



Cycling - Group Riding Etiquette

We have 2 primary objectives for our rides:

1. The rides should provide training benefit to all
2. They should be safe & enjoyable

We will always focus on safe riding when we are out in groups and your club would respectfully ask all PACTRAC members to read and acquaint themselves with the guidelines below.

Introduction

Club rides are great fun, and have many advantages. Aside from being social, they allow the group to travel further and faster than if riding alone, provide safety and camaraderie for all, improve skills and allow newer/novice riders to learn/benefit from the experience of more experienced/stronger riders. Plus, it's a great chance to hang out with like-minded friends and see a lot of very nice bikes!!

But with larger groups riding comes higher risk and in order to ensure these rides remain safe as well as good fun training it is important that everyone follows a set of rules. Club rides are unsupervised and The Club is not responsible for the safety of participants, everyone on the ride must take responsibility to look out for the safety of others as well as their own. Always bear in mind that everyone in the group may not be as confident or have as good bike handling skills as you.

Below are some basic rules and guidance to follow set out as:

Do's

Don'ts

Calls

Hand Signals

The Chain Gang (Through-and-Off)*

The Paceline*

* These are more advanced group riding techniques – these may not be suitable for all rides/conditions or abilities. All participants should exercise their own judgement regarding if/when to use these more advanced techniques.

Please apply these rules when you are next on a group ride and where others don't, please politely inform them of the proper cycling etiquette.



DO's

Be on time for the start of the ride, or let others know in advance if you will be late so they can meet you en-route. On time should mean ready to go at the start time – if you drive to the start, allow at least 10 mins to get your bike together and checked and any last minute prep/chatting done.

Bring sufficient nutrition & hydration for the ride.

Follow the Highway Code at all times – it applies to ALL road-users.

Wear a cycle helmet.

Ensure your bike is safe & roadworthy, brakes are fully operational and that your tyres are pumped up to the recommended PSI (as written on the tyre, and appropriate for the conditions).

Cycle a maximum of two abreast in 2 close parallel lines where appropriate, focus on keeping it neat and tidy.

Ride with 1ft approx. between your front wheel and the back wheel of the rider in front. There should also be 1ft between your shoulders and the rider beside you.

Be prepared on small or busy roads to ride in single file.

Riders at the back of the pack to shout “Car back, single file” if there are vehicles behind but only when appropriate e.g. not when travelling single file down busier roads, where there is a constant flow of cars as it is a given that there are cars behind. Listen and act on their calls, DON'T look back and check for yourself, as you will move off your line and may cause an accident.

Lead cyclists to navigate and point out hazards in the road by shouting and using hand signals. Listen to them and act on the calls, and most importantly, repeat them for the cyclist behind you.

Ride directly behind the wheel of the rider in front. If you cycle in the middle of the two wheels in front of you, you WILL push the cyclist on your outside into the path of passing vehicles.

Brake as gently and smoothly as you safely can when riding in a pack.

Cover your brakes at all times.

When on the front keep pedalling, this is particularly important going downhill. If you freewheel everyone behind will have to brake.

Talk/Communicate to each other. Point out either with hand signals or shouts, all potholes, manhole covers and any other hazards in the road that could cause punctures or accidents. Follow the hand signals and calls of the riders in front as they will have seen the danger before you and then you can all communicate down the pack.

If you are the back of the group and either see someone dropping or are being dropped it is your responsibility to call to the cyclists in front that the pace is too high. The pack must communicate this up to the front. The lead cyclists will not be aware if you start to drop. Ask them to slow down; it is your ride too.

When asked to “ease up” or “slow a little” do not brake suddenly. Gentle ease your pace by pedalling less hard or freewheeling and/or sitting up for a moment. Look at your speed – if someone is being dropped you probably only need to reduce your speed by half a mile an hour to allow them to stay on.

Ride at a steady pace, keeping the pack as a compact unit.

Check over your shoulder for other riders or traffic before moving out to the right.



Slow right down when passing horses or other animals in the road, and pass them as wide as it is safe to do so. Always call to the horse riders well ahead of catching them – a cheery “Good morning” or “Hello” will suffice. Keep calling until the riders indicate they know you are there. They may want to turn the horse so it can see you.

If you are on the front, remember that people are following your calls. If you make a decision to pull out on a roundabout or junction, you need to call “Clear” or “Wait” to warn the pack of hazards.

