before riding off the front of the group (on a hill, for example) ensure that the ride leader is aware you are doing so and the reason. Otherwise, this action can upset ride discipline, harmony and pace of the group. Stop at the top of the hill or next road junction to regroup. Our rides are not races and there will be riders in the group who may start to suffer.

If you ride ahead of the leader and miss an important turn or road junction, the group will not look for you. You will be deemed by the ride leader and the group to have left the ride without notification. The club's Third Party Liability Insurance Cover to you becomes void. (Some ride leaders prefer to lead from the middle and designate someone to be at the front but the same principle applies)

### **Ride two abreast**

Contrary to some road user opinions this is perfectly legal; however, the Highway Code qualifies this as follows: "Rule 66 - never ride more than two abreast, and ride in single file on narrow or busy roads and when riding round bends". Two parallel lines of cyclists' is sometimes the safest and most practical cycling formation. All club rides assume this formation at times, usually with the ride leader at the front, and another experienced leader at the back [backmarker]. Keep to this formation if possible, and only overtake on hills or safe places where the road ahead is clear.

### **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 cycling in the group. Ideally, stay close to the rider in front to maximise the slipstream (echelon) 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. Take care not to overlap the wheel in front – keep level or 6 inches behind.

### **Don't 'switch' suddenly without signalling**

Hold your line and keep a steady cadence: this allows 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 will not stop suddenly without warning so you won't have to make any sudden moves.

### **Relax**

Try to relax your upper body as much as possible. This will help prevent fatigue and help to prevent you from making sudden changes in direction. Bend the arms a little and keep your head up. If the group splits, the ride leader will stop at the next suitable pull-in, junction or turn, and pass on route information. The leader will ask a rider in the first group to mark the turn, allowing split riders to regroup. Should the ride split into smaller groups for whatever reason, the last rider in each group must mark the turn.

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

Don't feel shy about it! Tell riders around you if you have a puncture, a mechanical problem, or are suffering psychically. Don't drift off the back of the group without telling anyone. If you drop behind on a hill they will wait or send a rider or two back to pace you up to the group, so don't worry, they won't abandon you.

### **Punctures and mechanical faults**

Some of the group may ride on, but stop and wait at the next convenient spot (whilst you fix your problem); some will retrace to help you (this helps them to keep warm). If you are not mechanically minded, there will be experienced riders who can fix a problem in a matter of minutes. Don't feel afraid to ask for help, it will save the group time.

### **Send a message to the front group**

If you are riding at the back and a rider drops off for whatever reason, tell rider(s) in front of you and ask them to shout the nature of the problem to the front. The pace can slow to suit the problem or the group can stop in a safe location. Once a rider(s) have been left behind, if they do not know the route on the day, finding them and regrouping is nigh-on impossible and causes unnecessary concern to the ride leader on the day.

### **Essential verbal instructions to be passed on by the group:**

**'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 'Car down', and a car approaching from the rear of the group is 'Car up'. The outside rider should move to the front of the rider beside them, if necessary, to allow a car to pass from behind and to the back of the rider if allowing a car coming towards you to pass safely.

**'Easy' or 'Grid'** - This is shouted when a badly sighted road junction or potential hazard is ahead. Pay attention, it's often very easy to just rely on the ride leader 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 pass the hazard.

**'On your left'** - Means that there is an obstacle on the left hand side, and the group will move to the right to avoid it e.g. a parked car, walkers, forest ponies etc.

**'Single out'** - When a large vehicle comes from behind and needs extra space to overtake, or the group is approaching a narrow road or overtaking a line of parked cars. If traffic builds up from behind, always split the group into two or three smaller groups, and leave a two/three car gap (50 metres) between each group - this is appreciated by the majority of drivers. Regroup when safe to do so.

**'Stopping or Slowing Down'** - Is as it suggests - the group is stopping - usually traffic lights or busy road junctions. Don't block junctions and the sight lines of motorised traffic at any time. Always look over your right shoulder before leaving the near kerbside.

**'Horses'** - On approaching a horse rider or horse riders from behind, slow down and, rather than ringing your bell, shout 'Bicycle(s) behind you'. Horses are accustomed to a commanding human voice and are very rarely startled. A horse rider will 'thank you' verbally and 'wave' their appreciation. Nevertheless, play safe, and always give the horse(s) a wide berth.

**'Coming through'** - Means that a rider coming from behind 'warns you' that they are overtaking on your right.

## **Essential hand signals to be passed on by the group:**

**Arm vertically in the air** - Signifies that the rider signalling is stopping (e.g. puncture/ chain off) or there is a hazard in the road that the whole group may have to stop for. Arm pointing down to the road - Points out potholes, drain covers, glass, dead badgers, or anything else which may cause harm to a cyclist. It informs the rider behind - before they hit it, causing possible serious injury.

**Directional indication to riders behind** - Whether it is slowing down or turning at junctions, groups large and small need everyone to indicate to all group riders and other road users, to let them know what you intend to do.

**Wafting for parked vehicles, road works, horses, and pedestrians** - When meeting these obstructions, experienced riders will invariably "Waft" [wave] a hand or arm behind their back. This signifies there is an immediate hazard ahead, and means the group will have to move out. They do this 'waft' in the direction you will need to move (i.e. left or right arm 'waft'). Remember you are expected to do the same so the rider behind you is warned of the danger. Practice and execute this valuable arm movement until it becomes second nature.

**Don't use your arms to indicate points of interest.** A driver behind may be confused and momentarily think you are making a turn.