



## **Meridian Triathlon Club (MTC) – Ride Guidelines**

This document is intended to provide guidance to riding in a group. Cycling on the public roads has some inherent danger attached, but as a club we want to support and encourage people to ride safely and enjoyably, respecting their fellow riders and other road users.

By following a few basic "rules of etiquette", we can achieve this, so please read. It is hoped you will find it useful and we would encourage you to contact us in advance of the rides, if you have any queries or concerns (email [info@meridiantriclub.co.uk](mailto:info@meridiantriclub.co.uk)).

These guidelines are based on best practice issued to us by British Cycling, and on the collective decades of cycling experience that the ride navigators have. Thanks, are also due to Royston Cycling Club and Tri London for letting us use their guidelines as a basis for ours.

By joining our club, you agree to abide by these guidelines, so please take the time to read them.

**Please note that group/club rides are not coached unless otherwise stated**

We have an emergency WhatsApp group for club members. This is for if you're out cycling/training locally and need urgent help - not for a puncture (you should be able to sort out that type of roadside repair yourself) but a major mechanical, injury or accident.

If you'd like to join it, please see our Facebook page or contact a member of the committee. This is on the understanding that anyone on the group is equally willing to help others on the group, if available and local.

### ***Ride Etiquette - SAFETY – PREPARATION - RESPECT – FUN***

#### **SAFETY:**

This is the single most important consideration for our Club rides, and we ask you to take this very seriously.

- Ensure that you are familiar with the MTC risk assessment for club rides which can be found on the MTC webpage.
- Follow the Highway Code at all times – it applies to **ALL** road-users, including stopping at red-lights and riding no more than two-abreast.
- It's MTC policy that all riders must wear a helmet – **no helmet no ride**.
- It is essential that your bike is in a safe and roadworthy condition before each ride. If you are unsure many local bike shops will offer a bike-check. Ensure you have working brakes, inspect your tyres for damage to the side-walls and foreign objects embedded in the tread and are pumped up to the recommended PSI (as written on tyre.)
- If your emergency contact details are stored in your phone which has a security code on it, please have these somewhere accessible, too, such as on a piece of paper (membership

cards have the option of this being printed on them) or write them in permanent marker on your cycle helmet.

- To stay safe, it is essential that cyclists stay aware of what is going on around them when riding so under no circumstance are headphones to be used on any Club rides.
- **TT/Aero bars are not permitted on club rides**
- In the unlikely event that there is an incident, please support the ride navigator and offer any help you can, whether it be making a phone call to seek help, warning other road users (often the most critical thing to do), or assisting with any injured riders.
- Talk to each other. Point out either with hand signals or shouts, all potholes, manhole covers and other dangers 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.
- Cycle a maximum of two abreast in 2 close parallel lines, where appropriate, focus on keeping it neat and tidy. Where appropriate and safe to do so, allow drivers to get past you on narrow roads. Be extra cautious on blind bends.
- Please respect ALL other road users including drivers, pedestrians, runners, dog-walkers and horse-riders.
- When approaching **horse-riders** it is important to acknowledge the rider as the horse may not be familiar with cyclists and they can be spooked by silent bikes approaching – slow down and always call to the horse riders well ahead of catching them – a cheery “Good morning” or “Hello” or “Bike”. Keep calling until the riders indicate they know you are there. They may want to turn the horse so it can see you. Slow right down when passing horses, and pass them as wide as it is safe to do so.

### PREPARATION:

Please ensure that you are suitably prepared before each ride. Bring everything you might need and do not rely on others to have something.

