



MONDAY NIGHT RIDES GROUP RIDE GUIDELINES

Riding safely in a group (a *peloton*) requires everyone to think and ride as one. Think of it as the Zen of road riding.

Group rides are an opportunity for members to ride together for fun and fitness.

Experienced cyclists joining us on Monday Nights are expected to assist newcomers and the super fit should consider the MNRs as recovery/social rides.

Inexperienced riders will not find a better opportunity to increase their fitness, bike handling skills and overall confidence.

General Expectations

“No Drop Ride” – no one will be “dropped” from the group. We’ll start the ride and finish the ride together. If needed, we will establish “re-grouping” points prior to the start of each ride. These will be points along the route where we agree to stop and...re-group. Depending on the day and the riders we may agree to split into 2 or more smaller groups.

Controlled pace – the speed of the group will be dictated by the “slowest” rider present (+5% - laziness will not be enabled!). However, ALL riders should arrive with a rudimentary base of cycling fitness. Meaning you are comfortably able to maintain an average pace of 20kph (when riding alone and with out significant head or tail wind) for 60 mins or more. If you are not sure, find out before coming to your first Monday Night Ride. We are happy to help - contact us to arrange a riding date to assess your ride readiness.

Traffic – you certainly won’t need courier skills but you should be comfortable riding in traffic.

Drafting – *to ride closely behind another cyclist in order to benefit from the wind resistance provided and move along in the lead rider’s slipstream.* At all times we will be riding closely together in order to benefit from the “draft” of the riders ahead. By doing so the group as a whole will expend 20 – 50% less energy than a solo rider (depends on the size of the group and how well it is working together). Don't worry if you have no experience with drafting – we will teach you. However, everyone must arrive willing to learn, i.e. overcome fear/push your limits/exit your comfort zone.

Group Ride Rules

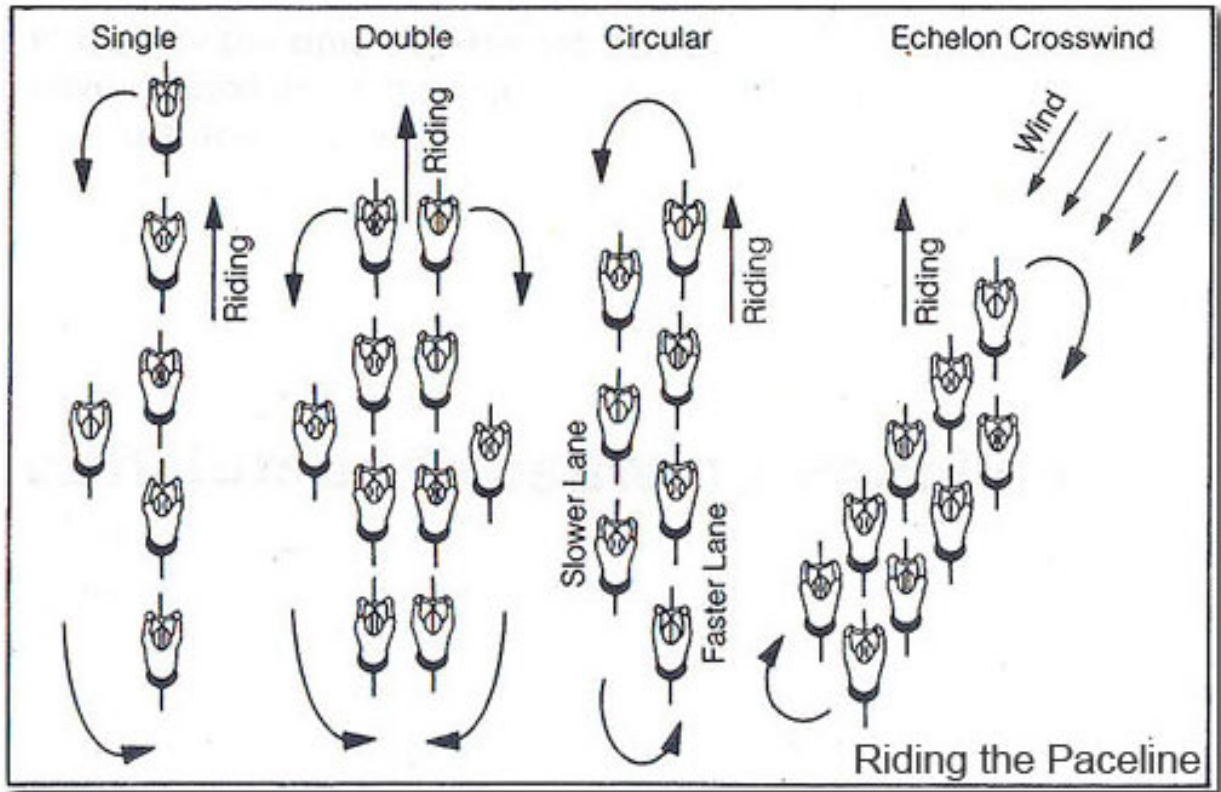
#1: It’s Not a Race – A group ride is a ride, not a race. We won’t be “attacking” off the front or sprinting from the back. Having said this, our ride route does have a fun sprint opportunity and many will take advantage. Everyone waits at the stop sign for the rest of the group to catch up.

