

Roberttown Community Cycling Club

Members Guide to Group Rides and Riding Safely

The following is intended as a guide to new and experienced riders to help ensure the safety and enjoyment of all, particularly those new to riding on the road or in a group.

All members of the club are responsible for safe, group riding. All members should be aware of the road conditions, traffic, and play their part with keeping together.

Communication

The most important factor in successful group riding is communication. Make sure you know the meaning of common verbal signals and ensure these are repeated so those further back in the group are made aware of them. Most are common sense but if any are not clear then please clarify with those you are riding with. Common 'shouts' include:

- Slowing
- Braking
- Stopping
- Inside (hazard on the curb side of the group such as potholes)
- Middle (hazard on the outside of the rider in front)
- Mechanical - someone needs to pull over to fix a problem with their bike
- Mile off - please slow the pace down as some are struggling
- Car up / behind - car approaching from the rear
- Car down / in front - car coming towards you
- Single out - adopt single file
- Double up – ride two abreast

Some of these can also be indicated by means of a hand signal which can be useful for those hard of hearing or when traffic noise is muffling verbal signals. Always try to repeat signals that the person in front is making to ensure those behind are also given warning of the hazard.

Illustrations of commonly used hand signals can be found at the end of this guide.

Be Aware

As you get more experienced you will relax more when riding in larger groups. However, we all need to remain vigilant of our surroundings including the traffic and riders around us.

There may be occasions when you want to move forward in the group or backwards. As you would for any other manoeuvre let others know what you are intending to do and look to make sure it is safe to carry out the move.

Rules of the road

Riding a bike on the road is no different from being on the road in any other vehicle. The vast majority of club runs are on open roads and all normal signage, traffic lights and rules must be observed by the group.

If a junction or traffic light splits a group never be tempted to 'squeeze' through. Simply shout 'split' to those who have made it through and await a safe moment to proceed. Those that were able to get through should either slow down to allow the others to catch up or pull in at a safe position at the side of the road.

Ride consistently and predictably

The movements you make will affect everyone in the group and are usually magnified as the actions are replicated through the group. Therefore, please ensure that you:

- Hold a straight line where possible
- Do not weave around
- Don't brake sharply unless to avoid an immediate impact
- When standing out of the saddle be aware that this will push your bike back slightly if you don't adjust accordingly
- If you do need to pull over ensure there is space to do so without veering across the line of another rider.

Don't overlap wheels

If you aren't aware of the benefit of drafting already you will soon appreciate the advantage of riding in someone's wheel. However, care must always be taken to ensure you don't overlap wheels as there may still be occasion where the rider in front has to make a sudden movement. Leaving a small gap between the front of your front wheel and the rear of their rear wheel will ensure that there are no accidents if someone has to make a sudden move.

As far as possible we should all try to ride in line (it is still possible to look further down the road for any potential hazards). If people start to ride on the shoulder of the person in front, then this can have a knock-on impact right down the group with riders being pushed too far towards the centre of the road.

Similarly in cross winds it can be tempting to get on the shoulder of the rider in front to get a better drafting benefit. This may be fine in the Tour de France where all riders are on closed roads but on open roads you run the risk of coming in to conflict with oncoming traffic as riders get pushed further toward the centre of the road.

Avoid half wheeling

Where road conditions permit, we will usually be riding two abreast. It is important for the benefit of all to maintain an even pace, suitable for the group you're riding with.

Do not try to race the person alongside you as there will eventually be someone who can't keep up as the pace increases - one day this person could be you!

Don't ride in the gutter

If you're riding on the front of the group, don't sit in the gutter as you'll be forcing everyone else to follow you. In the gutter you're more likely to hit hazards such as manhole covers and potholes, Also, this is where road debris will naturally end up such as glass. Finally leaving a gap between yourself and the curb gives you somewhere to move to if you need to avoid another hazard.