- E.g. puncture repair kit, tyre levers, inner tubes, pump, multi tool (including chain tool), food, water, money, credit card, mobile, contact details in case of emergency. That said we tend to travel light enough to fill seat packs but not to fill panniers or rucksacks.
- **We would ask all riders to be able to fix basic problems such as punctures, themselves.** Always carry some spare inner tubes that are the correct size for your wheels, as other riders will be unlikely to have spares.
- You may wish to carry a pocket size cable lock to deter thieves at any coffee stops.
- It is also handy to be aware of the destination and route taken.
- When the roads are wet, and always throughout the months of Greenwich Mean Time (end of October - end of March), to avoid spraying other members of the group with mud and water from their back wheel, riders are expected to fit a rear mudguard. Riders not so equipped may be excluded from the group or required to ride at the back. At other times of the year, in the event that a group finds itself on unexpectedly wet roads, the expected courtesy is for those without a rear mudguard to ride at the back of the group.
- Dress sensibly for the conditions (temperature and precipitation). Brightly coloured clothing is preferable to black and in low light reflective or fluorescent clothing is useful. Most riders tend to layer up with a number of thin layers rather than a single thick jacket. A wind/waterproof in your rear pocket can be very useful.
- Front and rear lights are recommended especially when visibility is poor

## RESPECT:

- We ask everyone, when riding on a Meridian Tri Club ride to have respect for their fellow riders and other road-users
- Ride navigators are volunteers who enable club rides to go ahead safely. They will have the safety of the whole group in mind. So please respect any decisions that they may make, for example, cancelling or cutting short a ride.
- Please get to the rides well before the scheduled departure time. We will divide into groups based on speed, and then look to get going promptly at the published time.
- It is useful for you to gauge your average riding speed both for group riding and training purposes. You can do this using a relatively cheap bike computer/speedo, an app on your phone or a GPS device such as Garmin.
- **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 ;)
- Cycle with confidence. If you're nervous you will tense up and then are less likely to be able to respond to things quickly.
- Junctions: Don't wait at junctions as it impedes drivers and can be distracting and never stop on roundabouts.
- If you get separated from the group keep going and the ones in front should stop at their earliest convenience and wait. If you find you are waiting for longer than 5 minutes (or you have no sight of them) loop back to the rear group – it is possible that they may have mechanical problems.

## FUN:

- Let's not forget that we do this because we love our sport, so let's do it with a smile on our faces. A cheery "hello" to passing groups and other road users helps to keep our sport friendly.

## GROUP RIDING

- Ride with 2ft 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.
- 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.
- Ride at a steady pace, keeping the pack as a compact unit.
- 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", "Wait" or "Slowing" to warn the pack of hazards.
- Lead cyclists to navigate and point out hazards in the road by either shouting or using hand signals. Listen to them and act on the calls, and most importantly, **repeat them for the cyclist behind you**
- When on the front keep pedalling, this is particularly important going downhill. If you freewheel everyone behind will have to brake.
- **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. **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.

- Cover your brakes at all times. Brake as gently and smoothly as you safely can when riding in a 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 for a moment. Look at your speedo – 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.
- Check over your shoulder for other riders or traffic and signal, if appropriate, before moving out to the right.
- If you find you are constantly being left behind on a ride you should move down a group – chat to a ride navigator about this.

### DO NOT.....

- **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. Keep 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 – it is your responsibility to keep you safe!
- Do not stop suddenly to answer your mobile phone.

# The British Cycling Club's guide to riding in groups

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This has been adapted from the British cycling club's guide to riding in a group.

## Introduction

If you're not used to riding in a group, it can be intimidating and by not being comfortable in a group and being able to shelter from the wind, you'll be making any ride significantly more difficult.

## Communicate and Calling out

The most important factor to successful group riding is **communication**. Make sure you know the meaning of and always pass any verbal signals through the group so that everyone can hear.

- ***Slowing/Easy***: Usually accompanied by a hand signal. The group is slowing, perhaps for an approaching junction
- ***Stopping***: The cyclist in front needs to stop – brake!
- ***“Car Back”***: a vehicle is approaching from behind
- ***“Car front/UP”***: a vehicle is approaching from the front
- ***“Single out”***: the group moves to riding single file, perhaps in order to allow a vehicle to pass or when passing through a village with parked cars
- ***“Clear/Stop/Car left/Car right”*** – verbal communication at junctions. You must check yourself and not rely on others.
- ***“Hole”***: Upcoming pothole to avoid. This can also be followed by a direction i.e. “HOLE LEFT/Middle/RIGHT”.

Be aware there are local variations of these shouts, so use your eyes too. There are a number of hand signals on top of the normal left and right-hand signals you should also be aware of (see illustrations below).

