

Cycling – A Guide to Group Riding

Before you go out!

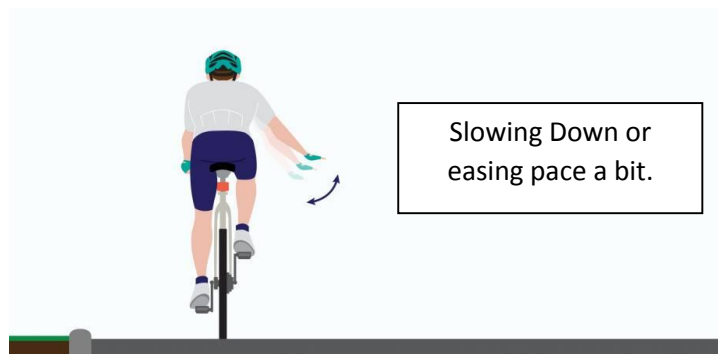
Some of this may seem obvious but it still needs to be said! There are a few things you should do before you go out on a group ride (or a solo ride when it comes to it!)

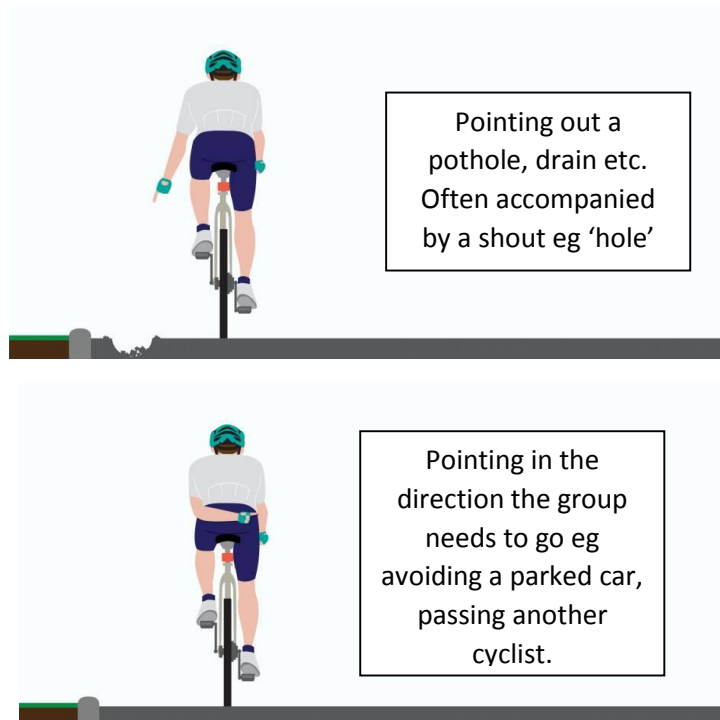
- Make sure your bike is in good working order with inflated tyres in decent condition, gears and brakes that work and remember to take spares eg inner tube, pump etc.
- Remember your helmet, no helmet no ride for most group rides. And on that note, I'd advise bright clothing and gloves (you really don't want to hit the tarmac without gloves!).
- If you're new to group riding, relax and don't panic. If you are new and/or a bit of a novice then let others know, they can then look out for you and help with some advice.
- Don't expect to become an expert in one go, it takes time. Ask if you're not sure of anything and take your time picking up the new skills.

General Group riding Advice

This is general advice for riding with others and especially in a group.

- Keep it smooth, no sudden changes in direction and no sudden accelerations or braking.
- Announce hazards – give a shout if there is a pothole coming up or a drain to be avoided or a parked car etc. You will hear shouts of 'hole', 'surface' etc which are normally passed down the line when group riding.
- When riding in a group in twos etc, you will normally also hear other warnings such as 'car back' or 'tail' to warn of a car at the back of the group. 'Car up' or 'nose' indicates a car etc coming towards the group. If there is a need to ride single file then there may be a shout of 'single up'. These shouts vary from area to area but should always make sense.
- Use hand signals to warn of hazards eg pointing down to a hole, pointing behind your back when there is something at the side of the road, waving to indicate slowing down etc.





