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Group Riding Etiquette & Tips

Obey The Road Rules

First and foremost, obey the road rules.

It is sometimes difficult to be overly rigid in this regard, on those early mornings at home, with no traffic about. When travelling on busy roads, it's an absolute must to observe the road rules.

Be considerate and avoid creating dangerous situations, safety and good practice is the keynote.

Look After Each Other

Good bunches look after their riders.

Wait if the group is split by traffic, stop for mechanicals, regroup after hills and don't leave individuals on their own to fend for themselves.

It can be a different matter if the pace is on. With everyone going full gas and the bunch stretched out, it is impossible to know what's happening with each individual.

However, the group should still regroup and wait for stragglers after they have had a good crack and blown off some steam.

A Rider's actions reverberate through the pack

Remember any action taken by one rider will affect all riders behind.

When rolling out, keep it smooth.

Avoid wandering off your line while getting your foot in. If you miss on the first attempt, don't balk the rider behind by waiting for the click or stare at your pedal.

Make a couple of revolutions with your foot resting on top of the pedal to maintain momentum and finish it off on the move.

Sudden movements create problems for everyone around you.

Keep an eye on conditions ahead. Don't stare at the rear wheel in front of you, but use the back of the rider in front to gauge distance, while regularly glancing 3 - 5 riders ahead and up the road to anticipate problems before they occur.

On the front the lead pair has the responsibility of steering the group and maintaining a smooth momentum, they must be decisive and anticipate ahead. It's their responsibility to calculate actions for the group as a whole, especially arriving at roundabouts & traffic lights where an orderly approach is preferred.

It is **better to stop the whole group than split the bunch** on a red light. Jamming the brakes on at the last moment shows a lack of awareness and is dangerous.

Stay Alert

When arriving at junctions all riders should be alert to what is going on up front.

Though the lead riders are guiding the bunch, the concept of the group is superseded by the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own safety and make the correct call based on their safety.

Pedal On The Front

Keep working while on the front of the bunch, particularly through the short ups & downs.

Never freewheel on the front, unless slowing the whole group is the intention. If you want to sit up after an effort, simply roll off the front. Soft-peddalling on the front causes a concertina effect down the line and breaks the rhythm of the bunch. The riders immediately behind the lead pair should not have to be on the brakes on the smaller down hills. If you have pulled up the rise and the legs need a rest, don't soft pedal on the decline, roll off the front and recover as you slide to the back of the bunch or power down then roll off.

When passing other packs. Keep it tidy. Be patient and overtake on an appropriate section of road.

Don't break up the group in an effort to get past. The whole group should overtake.

Sign Road Hazards, preferably while they are still up ahead, don't wait till the group is on top of the problem.

Point to hazards and I do mean hazards, we do not need to be made aware of every imperfection in the roadway.

Point out hazards that could bring an unwary rider down, not wake up someone who is asleep. This does not abdicate the responsibility of those at the back, to watch the road.

Pass Those Signals Down

Calling or Signing, if not passed down, only confuses or gets lost in the wind. The situation is usually past by the time the message gets down the line. Hand signals are best and communicate in an instant. Whatever used, calling or signing, please make it plain what the message is. Keep calls short and to the point. 'Stopping' 'Rolling' etc.

The group does **not need detailed instructions**. 'Car Back' is suitable for all vehicles approaching from the rear. Calling or Signing is not to be polite, it is about safety.

To be effective, signing has to be consistent & be workable in a bunch travelling at speed.

Change Early When The Road Turns Up

When the road turns up, change early, before momentum is lost. Take care not to drop-kick the rider behind you when rising out of the saddle. In a tight bunch there is the potential for a crash if the bike moves backward as you lift off the saddle. So as you stand, take the bike with you. Pull the bike up underneath you when you rise out of the saddle on a climb or change up a gear and power down as you stand.

Fast downhill. On a fast downhill, if you roll through, move to the left, allowing faster riders to come through. Keep left when descending. If the group stays together, those on the front should start driving the pedals before losing momentum at the bottom.

Slow moving traffic. On single lane roadway, where it is difficult for traffic to pass, ride on the shoulder, but only where possible and a good surface. When a lot of traffic gets banked up behind the group, we get off the road and wait for the traffic to pass. When encountering slow moving traffic slide up the inside of vehicles only if all can get through.

Merging Safely

Merging. Be alert on fast moving highway sections.

Remember we are merging at 30 km/h. Following traffic can be travelling over 100 km/h and may not see the group. Don't launch out into the traffic.

If there is some doubt, as to the traffic situation behind, wait.

In a large bunch, the tail end riders are best sighted to signal when the road is clear to merge or negotiate lane changes.

Ideally **the tail-end riders should lead the group out** when merging.

Pulling In The Pace Line

The Pace line. Most of the time, ride a steady tempo in a double pace line.

When the pace picks up, on occasion adopt a single-file pace line or a rotating pace line.

How long each rider pulls at the front **depends on the pace and relative strength** of the riders. In general, it can be anywhere from 10 seconds to several minutes.

Keep the front wheel close to the rider immediately in front, your nose out of the wind, turns at the front smooth & re-attachment to the back efficient.

When it's your turn to pull maintain the same speed as the riders before you.

As you pull off, ease speed so the rider behind simply has to maintain the previous speed to pass.

If the rider rolls off and does not slow down, it disrupts the pace and rhythm of the group and forces the rider behind to almost sprint in an effort to get past.

If your pull is finished, it's over - ease up, let the group pass, latch on to the back as quickly as possible.

Most Difficult Part For A Large Bunch - PaceLine

The most difficult part for a large bunch is organizing the group's efforts in a rotating pace line and keeping it smooth.

Staying smooth means **maintaining a consistent speed**: don't speed up as you take your turn on the front, don't drop back too quickly from the lead position, be sure and hug the wheel in front while staying close to the other line, maximize the draft so the pace line stays compact and efficient.