

Uxbridge Loiterers' Guide to Riding in Groups

This guidance has been adapted from Winchester CTC's & the British Cycling Club's guides to riding in a group.

Introduction

Riding in a group is great fun but is **different from cycling on your own**. When on a club ride, you represent the club. Do not deliberately try to intimidate drivers or hold them up. Be courteous to other road users, even if they aren't courteous to you.

The following guidance is designed to make the rides safe and enjoyable for all.

Make sure both you and your bike are prepared

Ensure your bike is well maintained as misfiring gears or poor brakes can make you a liability in a group. Carry suitable spares, clothing and some of your own food and drink so that you are self-reliant. A pump, spare innertube, tyre levers and a bike lock are essential. Carry your club membership card with your next of kin details with you.

Follow the Leader

Follow the instructions of the group leader. **Avoid overtaking the leader** - it is extremely frustrating for everyone, to have to stop the group to go find an errant 'hare'. If you find yourself ahead of the leader, e.g. on a long uphill, stop at the top where safe to regroup. Also stop if you get to a junction. Don't assume you know the route. Bear in mind the leader is concentrating on navigation and keeping the ride together don't be surprised if they are reluctant to join in a long and diverting conversation whilst on the road!

If you want to leave the group during the ride, tell the leader or backmarker so that you are not treated as a "missing person". Tell the leader if someone leaves the group without telling the leader.

Cycle Considerately

Please be courteous to other road users. **Aggressive behaviour towards other road users insisting on 'cyclists' rights' is not the Loiterers' way**. Be patient. An angry and frustrated driver will often take risks and drive aggressively, endangering the safety of the whole group. In a large group and, particularly if there is traffic behind that cannot overtake, be prepared to split into smaller groups of about 4 to 6 to help it pass. The gap between groups should be at least 4 car lengths (about 20m). Where appropriate pull in to let the car pass. Follow the leader's guidance on this or take action yourself if the leader is unaware of the problem. **A well structured group ride will proceed as a series of pods adequately spaced to let vehicles overtake.**

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. As well as obvious shouts such as "**slowing**" and "**stopping**", others to be aware of are "**car down**", meaning there is a car ahead coming towards the group to be aware of, "**car up**", meaning there is a car behind waiting to come through and "**single file**", meaning to adopt single file. 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 at the end of the guidance).

Be aware

Stay relaxed in the group but constantly look around and don't mindlessly follow the cyclist in front. Look past those in front of you to get a heads up of the road ahead. Just because cyclists 1 to 8 have successfully completed a manoeuvre it doesn't mean it's safe for cyclist 9! Always look first and **take responsibility for your own safety.**

Obey the rules of the road

Follow the Highway Code - don't jump lights or fail to stop for pedestrians on designated crossings.

Specific Hazards

- Don't block the sight of motorists already at the junction and waiting to pull out.
- Avoid overcrowding "T" junctions.
- General hazards (e.g. walker, jogger, dog, parked car etc.): Call "on the left" or "on the right" and slow down as appropriate.
- Horses - Ensure the rider is aware of your presence give the horse a wide berth and pass slowly and carefully. The horse will often be aware of you before the rider. Use verbal messages and not your bell. The last person past the horse(s) should inform the horse rider that they are the back of the group.

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. If you are changing position within the group tell people what you are doing.

Don't overlap wheels

In case the rider ahead needs to brake, don't follow their rear wheel too close. 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.

Riding Two Abreast

If road conditions and traffic allows, some of the group will be riding two abreast. Maintain an even pace and stay level with the person next to you. Whilst this is a good opportunity to chat, maintain your awareness of what's going on around you. **A call of 'car up' should be taken as an instruction to revert to single file.** If you are on the outside be aware of wide vehicles coming towards you and single out if necessary. The person on the inside accelerates and the person on the outside slows a little to drop behind. Do not constantly up the pace whenever a rider draws level to you.

Don't ride in the gutter

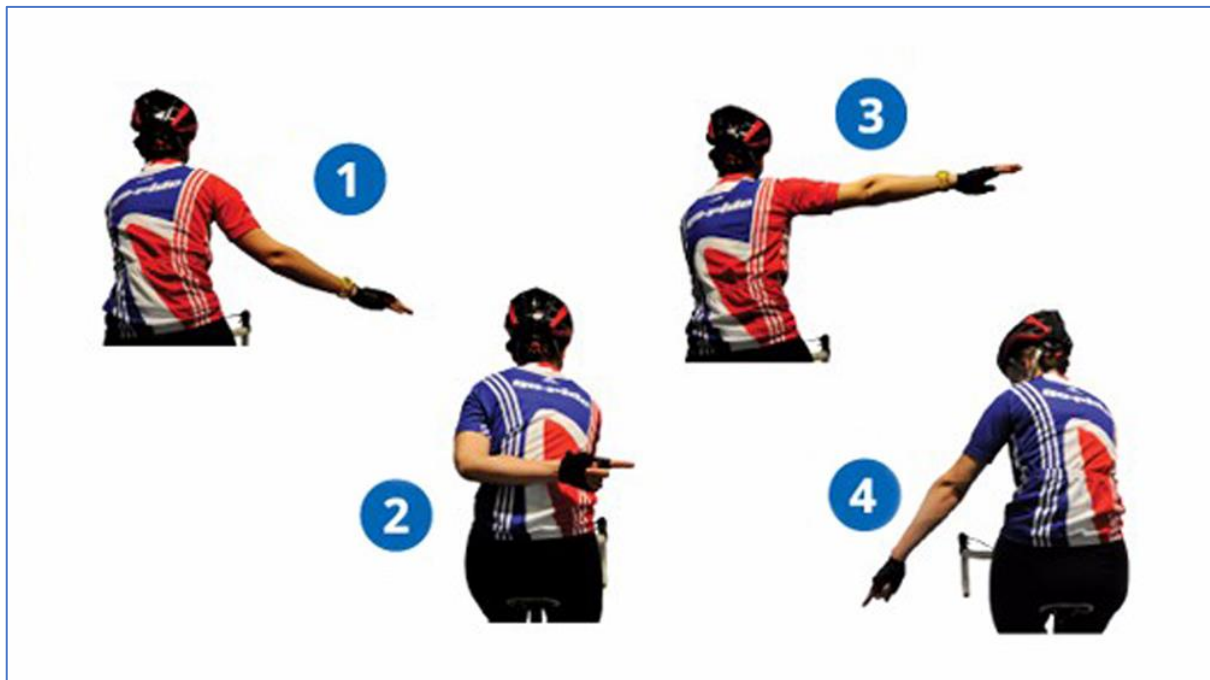
Riding close to the curb increases the likelihood of hitting obstructions such as drain covers. Where possible, ride 1 metre out from the curb - this is known as the **secondary position**. The **primary position** is at the centre of the moving traffic lane - normally the middle of your half of the carriage way. You will adopt that position, for example, prior to making a right turn. **Look behind you** before moving from the secondary to the primary position.

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. If the group has fragmented, be prepared to wait at a major change in direction to indicate to 'stragglers' the way forward.

Cycling Hand Signals

Stay safe when group cycling on the roads by using these four important hand signals, provided by British Cycling.



1 Slow

Move one hand as if gently patting an invisible dog. Group is slowing down or just easing things back a bit.

2 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.

3 Turn

Left or right hand extended out to side. Direction of turn/change in direction coming up.

4 Hazard

Pointing down at a hazard with a circling motion. This indicates a hazard such as a pothole or drain cover that needs to be avoided. Be sensible with this one and only point out major obstacles. This signal is often accompanied with a call of "below".