

CHORLEY

CYCLING CLUB

GROUP RIDE ETIQUETTE



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Riding in a group safely and efficiently is one of the key skills of road cycling. It can be a daunting and confusing experience, so we hope this document sheds some light on the do's and don't's.

As our new kit is due to land very soon, we feel it's important that we ride to our best on the road, making the experience of riding with the club as safe and enjoyable as possible.



Basics

When the road allows, you'll **usually be riding two-abreast** in a **'double pace line'**. This allows everyone behind the two leading riders, to shelter from the wind. Cycling two-abreast is suggested in the highway code and has been proven to be safer.

The time a rider spends on the front is usually dependant on fitness and collective ability of the group. Tired riders will take shorter turns, stronger or fresher riders, longer turns. **Sharing the workload is encouraged**, however there is no shame in drafting if you're struggling.

If you're riding on the front, **keep your speed as smooth and controlled as possible** because everyone is riding close to one another. This means no grabbing handfuls of brake or fast accelerating, particularly out of corners. Always have your hands covering the brakes, either on the hoods or the drops.

Half-wheeling – nudging your front tyre ahead of the rider beside you – is poor group-riding etiquette. It can come across as a passive-aggressive signal you wish to up the pace. Instead, always try to keep your handlebars level with the person next to you. If unsure about pacing, match the speed of more experienced riders.

Starting out, it's best to **keep at least a wheel length between your front wheel and the back wheel in front**. As you progress, you can close this gap. But don't overlap your wheel with the person in front, because the wheels may make contact with the slightest gust of wind or bump in the road. Try to keep your head up and look ahead for hazards or signals from the other riders.

When approaching hills, it's important to **widen the gap between cyclists to allow for slowing down**. Avoid getting out of the saddle when someone's right behind you. Your back wheel will drop back about half a bike length. This could cause them to swerve or brake sharply. Where

possible, try to stand up into your pedal stroke, to minimise the dropping back of your rear wheel.

On downhills, front riders should try to keep pedalling where possible, otherwise riders benefitting from their draft will have to brake. **Descend at your own pace and do not feel pressured to go beyond your comfort zone.**

Regrouping must take place at the earliest but safest point, after climbs and descents.

Knowing the route is not always possible, however, **CCC posts the route file on the website each week**. In this day and age, most members have head units from which a route may be followed. The club cannot encourage enough that each member **download the route they wish to ride and have this on their head unit**. This minimises the chance of the group missing turns and going the wrong way, as well as confusion when approaching junctions and turns.

When approaching known turns and junctions, **riders should indicate the direction of travel by pointing their arm in the correct direction, whilst also calling the direction of travel, e.g. "Left" or "Right Turn"**.

Hazards

Ensuring everyone in the group knows about what's going on, is aware of any hazards, and is happy communicating with the others is very important.

The front riders are responsible for warning the group about upcoming hazards (such as potholes), approaching cars, corners or junctions. The signals should pass all the way back through the group. When on the front, make sure you always let the rest know if you slow down or brake.

If you aren't familiar with hand gestures and calls, make sure you check these with the rest of the group before you set off. The basics are:

- **“Car back”** – car approaching from behind the group.
- **“Car up”** – car approaching ahead of the group.

- **“Clear” or “Car”** (left/right/both) – when negotiating junctions or roundabouts, use these calls to inform the group if it is clear to proceed, or if a vehicle is approaching. Example – “Car left” or “Clear both”.
- **“Through”** – car passing from rear.
- Hazards: **“Hole / Grid / Bump / Bollard/ Lines (for rail lines) / Water / Gravel”** – when calling out these hazards, point them out also. You can combine these with the words “inside” for obstacles to the left hand kerb, “middle” for the centre of the lane, or “outside” for the right of the lane. Example – “Hole inside” or “Grid Middle”.
- **“Out”** – group needs to move out for obstacle such as parked vehicle. Combine with hand signal. To do this, put your hand behind your back and point out the direction the group should move.
- **“Single out”** – suggest the group ride single file.
- **“Slowing/stopping/steady”** – group needs to slow or stop. Can be combined with hand signal indicating the need to slow down.
- **“Narrow/Narrowing”** – indicates the road narrows and there may be a need to slow or stop. Can be combined with hand signal. Raise hand and repeatedly pinch fingers and thumb together, as though imitating a bird.
- **“Knock off”** – a rider is struggling at the rear and the pace should slow to allow them to recover.

It's up to the riders on the back of the group to let those in front know what's behind. They should call if a car is behind them or about to overtake. On narrow lanes, this allows the bunch to single out when it's safe for the vehicle to pass or remain two abreast when it is not. Elsewhere, front riders will know not to move towards the middle of the road when a car is passing.

Call clearly (but not too loudly) and give notice of hazards as early as you can to allow time for the group to react. Keep your pace even with the rider beside you, and you'll be set.

Part of group cycling etiquette is about coming prepared.

Here are some things you should do, or bring along with you:

Mandatory items

- **Roadworthy bike**
One that is safe and well maintained
- **Good quality helmet**
Your head is worth protecting

Highly recommended items

- **Front and Rear Lights**
Rear especially. Lights are pretty much mandatory in poor light conditions
- **Puncture repair kit**
at least 1 spare inner tube, a pump and patch kit. Co2 cannisters are great for quickly pumping up tyres, but can fail, so please always bring a pump as a failsafe

- **Food / Drink**
We highly suggest water or squash as a minimum. Electrolytes and carbohydrate drink are much better for keeping you hydrated and your energy levels up. High carb snacks such as gels, bars, bananas, flapjack, sweets etc, are great on bike fuel
- **Appropriate / weatherproof clothing**
For your comfort on rides, especially in poor weather conditions
- **Mudguards**
All but mandatory in poor weather conditions, to keep you drier and keep spray out of the faces of others
- **A basic knowledge of road side fixes**
e.g. punctures
- **Money / payment method**
For cafe stop or emergencies

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Contacts

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