If you are feeling tired let people know. Accidents happen when people are tired and lose concentration. Everyone gets tired, let people know so they can slow the pace down and tuck you in the pack to carry you home ;o)

Cycle with confidence. If you're nervous you will tense up and then are less likely to be able to respond to things quickly. Use a relaxed grip on the handlebars, keep your shoulders down (not up against your neck) and bring your elbows down and in so that they're slightly bent. These steps will help you stay relaxed, which allows quicker reaction time and prevents tension in the neck and shoulders that can lead to fatigue and sloppy riding.

When cycling in poor visibility, at dusk or at night wear appropriate bright or reflective clothing and ensure you have working lights on the front and rear of your bike.

Dress in appropriate clothing for the weather, and ensure you have appropriate clothing for any changes in weather that you may encounter during the course of the ride.

Bring everything you might need. Prepare for every eventuality. For example, puncture kit, tyre levers, inner tubes, pump, multi tool (including chain tool), helmet, waterproof jacket, food, water, money, credit card, mobile, contact details in emergency.

DON'TS

Overlap wheels, or nudge in between the wheels of the riders in front. You will come off if they move off their line.

Ride on tri / aero bars in packs as you will not be able to brake or steer quickly.

Make any sudden movements/changes in direction off your line when in the pack. You are responsible for the cyclist behind you, they are following YOUR wheel they need to trust you.

Ride off the front. This is a group ride, not a race. If you want to go faster then let the others know what you are going to do and if no one wants to join you then go off and enjoy your ride alone.

Stop pedalling if you are on the front, even on downhills. The cyclists behind you will read this as you slowing and could be forced to brake and bunch up.

“Zone out” on the wheel in front. Stay alert and aware of everything that is going on around you, look ahead and that way you can avoid most hazards.

Whip round the outside of the pack to get to the front unless in an emergency. Shout up the pack any communication. If you do need to get to the front then make sure you check in front and behind for cars, remember three abreast will push you out into oncoming traffic.

Pull out at junctions without looking, having heard the “Clear” call from a fellow cyclist. Check whether there is a vehicle coming yourself.



CALLS

These are some calls you might hear. It is essential that you repeat them down the pack so everyone can hear:

“Car Up/Front/Back”: Keep tight to the cyclist next to you, and be prepared to cycle in single file

“Hole”: Upcoming pothole to avoid. This can also be followed by a direction i.e “HOLE LEFT”

“Slowing”: Usually accompanied by a hand signal. The cyclist in front needs to slow down for some reason

“Stopping”: Brake!

“Wait” : Usually at junctions to indicate there is a car coming

“Clear”: To indicate that a junction is traffic free. You must check yourself and not rely on others

“Heads Up”: Hazard ahead, pay attention

“Single out/ single file”: Get into single file safely and promptly

HAND SIGNALS (but shout instructions as well)

These are some hand signals (other than the obvious left and right turns!) It is essential that the entire group repeats them so everyone can see and pass it on:

Single hand in the air (up or down): Rider is signalling that he/she needs to stop or slow down. Usually followed by the call ‘Slowing’, ‘Stopping’.

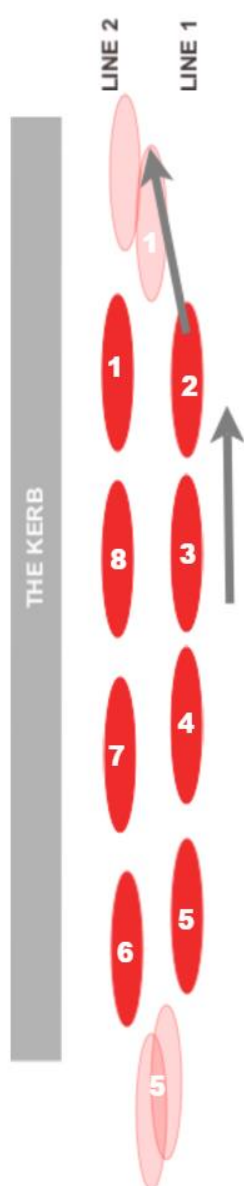
Pointing down at the road: This is to point out hazards such as pot holes, manhole covers etc. PLEASE copy this signal, it stops accidents and punctures.

Arm out left or right: Everyone in the pack needs to indicate when turning left or right.

