

A Guide to Riding in a Group

Communicate

The most important factor to successful group riding is communication. Make sure you know the meaning of and always pass back 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 you, “car up”, meaning there is a car coming up behind the group, “single out”, meaning to adopt single file, and “make a gap”. Instructing you to leave a gap of 20 to 25 metres in the group so that following vehicles have space to pull in when overtaking. There are a number of 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 just follow the wheel in front. Look past the riders in front of you to get a view of the road ahead. Always look behind before you change position and let the riders around you know before moving within 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. Don't grab your brakes even if you drop something valuable. Slow down gently and let those around you know you are stopping.

Ride two abreast when you can

Provided the road is not so narrow that a following vehicle cannot overtake, you should ride two abreast. That makes the group half the length, actually making it much easier for a car to overtake the group safely.

Don't get ahead of the ride leader

In the normal course of events don't move ahead of the ride leader. They are trying to set the right pace and they decide the route. On hills you may find that you pass the leader and other riders but if you do, wait at the top of the hill, and do not pass any junctions at which the group may turn.

Don't ride in the gutter

Don't sit in the gutter as you'll be encouraging those behind to follow, and increasing the chances of someone hitting drain covers, potholes or loose debris.. Where possible, ride in the centre of the traffic lane and at least a metre out from the kerb.

Expect the group to change and move

Riders will change position, and the group may fragment and reform as the ride progresses. Expect larger groups on flat sections but, on longer climbs, they'll usually break up. Similarly, on descents, riders will tend to string out to give more time to react at the 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, below are some of the other common hand signals used when riding in a group.

Hand Signals

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.



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 describing the hazard (pothole, grid, glass, bollard, etc.).



Waving/pointing behind back:

Indicates that there is an obstruction such as a parked car or pedestrian and that the whole group should move in the direction indicated..

