



RIDER SAFETY DOCUMENT

Learn and Share

The SINGLE most important aspect of completing this ride safely is to communicate with your fellow riders about what you learned and what they learned. There is no one on this ride that knows everything. Therefore, if we take the time to ask questions and volunteer things we learned, the learning curve will be much shorter – and safer – for everyone. We will allocate time for this every day and every night but this should be a regular part of your training with the people around you.

Take It Serious – Speak Up

Cycling is a sport that can kill you if not done properly. I would rather upset someone than take a fall at 40k an hour, so if someone makes an unsafe move or you see something that could cause an accident, speak up. You can always apologize later and explain your intentions. Research into catastrophes such as the space shuttle disaster have shown that more than 50% of people involved thought an accident was likely to happen, yet they failed to speak up for fear of something. So SPEAK UP and help create what we call a “culture of safety.”

Be Predictable

NEVER make sudden or unpredictable movements. If you need to change positions, slow down, stop, or change the direction of the group, make sure you tell everyone well in advance what you are about to do. A common mistake of new riders is to slow down and take a drink without warning or stand up to stretch their legs, creating the risk of a pile up from behind. To do this properly, tell everyone you need a drink and have the entire pack slow down first. Also, never pass anyone from the back unless absolutely necessary and only after you have shouted to tell everyone that you are “passing on the left.”

Do not wait until the last minute to call out obstacles. If you are the lead rider, scan the road well ahead of you and take the group gradually around it. Avoid sudden spasms to either direction.

Be Consistent in Your Communication

There is no one universal system of communication for cyclists. I have found that every group I ride in has a different method to call out holes and obstacles. Some yell “hole right” while others yell “watch right” or something even as odd as “sticks.” The MOST important part of this is that you develop a system that you use EVERY SINGLE TIME with your group. You are cycling at speeds up to 50k an hour and new phrases will not be understood in enough time. On our rides, we use one very simple system with these basic commands from which we NEVER deviate:

“Hole right” indicates an obstacle to the right and you should move left. It doesn’t matter if it is a hole, stick, rock, or wet leaves we call out “hole right.” Call this out to riders behind you.

“Hole left” indicates an obstacle to the left and you should move right. Call this out to riders behind you.

“Slowing” indicates that you are about to slow. DO NOT slow down until you have heard the command repeated behind you.

“Stopping” indicates that you are about to stop. DO NOT stop until you have heard the command repeated behind you.

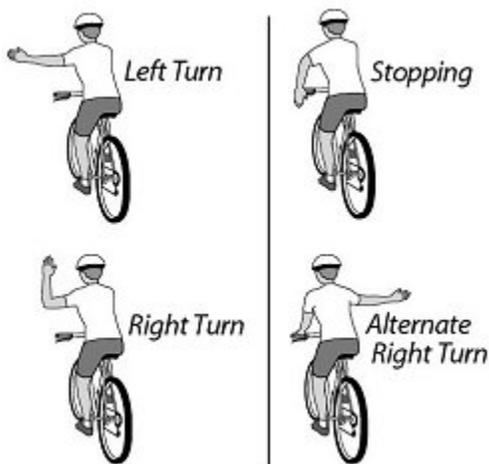
“Car back!” indicates there is a vehicle approaching from behind.

“Car up!” indicates there is an oncoming vehicle that may be in your way.

“Tracks” indicates upcoming railroad tracks.

Many cyclists use hand signals to communicate the above. It is acceptable to use hand signals, but only in circumstances where you feel comfortable taking one hand off the steering (and your brakes) to do so. Your first responsibility is to communicate verbally and only in safe areas should you consider using hand signals as well. Hand signals should be done with the left hand so that your right hand is on the rear brake (if you only have one hand to brake, you want it to be the rear one so you don't go over the handlebars).

Hand signals for REQUIRED actions are:



One last note on communication: It is impossible to hurt someone by communicating too much. However, not communicating enough can lead to very serious injury. If in doubt, shout it out.

Positioning

Riders should ride in a single file, spacing themselves 12-36 inches behind the bike in front of them. This is called drafting and it will save the riders in back as much as 30% of their energy. You should NEVER draft going down hills, it is too dangerous. Spread out to a safe distance. If it is a large hill/mountain, put at least 100 yards between you and the rider in front of you. That is the length of a football field. Lead riders should regroup at the bottom and wait for everyone to catch up.

ALL riders are responsible for their own safety and should be looking over and around the person in front of them for holes and obstacles. The front rider has the responsibility to try and call out all obstacles; however, their first responsibility is to themselves. It is the responsibility of every rider to look for obstacles.