Left arm signalling behind back: Signal the cyclist is about to move out into the road, e.g. to pass a parked car, to go round debris in the road.



The Chain Gang (Through-and-Off)*



Two lines or riders with equal numbers in each line. One faster line sheltered from the wind (by the slower line) will be the pace setting line (**line 1**). The slower line we will call the recovery line (**line 2**).

The chain goes clockwise or anti-clockwise depending on the wind direction, to give shelter to the faster line. On a club run we will almost always usually have the outside line as the faster line - as this works better in traffic

You change speed when you reach "**line 2**" – slowing down (by about 1 mph) once you've changed lines at the front, and you accelerate slightly in order to rejoin the pace setting line (**line 1**) at the back.

Get it right...

Take a nice *shallow* line from **line 1** into **line 2** so that the lead rider in **line 2** can latch onto your wheel easily. A sharp line across will put you into the front wheel of the preceding rider... you don't want that! Don't increase your pace or accelerate, just ride through maintaining the pace of the line. Increasing the pace at the front is strictly a no-no, all it achieves is to disrupt the group. It helps if the lead rider of **line 2** calls "clear" when it is safe for the new lead rider to come across.

Ease off at the front when you have changed from the faster **line 1** to the slower **line 2** – don't brake - just take the pressure off the pedals *slightly* and continue to pedal. The next rider coming through in front of you should not need to increase pace in order to come past you! The rider coming through should not need to look behind when doing this - **taking a shallow line across will ensure you don't collide with anyone** - looking back while going forward is not a good idea - don't do it. If you ease off too much the rider behind will have to take avoiding action and maybe brake sharply - you don't want that - also the rider at the back of the line will have to accelerate hard to get back into **line 1**... so just ease off slightly.

Do not accelerate through... the only acceleration is at the back of the line from **line 2** back into **line 1**. **Again... the only acceleration is at the back of the line, from line 2 back into line 1. Don't surge at the front.**

When you're about to rejoin the pace setting line **line 1**, start edging sideways towards the last rider, so that you can move smoothly onto the wheel. The last rider in the pace setting line should call "last man" as he is about to pass the last rider in the slow lane. This prepares the rider to start moving across, and get onto the wheel by accelerating slightly.

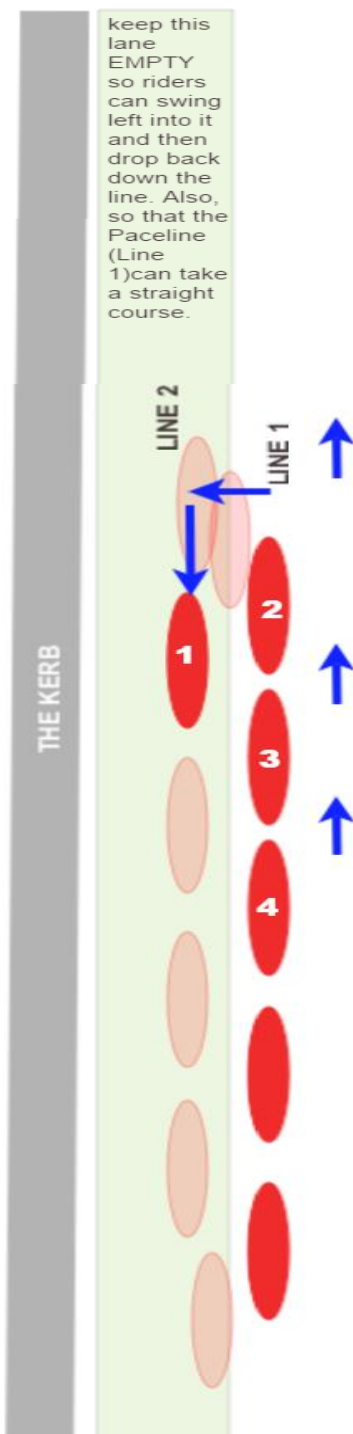
Don't fall asleep at the back, if you miss the last rider and have to *jump lanes and accelerate* to close the gap - then everyone behind you will also be making a needless effort - and you'll end up having to buy the coffees at the end of the ride.

If this sounds complicated - it actually isn't. It's great fun, and if you put this advice into action you'll soon be working like a pro in the chain-gang.