Expect the group to change

As well as positioning in the group changing during the course of a ride the group may also stretch out on climbs and descents. On climbs people will like to climb at their own pace with the group coming together at the top. Similarly on descents where the pace can increase significantly people like to space out to get a clearer view of the road ahead.

Filtering past stationary or slow-moving traffic

It is perfectly legal for cyclists to pass stationary or slow-moving traffic. It is also legal for cyclists to pass on the left or 'undertake'. However never undertake a long vehicle such as a bus or lorry unless it is completely stationary and will remain so until you are past. If in doubt don't undertake as you will be in its blind spot. Also, if the vehicle is turning trailers and overhanging parts of the vehicle can swing out in to what might have looked like an empty space for you to pass.

Care must also be taken when filtering on the right or outside to ensure that you don't come in to conflict with oncoming traffic.

As a courtesy and point of safety to all parties it is also good practise for a whole group to pass on the same side so the vehicle driver can more easily keep track of your movements.

Also, when filtering towards a vehicle at the front of a line of traffic be mindful that if they are at a junction, they will need to be able to see traffic in both directions so try not to block their view. Filtering on both sides of a vehicle or 'swarming', particularly at a junction, can cause a driver to panic.

Remember only filter when it is safe to do so.

Use of mobile phones

Any distraction whilst riding your bike is unwelcome and potentially unsafe, both to yourself and others. We therefore ask that members do not use their phone (for taking calls or pictures) whilst riding in the group. This ensures we comply with the law for the use of mobile phones whilst riding on public roads.

Helmets

Helmets are required on all club rides. Please make sure yours is in good condition. If you have had a fall or it has somehow been hit or damaged, replace it immediately.

(NB many manufacturers will offer a replacement helmet at a reduced rate if you can prove the original purchase)

Bike maintenance

It is the responsibility of all riders to ensure that their bikes are in good working order and suitable for the ride they are attempting. If in doubt please visit your local bike shop to get yours checked over. Riders should also be familiar with the operation of their bikes so that they can affect adjustments or minor repairs should they be required. As a minimum all riders should be able to repair a puncture and have suitable tools to do this at the roadside (tyre levers, spare inner tube, pump).

Mudguards when wet

When it is wet, please ensure that you have at least a rear mudguard (and a front if you want to keep yourself dry!). This should be of sufficient length to prevent spray from your rear wheel covering the rider behind you. During winter months it is advisable to have mudguards on all the time due to the changeable nature of the weather.

Club Rides

These are a great way to meet new members, discover new routes and pick up a few tips. Below are listed the main rides that go out regularly but please keep an eye on the Facebook site for details. Most will usually state expected speed, distance and most importantly where they're planning to stop for a coffee!

All club rides generally start at the Roberttown Community Centre. Check Facebook posts for additional "pick up" points and route details etc.

Saturday morning – Summer at 08:30hrs generally 40-60 miles on road – Winter 09:00hrs Shorter rides 30-50 miles

Tuesday "training rides" – generally 20-25 miles. (March – September)

Thursday Trail rides for Mountain Bikes, Gravel Bikes and Hybrids – A mix of trails, paths and road.

Hand signals

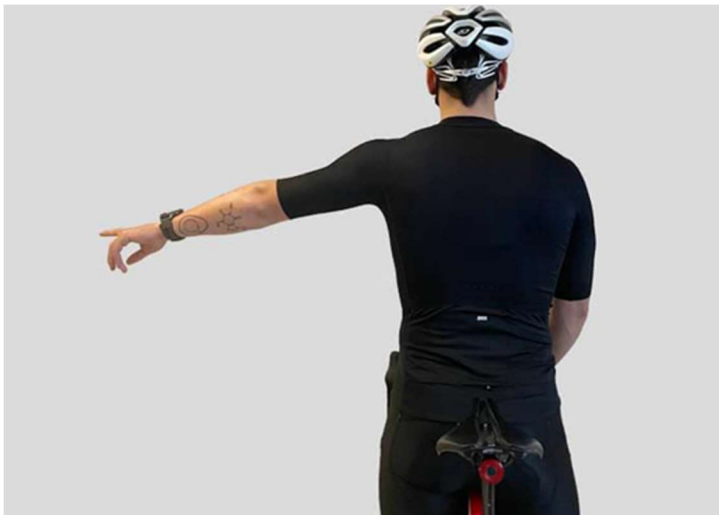
Slowing Down

To let others know you're going to slow down, extend your arm with your palm facing downwards, and move your hand quickly upwards and downwards. It's essential to do it ahead of a junction or a stop sign. Focus on anticipating if you intend to slow down, in order that others have time to react and can hit the brakes progressively.