#2: Ride Bar to Bar – Most of the time we will be riding in pairs or a *double paceline* (see diagram). When riding in this formation you must position yourself side by side, handlebar to handlebar. You must match the speed of the rider next to you at all times. Riding with your bars ahead of the rider beside you is called “half wheeling” – a cycling faux-pas, potentially dangerous, always annoying. NO HALF WHEELING.

#3: Communicate – When you see an obstacle in the road ahead of you, put your hand down and give a signal that lets the riders behind you know a significant obstacle is forthcoming. Traditionally a quick wave of the hand or point of the finger will suffice. Do not yell into the peloton “HOOOLE” or “RED LIGHT”. The problem with yelling is that 90% of the riders will not hear what you have said and will be distracted with wondering what the yelling is all about. Lead riders shall point out significant hazards and steer the group gradually around glass, potholes, pedestrians etc. Critical to a successful group ride is *trusting* that the rider in front of you will not drive their bike into a gaping hole, road crack or sewer grate. If you are riding correctly (directly behind the rider in front of you) then you should trust that whatever they are riding through you can also ride through. If you do find yourself riding through a large hole or a parallel crack in the road (very common here!) *do not panic*, relax, keep your wheel pointed straight ahead and ride it out.

You need not, and should not, point out *every* pothole, crack, oncoming car or small patch of gravel. Leave the warnings for the major obstacles – things that could potentially damage a bike or person behind you. Also, there should be no reason to alert the group of a red light up ahead. Everyone should be riding “heads up” and paying attention to the traffic and the road, even at the back. Do not assume that you can leave it to the other riders to watch the road ahead. If you need to communicate something to the group, such as a flat, or that the group has been split due to the pace or a red light etc. then speak to the rider(s) in front and beside you who will do the same until the whole group has the message. FYI: “Car back” means a car is passing from behind; “Car up” means an oncoming car.

#4: Where to look? – Don’t fixate on the rear wheel of the bike in front of you. Look around, know what’s coming – have “soft eyes”. This is easier said than done when you are inexperienced. If anything, look through the front wheel of the rider(s) in front of you, widening your field of vision. With experience you will become more and more confident of your peripheral vision and will begin to “sense” where you are, in relation to the riders ahead of you, without staring.



#5: Peeling Off – often we will assume a “social” double paceline (see diagram). When you have taken your turn at the front make sure the rider beside you knows you intend to peel off. **Both riders must peel off at the same time.** Once you have both established that you are

going back, shoulder check! before moving over. You should neither veer off suddenly nor take all day to move over – peel off in a deliberate and controlled manner. Giving the riders behind you a signal is ideal – a flick of your inside elbow tells the riders behind that you are about to peel off. Don't point your finger at the ground beside you as that signals an entirely different thing (see #3). A common beginner faux pas is to stop pedaling just before peeling off the front. This creates an accordion effect toward the rear. Simply, shoulder check to ensure it is safe for you to move to the side and then do so slowly and deliberately while keeping a steady pressure on the pedals until you have cleared the front. Speeding up a little (a couple of strong pedal strokes) before peeling off is perfectly acceptable (and may be preferable) as it effectively clears your rear wheel from the front wheel behind you before you peel off (ahem, not that ANYONE in the group will be overlapping wheels at ANY time).

After peeling off, “soft pedal” and let the group pull through. As the last couple riders are passing through, begin to apply more pressure to your pedal stroke to match the speed of the group and then smoothly reenter the group, taking your position at the rear. If you don't time your reentry correctly, a gap will occur and you will have to sprint to get back on.

