



Lichfield City Cycling Club



Cafe Ride Etiquette

When you first ride in a group you may be slightly unsure as to what is going on; where you should be riding in the formation or who is in charge etc. There are a few rules to riding in a group safely and effectively. There's also some basic 'etiquette' you need to know, just so you don't upset other riders or road users.

Essentially we want the ride to be safe for all the riders and for other road users - so if you are given instruction by a more experienced rider it makes sense to obey rather than question.

Why ride in a group?

For several reasons; social, safety, sporting and fitness. And, of course, if you are new to the sport or the area, you won't get lost. By riding in a group you'll learn road skills and be able to chat to more experienced riders, generally speaking it is the best place to learn about how to get into cycling.

Group Size

Many of the roads that we use are quiet but narrow. A long stream of cyclists is difficult to pass on roads like this and it is more responsible to organise ourselves so that groups are not too large. Ideally there will be riders of similar ability in each group. Each group can decide their pace and route but will meet at the cafe at the normal time. The same group sizes apply to the ride home but riders can switch groups.

Be prepared

Wear appropriate clothes and carry the following with you: a rain jacket, a pump, essential tools, spare tubes, food and drink. Also carry a mobile phone, plus money for tea stop. You shouldn't need a map, but take one if you need some added 'get home' reassurance.

Ride in two lines and rules for singling

Two parallel lines of riders is the safest and most practical riding formation. All club runs will assume this formation, usually with the ride leader at the front and another experienced rider towards the back. Do not break the line and overtake only on hills or safe places where the road ahead is clear. Contrary to some road users opinion this is legal. There are times when it is necessary to single out. On narrow roads oncoming or cars approaching from behind need to be able to pass. When this happens the lead rider or tail rider as appropriate will shout 'SINGLE OUT'. When this happens DO NOT SLOW, try to speed up so that the group does not bunch and gets wider which defeats the object. The outside rider of each pair will pull in behind kerbside rider

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 sitting in the bunch. So stay close to the rider in front to maximise the slipstream 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 or watch the bum of the rider in front, this way you will relax more and see any problems before they arise. Do not overlap the wheel in front (half-wheeling) in case the rider in front moves sideways and takes you out.

Don't 'switch' suddenly

Hold your line and keep a steady cadence, this is 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. Keep off your brakes as much as possible and when you do use them do so gradually.

Relax

Try to relax your upper body as much as possible. This will help prevent fatigue and also prevent you from making sudden changes in direction. Bend the arms a little and keep your head up.

Don't ride off the front

Depending on the type of group you are riding in, the main principle of group riding is to ride together (either socially or 'through and off'). So attacking off the front is not a good idea, it will usually upset the more experienced riders and generally upset the discipline and pace of the group. Sometimes there will be a long hill or section where there strong riders will put in an effort but remember to be sensible, this isn't a race and there are riders in the group who may be dropped or start to suffer if you want to do your level 3 effort miles from home.

Tell someone if you have a problem

Tell the riders around you if you have a puncture, mechanical problem or just need a pee, don't drift to the back and off it without telling anyone. . If you are a slow mechanic ask for help. There will be experienced riders who can fix a flat in a matter of seconds, so don't feel afraid to ask if it will save the group time.

The group will wait for you. If they drop you 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.

Send the message to the front

If you are riding at the back and a rider is dropped for whatever reason tell the riders in front of you and ask them to shout up to the front. The pace can then be adjusted to suit the problem or the group can stop. Once riders have been left behind, finding them and regrouping can be a pain.

Horses

We frequently meet horses. Many horses seem to dislike cyclists and can be unpredictable. Always slow down and give them as wide a berth as possible. If approaching from behind the horse riders may not hear us, give a calm call so that they are aware of our approach.

Other general shouted instructions

A general warning of a car trying to pass or one coming around a corner. A car coming down the road towards you is usually 'Car down'. A car coming up from behind is 'Car up'. The easiest way to remember the difference is "down your throat and up your bum"

"Easy" or Look up'

If this is shouted it usually means there is a bad junction or potential hazard ahead and to pay attention yourself, it's often very easy to rely on the ride leaders 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 get around the hazard.

"Clear or OK" before you cross a junction look both ways, if clear for the riders immediately behind shout "Clear" so that the next riders do not have to stop. Make sure the road is clear before shouting.

'Single out' [See above]

When a car is behind and needs extra space to overtake, or if the group is approaching a narrow road or overtaking a line of parked cars.

General hand signals

Hand up in the air

Signifies that the rider signalling is stopping (e.g. for a puncture) or there is a hazard in the road that the whole group may have to stop for. Shout "Stopping" as well.

Pointing out holes in the road

This is essential. You must point out drain covers, holes, dead badgers, glass or anything else which may cause harm to a cyclist. Basically if you have to go around it tell the rider behind about it before they hit it. Shout as well if necessary.

Indication directions to riders behind

Whether it is slowing down or turning at junctions, large groups need everyone to indicate for other road users, so let them know what you intend to do.

Waving for parked cars, horses and pedestrians

When overtaking riders will sometimes wave a hand behind them (like they're wafting away malodorous wind!!) this signifies there is a hazard that means the group will have to move out. They will do this 'waft' in the direction you will need to move. Remember you are expected to do the same so the rider behind you has seen the obstacle.