Turning right or left

One of the most important and widely-used signals by all cyclists. This signal will make any road user aware of your intentions, as a turning light would on a motor vehicle. To signal what side you'll turn to, extend your arm outwards – the left one if you're turning left, and the right one if you're turning right. You can also swing your arm up and down to make it more visible.



Stopping

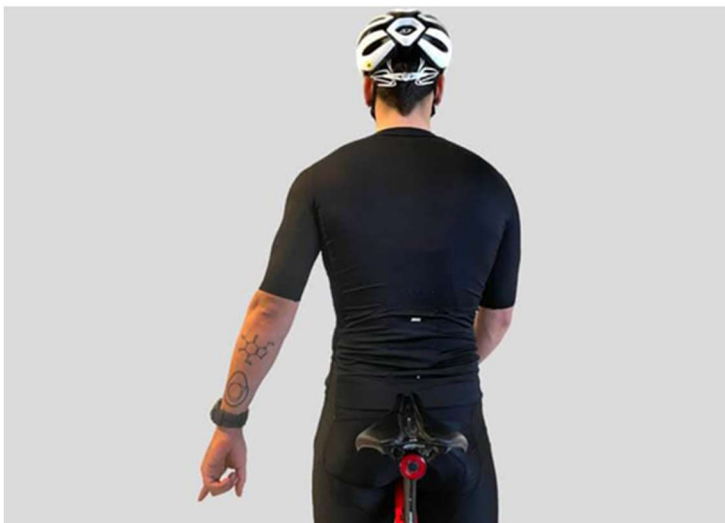
As other signals, this one is also essential to know, especially when riding in a group, to alert others of your intention and avoid crashing. Always signal your intention to stop in advance so that bikes behind you can react on time and also stop correctly. To let others know about it, raise your left or right hand over your head, palm facing onwards. It's advisable to move your hand slightly, to make it more evident.



Indicating an object on the road

When riding with other cyclists, it may be difficult to see what's ahead on the road. That's why the ones riding in front of the rest must alert their partners about any object or obstacle that may be on the road. Once they will have alerted, the ones behind will also signal the same, as if it were a domino effect, until everyone is aware of the obstacle to increase safety and avoid unpleasant surprises.

To alert about a strange object on the road, extend your arm and point to the object itself, while cycling slightly away from the obstacle to make it easier to drive around it.



Signalling holes on the road

Pot holes are a feature on most of our roads and should be pointed out to those around you. To make sure everyone can ride over the hole or avoid it correctly simply point it out to those behind.

Alternatively extend your arm sideways and swing your hand up and down, repeatedly. or you can extend your elbows out, while handling the handlebars, as if you were a bird flapping its wings. This may be appropriate when you need to keep both hands on the bars to maintain control.



Dirty road

Dirt, sand, gravel or oil spillages on the road are dangers not as visible as objects, but can be equally or even more dangerous, as they can cause traction loss and mean falling down. To make others aware of dirt on the road, extend your arm downwards, facepalm facing down, and move your facepalm back and forth, as if you were dusting furniture. With this signal, your fellow cyclists will be able to slow down and grab their handlebars properly, in order to avoid the peril.



Dodging an obstacle

You surely have found some wrongly-parked car in the middle of the road, or a cyclist going slower than you that you need overtake. To alert your group about an obstacle ahead, so that they can dodge it properly, shake your arm behind your back and point at what side you intend to dodge it.