At this point, the group will be 4 riders wide across the road. Not ideal. Here are some things to keep in mind: 1) the front pair should not peel off when a line up of cars are waiting to pass the group safely. Best to wait until the road is clear (i.e shoulder check!); 2) when you do peel off and head to the back, don't take all day, soft pedal and reenter the back of the group as soon as possible; 3) the whole group needs to keep in mind that the rider(s) peeling off on the curb side of the road need room (i.e don't “gutter” your riding partners).

TIP: For goodness sake, don't exhaust yourself at the front. Peel off *before* you get tired. The group is only as strong as its weakest member so it is in the group's best interest to keep everyone fresh and happy. So what if your turn at the front is only 10 seconds while everyone else seems to pull forever? Let them. Not only *should* the stronger riders take longer pulls they will *want* the training benefit this provides. Don't forget to tell your partner that you're peeling off so you can do so together (if your partner wants to stay at the front, that's ok, a change of riding pairs can occur, just make sure everyone around you is aware of this).

#6: Pulling Through – When the two riders ahead of you peel off, it is your job to come through to the front and pull the group along. If you do not want to ride at the front because you are tired or less fit than the rest of the group, it's too late to avoid it now. Once you are in second wheel, you **MUST** come through to the front. **Do not** speed up, and do not get out of the bar-to-bar formation. Maintain your speed and go straight through without hesitation. If there is a strong headwind you will notice when those lead riders peel off that your speed will decrease. It's important to keep in mind that you will need to increase your *effort* (pressure on your pedals), in relation to the wind, in order to maintain the pace of the ride but do not overcompensate and increase your *speed*.

If you find that you do not have the strength to be at the front then take a “token pull” – ride at the front for a couple of seconds, agree with the rider beside you that you are both peeling off, and go to the back. Once at the back decide whether or not you want to remain in the rotation (take another turn at the front) or if you need to sit at the back for a while (or all day). Taking token pulls is a good way of increasing your fitness but remember, don't exhaust yourself. It's perfectly acceptable to stay at the back. Just let the riders coming back from the front know that you are “sitting in” and allow them to slot in ahead of you in the group. Tip: Keep in mind that the very back of the group is actually less ideal than the middle of a group. Riders at the back suffer the worst of the accordion effect that is inevitable no matter how conscientious the group.

#7: Fill the Gaps – There should be no gaps in a group ride. As soon as you see a gap, fill it by riding into the space in a steady and controlled manner. There is no need to sprint into the space and then slam on the brakes, just gradually fill in any gaps as soon as you see them.

TIP: When moving over in front of another rider, look down under your elbow to see the front wheel of that rider behind and judge exactly when it is safe to move over in front of them (not too soon as to cause them to swerve to avoid touching wheels but not too late as to cause a split in the group).

#8: Maneuvering in the Group – If you need to go to the back of the group, or need to move away from the side of the road because the road is damaged (for example), just steadily move in whatever direction you want to go in. The key to all group riding is to do things gradually and steadily. Even if there is a rider right next to you as you move over, if you do it gradually, the other rider will naturally move over with you. If you do anything sudden you will likely cause a crash.

If you are feeling strong (willing and able to expend more energy) and there is a cross wind you should position yourself on the windward side of the group. This way the “weaker” riders will be sheltered from the wind and able to conserve more energy. Likewise, if you are on the windward side and getting tired let the riders beside and behind you know that you need to switch sides. The rider beside you can then let a gap open in front of them that you can slowly fill while the rider behind you moves up to fill your space. See the TIP above under #6.

Strong cross winds are best battled in an “echelon”, however this is not a safe way for a large group to travel on open roadways (it takes up the whole road). So, we will predominately stick to the “social” double paceline formation. A double paceline that is constantly rotating (see “circular” in diagram) is the best alternative to an echelon in a strong crosswind situation. Familiarize yourself with this rotating paceline so you will know what to do when we decide to ride this way.

TIP: In a cross wind situation the direction of group rotation should be dictated by the wind with the slower lane being on the windward side i.e. clockwise for a right hand cross wind and vice versa.

#9: Slowing and Adjusting Speed – Many of the riders in our MNR group are new to drafting and group riding which means we spend a lot of time practicing and getting more comfortable riding very close to each other. But not TOO close, just close enough to benefit from the draft and keep gaps to a minimum.