Riders should NEVER pass from behind and NEVER box someone in by riding beside them, this essentially traps them between you and the shoulder.

If you want to change positions in the pace-line, you should:

- Ensure you are on a straight and flat stretch of road with no traffic coming from either direction.

- Look over your left shoulder to ensure there are no cars coming from behind.
- Slowly drift to your left moving out of the pace-line.
- Wave the rider behind you up into your position.
- Slowly drift back to the end of the line.
- When your front tire is in line with the last rider's rear tire, start to pedal more aggressively to match his/her speed. Then gently ease into the back of the line.

If you mistakenly come into another rider's space on their left or right, you **MUST** tell them "On your right" or "On your left." You are now in their space and you must move immediately out of that position. This is called "riding inside someone's tire" and if you touch tires, you are likely the one that is going to fall and it will be your fault.

If you are the lead rider and there is a parked car or other obstacle ahead of you in your way, you must lead the group safely around it by:

- Looking over your left shoulder to ensure there is no traffic approaching. If there is, you should slow the group down or stop them, by yelling "SLOWING", waiting for that command to be repeated, and then bringing them to a slower pace or a stop (Yell "STOPPING" first if you are stopping).
- Waving with your right arm behind you, motioning the group to come left of the obstacle.
- Slowly and predictably bringing the group out into traffic and around the obstacle.

Be Assertive with AND Respectful of Traffic

Many new cyclists are intimidated by traffic. Here are some tips to help:

- You don't need to hug the shoulder of the road. You have the same rights as a car or truck when on the road. If there are obstacles in your way and you have to be closer to the middle, that is OK and much safer than being sandwiched. YOU have the same rights of way as a car, including not being rear-ended from behind!
- Be assertive with traffic. If you think they are going to pass and create a head on collision with another vehicle, put your hand out to stop them.
- NEVER ride on sidewalks. If you get hit by a car while on a sidewalk, it is your fault.
- NEVER go through red lights, even if no one is around, it isn't good for relationships with drivers.
- Respect traffic and thank them when they take their time to go around you casually and safely. Don't bother with the one-finger salute when someone upsets you. It's tempting but never worth it.

Railroad Tracks

Railroad tracks **MUST** be crossed at a 90-degree angle (as perpendicular as possible) or you risk getting your wheel caught and taking a bad spill. If traffic prevents you from crossing tracks at this angle, then slow down to under 5k/hour and cross them extremely slowly – or dismount and walk over them. Well in advance of the tracks, riders should be calling out to one another "Tracks!" and by making the "peace sign" against your back with your left hand.

Descending

We are going to be descending some very large mountains. ALL riders should be practicing going down hills (and training going up them)! Unfortunately, there isn't one single speed that we can assign to hills and say that is the speed which you should never exceed. It really depends on the skill level of the rider and the grade of the hill (that is how steep it is). However, consider this when you are thinking about going fast:

- Hills/mountains in the country often have "cattle crossings". If you don't know what these are, you don't want to find out when going at 50k an hour or more. You WILL spill. These are essentially large grates in the road to prevent cattle from being on the road. They will catch your tires and

throw you off your bike. If you don't know the hills, then you must be going a speed that allows you to stop safely before you hit an obstacle as it comes into view!

- A lot of country roads don't have guardrails and even if they do, you are going over the guardrail while your bike stays behind.
- Stay in control. If you get going too fast and your bike starts to wobble, use your knees to stabilize the centre bar. Slowly use BOTH brakes to bring the bike back under control.
- Check your brake pads BEFORE the day begins. As they wear down, you will start to expose the screws, which will cause a flat and you don't want to get a flat at high speeds! Brake pads wear down more in the rain so check them after a day in the rain as well.

Miscellaneous

- No iPods or earphones. Your ears are just as valuable as your eyes and you should ALWAYS be listening for traffic patterns behind you. We also strongly recommend a rear-view mirror for your left handlebar.
- If you go off the road and accidentally onto the shoulder, STAY ON THE SHOULDER and bring your bike under control. If you make a panicky move to get back on the pavement, your front tire will likely catch the lip and cause you to go down. Stay calm, remain predictable, and bring the bike to a slow stop.
- Get a \$10 safety vest and have it handy. They are great in the fog and even help on overcast days. They are REQUIRED at night as are a front and rear light.
- On hot days, the tar used by road crews to fill in cracks heat up and become sticky. Avoid them as it can cause you to spill.
- Avoid puddles as you can't see how deep they are or what's in them.
- The white lines marking the side of the road are slippery, especially when wet.
- Leaves are slippery as well, even more so when wet.
- Always have a phone and ID on you.

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