## Be aware

Stay relaxed in the group but constantly look around and don't mindlessly follow the wheels. Look past the riders in front to get a heads up of the road ahead. Always look first and let the riders around you know before moving within the group.

## Obey the rules of the road

Respect junctions and always stay on the correct side of the road.

## Ride consistently and predictably

Your movements will affect everyone in the group. Hold a straight line, don't weave and always overtake around the right-hand side of the group. Don't grab your brakes and, if you stand out of the saddle, don't let your back wheel drop back.

Do not make sudden changes of speed or direction when riding in a group. Consider the proximity of other riders and how your actions might affect them. For example, getting out of the saddle to stand on the pedals can have the same effect as braking, should you throw your weight forward and not maintain pressure on the pedals.

## Don't overlap wheels

In case the rider ahead needs to brake, don't follow their rear wheel directly. It's perfectly acceptable and you'll get the same drafting benefit from riding six inches on either side of it.

However, it's essential that you don't overlap their rear wheel as any sudden movements by them will be likely to bring both of you down.

### **Avoid half wheeling**

If road conditions and traffic allows, you'll often be riding two abreast. Maintain an even pace and stay level with the person next to you. Do not constantly up the pace whenever a rider draws level to you. Known as "half-wheeling" this is definitely frowned on.

### **Wheel suck**

Don't always sit amongst the wheels and shirk your stint on the front. Even if you just put in a few turns of the pedals it'll be appreciated. However, even if you're finding the pace easy, don't get on the front and accelerate, try to maintain the pace of the group.

### **Don't ride in the gutter**

If you're on the front of the group, don't sit in the gutter as you'll be forcing everyone else to follow you increasing the likelihood of hitting obstructions such as drain covers and of picking up punctures. Where possible, ride 1 m out from the curb.

### **Expect the group to change**

Groups will change, fragment and reform as the ride progresses. Expect larger groups on flat sections but, on longer climbs, they'll break up. Similarly, on descents, riders will tend to string out to give more time to react at higher speeds.

### **Hand Signals**

In addition to the standard directional signal of the left or right hand extended out to the side, which should be used whenever you are cycling on the public highway, see below some of the other common hand signals used when riding in a group situation.

Make yourself aware of these prior to going out on a group ride and also check with a group member which hand signals and verbal shouts they regularly use, as they can vary locally.

### **"Slowing down"**

**One hand as if "gently patting an invisible dog":** This shows that the group is slowing down or just to ease the pace back a bit.



**“Pothole or hazard in road”**

**Pointing down at the road sometimes with a circling motion:** Indicates an obstruction or hazard on the road such as a pothole or drain cover that needs to be avoided. Be sensible with this one and only point out major obstacles that should be avoided. This signal is often accompanied with a call of ‘below’.



**“Move out due to obstruction”**

**Waving/pointing behind back:** Indicates that there is an obstruction such as a parked car or pedestrian and that the whole group needs to move in the direction indicated to avoid it.



### **Additional Resources:**

1) Ridesmart/GCN 3 min basic video:

[How To Ride In A Group | Ridesmart](#)

2) British Triathlon General group riding video:

[Group Riding Etiquette](#)

3) British Triathlon: Calling and signalling:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=115&v=SsMDIITXZBU&embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britishtriathlon.org%2F&source\\_ve\\_path=MTM5MTE3LDIzODUx](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=115&v=SsMDIITXZBU&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britishtriathlon.org%2F&source_ve_path=MTM5MTE3LDIzODUx)

4) Pacelines: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britishtriathlon.org%2F&source\\_ve\\_path=MTM5MTE3LDE2NDk5LDI4NjY0LDE2NDUwMw&v=\\_84gPoRwU0E&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britishtriathlon.org%2F&source_ve_path=MTM5MTE3LDE2NDk5LDI4NjY0LDE2NDUwMw&v=_84gPoRwU0E&feature=youtu.be)

5) Road cycling UK - guide to hand signals and calls - written document with images, not a video:

<https://roadcyclinguk.com/how-to/technique/essential-guide-road-cycling-hand-signals-calls.html>