For those already comfortable with group riding consider this TIP: instead of riding precisely behind the wheel in front of you, keep your front wheel slightly to the side (NOT overlapping but behind and to the side, instead of directly behind the wheel you are following). This way if the rider in front of you slows down your wheels are less likely to touch. All you need do is stop pedaling or soft pedal until that rider speeds up again, using this temporary wheel overlap as a buffer zone so as not to slow down too suddenly for the riders behind you (starting that dreaded accordion effect through the group).

Generally speaking, DO NOT BRAKE in the peloton. If you must apply your brakes at any time do so gently, subtly and gradually – it's called “feathering” the brakes. Better ways of slowing your speed is to soft pedal, sit up a little or move slightly to the side and out of the draft for a moment. Excessive braking usually precedes crashing. Maintain a comfortable distance behind the rider in front of you and RELAX.

Also PAY ATTENTION – to the road ahead, to the riders ahead, don't get caught up in conversation and forget that you are driving a vehicle (with only a thin layer of lycra protecting you from the asphalt).

Climbing— When you need to get out of the saddle, such as when climbing, your bike will naturally shift backwards as you stand up. This is fine when riding solo but when in a group, with a rider close behind you, be aware. Shift into an appropriate gear and stand up smoothly while keeping a steady pressure on the pedals. This will keep your bike from shifting backward as you stand up. Apply the opposite technique when changing to a sitting position. Adjust your gear if necessary and keep a steady pressure on the pedals to avoid abrupt changes in speed.

Descending—The leader must overcome a much greater wind resistance as the speed increases. If you are leading on a downhill, KEEP PEDALING. If you don't, everyone behind you will eat your lunch. Riders to the rear will accelerate faster downhill as drafting becomes more effective at the higher speeds. If you are following, back off a couple of bike lengths 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 feather your brakes 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.

#10: Relax – This one is really important. Staying relaxed, especially in the shoulders and arms, will allow you to be smooth and responsive. If you are not relaxed you will be “twitchy” and “all over the road” and you may notice that other riders don’t want to be near you (you are fearsome). Anytime you are riding in close proximity of other riders there's always the chance that you may come into contact. If you have tense arms and get bumped from the side, the shock will go directly to your front wheel and you will swerve, possibly lose control, and possibly cause a crash. If you are relaxed, it's much easier to absorb the bump without losing control. A good exercise is to go to a grass field with a friend and ride slowly side by side. Relax your arms and lightly bump each other using your relaxed elbows to absorb the (light) impact. While you're at it, take turns riding behind one another and touch wheels (gently). You will become familiar with how to safely recover from this type of contact. It may save you, and others, from suffering “road rash” someday.

TIP: We will do these drills in our annual road skills clinic.

Other things to keep in mind:

- No aero bars – you don't need to remove them from your bike but DO NOT use them while riding in a group.
- Obey the rules of the road – we will “unclip”/put foot down at each stop sign and red light. Once safe to do so we'll travel as a group through the intersection. If the group is large and the light is short DO NOT run the red light. The group ahead will wait.
- Bring at least 1 spare tube and a means of pumping air into it in the event that you flat. If you do not have these with you then let the group leader(s) know before the ride starts.
- Bring enough fluids and bar(s) or gel(s) to hydrate and energize you for a 2 hour ride. This is especially important in the heat of the summer!
- Be aware and look after each other – if you notice that a rider is being dropped or otherwise having difficulty let others know. If you hear “slow down” or “flat” from behind it is your responsibility to relay that to the rider(s) in front of you etc., etc. until everyone has the message (see #3). Social conversation with your fellow cyclists is a good thing and by no means discouraged but don't let it distract you from a general awareness of the road and the group.
- Keep to the side of the road as much as possible. We only need to use half the driving lane. But remember to allow enough room on the right for riders coming back from the front.

Let's review:

- NO SHOUTING – communicate with hand gestures or relay messages such as “car back” or “flat” to the riders closest to you.
- PAY ATTENTION – don't ride over debris or through potholes. Point them out AHEAD of time and steer the group around.
- NO BRAKING – review #8 above.
- RELAX – don't stare, stay loose but alert.
- SHOULDER CHECK – don't become a hood ornament.
- MAINTAIN THE PACE – don't speed up when you reach the front EXCEPT when going downhill.
- NO HALF WHEELING – match the speed of the rider beside you.
- DON'T OVERLAP WHEELS – something that won't happen when everyone is riding bar to bar and not half wheeling.