The Paceline*

Objective: High speed riding for minimum effort. This is one of the best ways to cover a big distance by sharing the workload and effort, or to close a gap.



The Paceline (**line 1, right**) should position itself out from the kerb, so that when rider 1 has completed a turn at the front (usually 20 to 40 seconds) they can move left into the “empty lane” (**line 2**) and immediately freewheel for a few seconds and then soft pedal, to latch on at the back of the line... accelerating when the last two riders are starting to come past – so that they can easily re-enter the end of the line.

The lead rider should always **complete their turn before** swinging into the left lane (**line 2**) otherwise the line is guaranteed to collapse in confusion!

Moving into the left lane should be a swift decisive move leaving no doubt for rider 2 that the turn at the front is completed. Note - Pro riders generally flick the right elbow to signal that they are pulling into the left lane, and for the next rider to come up. If it's good enough for the Pro's then it's good enough for Pactrac!!

Rider 1 should not hog the front - you should come off the front well before you get tired. Do your turn, 25 seconds is good, 20 seconds if it's into a headwind, and then get off the front. The pro's do 25 seconds, if it's good for them it's good for Pactrac! The goal is to keep the line moving through.

Rider 2 should wait for rider 1 to swing off to the left... **and should not attempt to ride round them or “overtake”**.

When rider 1 has come off the front, rider 2 should continue at the same speed **without accelerating** – and while **holding the same line on the road**. Uneven speeds will only create an accordion effect and will slow the paceline down. Riding immediately inwards towards the kerb will cause the Paceline to collapse... don't do it... **just keep riding straight until your turn is completed**.

Any rider that is struggling with the effort on the front should either sit on the back of the line – dropping back to allow new riders to join the end of the *working paceline* in front of them. Alternately, move through the line to keep the rotation going, but just do a very short turn before swinging over to the left.... don't feel the need to prove anything with a full turn if you're struggling. The important thing is for the line to maintain its momentum.



Chain Gang & Paceline Do's and Don'ts

1. Don't do anything suddenly
2. DON'T DO ANYTHING SUDDENLY
3. **DON'T DO ANYTHING SUDDENLY** - in other words *be **totally predictable!***

Generally a Chain Gang or a Pace Line will ride at a constant **effort** - *rather than a constant **speed***. *If you're the rider going through at the front, don't try and maintain speed up a hill.... just maintain the effort.*

Communicate!

If you're unable to go through and intend to sit at the back of the group to recover, then inform the other riders.

Warn the other riders if you intend to rejoin the chain after sitting in.

Whichever line you're in, don't allow a gap to open in front of you - be on a wheel at all times.

Potholes The lead riders should both be shouting warnings and pointing out potholes - and a gentle line should be taken around them, rather than a quick switch.

Avoid staring at the rear wheel in front, as you won't be able to see oncoming situations. Look past the rider in front of you and look up the road as much as possible, don't focus on the tyre in front of you.

Braking - try not to use your brakes – try moving into the wind slightly to slow yourself down.

Gears – try and maintain 80-100 rpm that way you'll always be on top of the gear and not struggling.

Junction - the first rider should make sure everyone gets through before resuming the pace. It's not a race, there's no reason to take risks on a recreational ride.

Keep your front wheel slightly offset from the rear wheel of the rider in front of you.

Accelerate only to rejoin the back of the line, after your turn. Don't accelerate at the front.

The lead rider should give clear warning of any changes in direction, obstructions, traffic, stop signs etc. Any warnings should be shouted down the line

Ride smoothly and avoid any sudden moves, be steady and predictable.

Communicate!

*** The only time you should be accelerating is when you change lines at the back. Failure to observe this simple fact is the main reason why many chain gangs or pacelines fail ****

The best chain gangs and pacelines have the smoothest riders... be a smooth rider.

***Notes:**

(i) PACTRAC takes no responsibility for the safety of any rider following these guidelines.

(ii) The above is guidance designed for riders on a club ride or training ride. Some techniques may not be suitable for triathlon specific efforts, or in certain conditions. All participants should exercise their own judgement regarding when to use these more advanced techniques.

(iii) A tip for developing these skills is to start off at slower speed, with smaller groups (8-10 max) and build up the speed and numbers gradually as the group gets used to it and the experience level builds. It's amazing how slick and efficient Pacelines and Chain Gangs can be when you are familiar with them and trust the group.