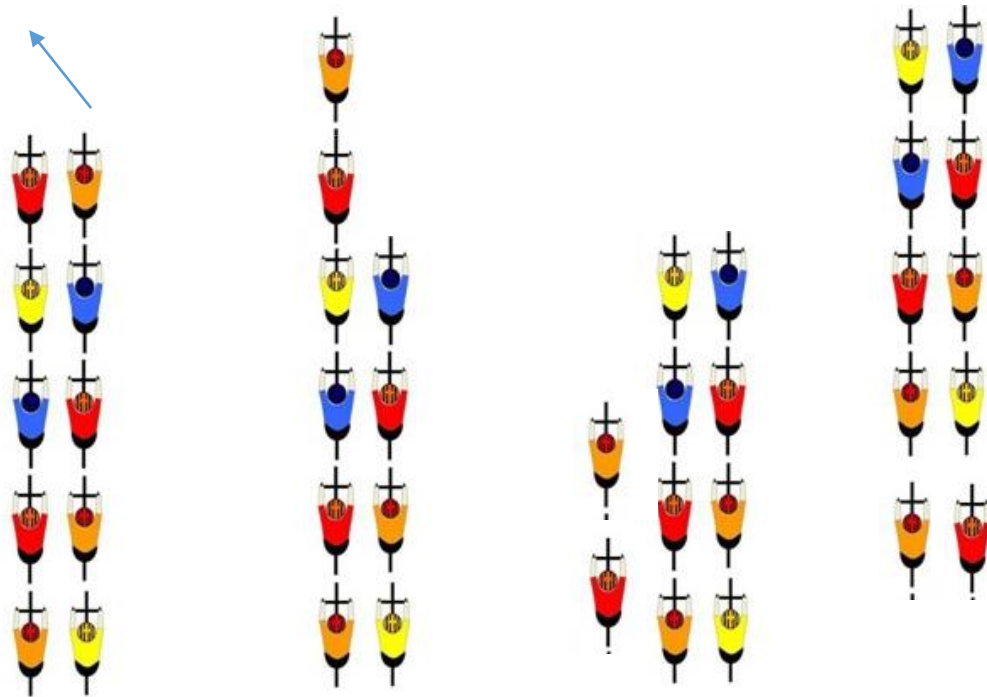
- Be careful when getting out the saddle to pedal. When you move out the saddle eg on a climb, the bike tends to move back a bit, try to avoid this by keeping it smooth and keeping the pressure on when rising.
- Don't be shy about taking your turn. Even if you are tired and one of the slow ones, try to take a spell at the front. If the rest of the group either don't want you there or they know you are 'weaker' then they will say and let you know to 'sit on'. It's nice to make an effort and they will appreciate it.
- Don't 'half-wheel' when riding side by side. It's not a race! 'half-wheeling' is where a rider sits a few inches in front of you (half a wheel). The tendency is that the person behind then speeds up to get alongside, at which point they 'half-wheel' again and so it continues, getting faster and faster! The idea is to ride side by side.
- Don't ride in the gutter. Don't ride too close to the side of the road, too many potholes, gravel, glass etc.
- When riding side by side, don't overlap wheels with the person in front, you don't want them moving and clipping your front wheel.
- Obey the rules of the road, no going through red lights, riding on the other side of the road etc.
- Group rides will normally be in pairs with 2 riders at the front side by side and then all the other riders in pairs down the road. Follow the spacing of the others in the group, it might seem quite close at first but you will get used to it.

Group Riding – How it's done

There are different ways of group riding, all are based on groups riding in pairs, with a pair in front and a pair directly behind and so on. The variations below are around how the group changes who is at the front.

- **Longish, steady turns** – This is common in group, club rides where the changes at the front are limited ie people do quite a long 'spell' at the front. Commonly the front two riders will change after a few minutes/half a mile up to several minutes/miles. In this case it might be

left to the lead riders to 'pull-off' when they have had enough or a group leader will shout 'spell' or 'change' to indicate that the front riders should change. When it is time to change the rider on the outside (nearest the centre of the road) will accelerate slightly and pull in just in front of the rider on the inside. They will then ease up slightly and drift to the back of the group as the other riders stay in their pairs but move out slightly to 'overtake'.



1. To change, outside rider, accelerates slightly and moves just in front of inside rider.

2. Both riders then ease off pace and start to drift towards the back.

3. Other pairs, move out slightly to let them through. First rider to the back goes to outside.

4. Riders at the front have now moved to the back and the next pair have taken over with no change of speed.

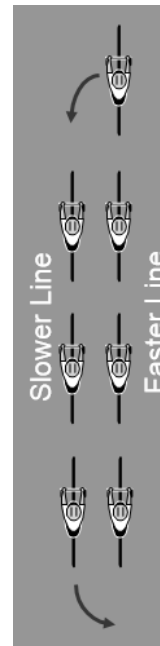
- Through and Off (paceline, bit and bit)** – known, by a few different names, this is probably the hardest group riding technique to get the hang of. It relies on everyone knowing what they are doing and trusting one another! When it works it is 'poetry in motion', when it doesn't, it can be very frustrating!! In 'through and off', there are two lines of riders. The riders on the outside (nearest the centre of the road) are riding slightly faster and are coming 'through'. The riders on the inside are going slightly slower and are riding 'off'. There is continual changing at the front with this technique. As the rider on the outside gets to the front they keep going at the same speed as the person in front of them pulls off to the front of the inside line. As the outside rider clears the inside rider they ease over to lead the

inside line and ease off the pace slightly. At this stage the rider on the outside will move past and then pull in, in front of you. When you get to the back, you accelerate slightly and move over to join the outside line of riders. A decent video of this is

<https://youtu.be/aYOJYcwReE>

Note: Don't cut in too early when moving off the front, leave space for the rider you are passing. Also remember that when you get to the front, you don't speed up! Keep it steady till you move over and then ease up a bit.

Two images which might help explain?



- Variations on above!! – There are many variations of the above techniques, most should make sense once you watch what the other riders are doing for a bit. If you're not sure, just ask another rider!
 - One common variation is locally called '**50 revs**' (it could also be **30 revs!!**)

This is similar to 'through and off' above. In this case the rider on the outside does 50 revs (50 pedal strokes) and then accelerates slightly to move in front of the inside rider. At this point the person now in front in the outside line, moves alongside the new front rider and again does 50 revs before moving forward. It is basically like doing 'through and off' but with a 50 rev pause. In this variation you do 50 revs on the outside, move to the front and then will have another 50 revs before you then move back along the inside line.
 - Another variation is a paceline or 'through and off' but this time in a single line.

In this case the main line of riders sits slightly out from the inside of the road (enough to allow a rider to move back from the front. The rider at the front does their spell at the front and then pulls off to the inside and moves to the back of the line. At the same time the new rider at the front doesn't increase speed, they just keep riding at the same pace. This can be done on a continuous motion or the rider at the front may stay there for a few revs. This can be quite difficult and would normally be used in a team time trial or by an experienced group of riders.