

## Group Riding Techniques

**1. Be predictable** - This is the most important rule and it involves every aspect of riding from changing positions in the group to following the traffic rules. All of the other rules support this one. Smooth, predictable riding isn't just a matter of style...its survival!! Always obey the traffic laws and think of the group as one (1) unit. Cross intersections together, turn together, stop together, etc. **NEVER** ride more than 2 abreast and always single up when cars are present.

**2. Don't overlap wheels EVER** - Heard the saying "the rider in back is the one that goes down? It's true. Just don't do it.

**3. Be steady** - This means speed and line. When in a group, maintain a steady speed as you go to the front. When you lead, ride a straight line and keep your speed constant with the conditions. Remember- this means do **NOT** speed up when you get to the front. It means steady pressure on the pedals...uphill or downhill, headwind or tailwind. The goal is not to have surges, but a constant, steady pace. If you have to brake, do so gently so that you can moderate your speed without disturbing riders around you. Constant, slight adjustments are necessary in a group, learn to do this smoothly.

**4. COMMUNICATE** - Announce hazards. When you are in the lead, you are responsible for the safety of everyone behind you. When you are in the group, communicate to the riders around you. Everyone trusts each other to point out anything in the path of the pack. This includes: potholes, road hazards, parked cars, walkers or other riders you are over taking. Be very vocal when approaching intersections, slowing, stopping, or turning. When you are near the back of the group, announce oncoming traffic from the rear.

**5. Signal** - Signaling lets everyone (vehicles and riders) know your intentions. Remember #1? This makes you predictable. Always try to make eye contact with oncoming traffic at intersections. Most cyclists use their right arms to signal a right turn, although technically incorrect, this is the most widely accepted signal and easiest to understand.

**6. Don't fixate** - Do not stare directly at the rider or wheel in front of you. Learn to be comfortable looking around or through the riders ahead of you. Be aware of your surroundings- always.

**7. Aero bars and group rides just don't mix** - The best scenario is to always use your road bike for group rides. If you do not have a road bike...stay out of the aero bars while in a group. The only exception...when you are at the front pulling you can get aero if you are comfortable doing this, but never when you are following a wheel. It just isn't safe.

**8. Don't leave stragglers on a no drop ride** - If you get separated, the lead group should soft pedal until the rest have rejoined. If there are new riders, be sure to regroup at any turns or intersections. It is also helpful to have pre designated "regroup" points during a ride, just in case someone gets dropped.

**9. Know your limitations and strengths** - Yes, riders of different abilities can still ride together and have fun. Know yourself and be honest. If you're not strong enough or too tired to take a turn at the front, stay at the back and let the stronger cyclists pull. Make sure you get don't pull too long or hard and then get dropped. If you are one of the stronger riders, set a nice steady pace at the front, but just stay on the front longer instead increasing the speed. Think longer not faster.

**10. Change positions correctly** - A common beginner mistake is to stop pedaling just before pulling off the front. This creates an accordion effect toward the rear. Keep a steady pressure on the pedals until you have cleared the front. After pulling off, soft pedal and let the group pull through. As the last couple riders are passing through, begin to apply more pressure to smoothly take your position at the rear. The goal is a nice, smooth transition. Remember- steadiness is the goal.

**11. Climbing** - If you need to stand, shift up a gear to compensate for the slower cadence and stand up smoothly keeping a steady pressure on the pedals. Think about propelling your bike forward as you stand. This will keep the bike from moving backward into the rider behind you.

**12. Descending** - The leader on a group must overcome a much greater wind resistance as the speed increases. If you are leading, keep pedaling. Riders to the rear will accelerate faster downhill as drafting becomes more effective. If you are following, back off a couple of bike lengths to give yourself a little extra space to compensate for the greater affects of drafting. If you are closing on the rider in front, sit up and let the wind slow you or use light braking to maintain spacing, but in both cases you should keep pedaling against the resistance. Keeping your legs moving not only makes it easier to keep the spacing, but also helps the legs get rid of the acid build up from the previous climb.

**13. Relax** - This one is really important. It will allow you to be smooth and responsive. A relaxed upper body allows you to have much more control over the bike and eliminates over-reacting. Many times, over-reaction to a situation is what causes the crash. If you just stay calm and relaxed, you might be able to avoid the mishap or crash.

**14. Closing a gap or slowing down** - Don't make erratic movements. Close a gap slowly, don't panic. Stay seated and gradually reel them back in. If you are getting to close to the rider ahead, soft pedal, sit up higher to catch more wind, move over slightly to catch more wind, feather your breaks a bit.

**15. Leading the Pack** - It is important than when you are pulling that you know where you are going. Make decisions with the safety of the entire group in mind. Do not accelerate or decelerate unless appropriate. If you decide to cross an intersection, make sure the entire group has enough time and space to make it through safely.

**16. No Half Wheeling** - Do not half wheel (riding in slightly ahead of the rider next to you) when riding side by side. Settle on a pressure and maintain it. Constantly evaluate your position next to another rider. Few things are more annoying than "Half Wheel Hank" or "Half Wheel Helen" on a group ride. Don't be Hank or Helen.

Notes- Move completely off the roadway when waiting for groups, fixing flats or stopping. Do not congregate on the roads.

Yield to horses, runners, and other pedestrians on paths.

Let someone know if you are getting dropped - it is much easier for the group to slow down a bit than to have to stop completely and wait for dropped riders.

Leave no trace - do not leave trash on the trail or road!

Only ride two abreast- NEVER more, and single up when cars approach- stay to the right and be courteous to traffic.