

Wirral Cycling Group



Ride Leader Manual

March 2022

Thanks to the New York Cycle Club (<https://nycc.org/>) for access to their Ride Leader Training Manual

INTRODUCTION

The quality of our rides depends on the active participation of both riders and ride leaders. By listing a ride, a leader has advertised the general characteristics of a ride, on which riders should be able to rely.

But leading a ride is more than just following a defined route or setting a particular pace. It's about taking responsibility for a group of cyclists and doing your utmost to provide them with a safe and pleasant ride. To that end, we've prepared this manual to help you lead a ride with the Wirral Cycling Group.

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1. *Why Lead a Ride?*

We want to start with some words of inspiration; some explanation of why you would want to lead a ride. So, here goes:

- It's fun.
- You get to choose the route, the pace, and the food stops. This means that you get to share *your* favourite destinations and routes, ride at *your* preferred pace, and bring people to *your* favourite cafes.
- You get to decide when and where to start and end your ride and where to take pit stops.
- You get to meet new people. This expands your pool of potential riding partners (and friends) who like to ride the way you do.
- You can inspire and motivate people and get them excited about cycling. Ride leaders have countless tales of novices who could barely shift gears on their first ride and later blossomed into avid cyclists.
- You can exercise your creativity in devising a new route or adopting a new theme.
- You contribute something to the cycling community.
- Leading a ride makes you get out on a ride yourself.
- People will call you a Leader !

2. *Planning a Ride*

Decide on the grade and distance that you want to lead

The grade of a ride refers to the style of riding, and while there can be certain areas of overlap and/or grey areas, these can usually be generalised as:

- A: A group of experienced riders, averaging over 15 mph, with closely spaced, rotating pacelines, infrequent stops, and a presumption that individual riders will be self-sufficient and so will be dropped if they do not keep up with the group. WCG does not run Grade A rides.
- B: A fast pace (averaging 12 to 15 mph) with less tightly spaced lines. The leader will pull for the most of the ride, but others may take up the pace at times. There will be stops for a snack and for lunch. There may be a no-drop policy.
- C: A medium pace of between 10 and 12 mph, riding in groups of six or seven riders. Leaders lead for the entire ride, there are frequent stops, and a no-drop policy (the group will wait for any stragglers)
- D: An easy overall pace of between 8 and 10 mph mostly flat, with widely spaced groups of riders and frequent stops for all riders to catch up.

What pace should I lead?

Lead at a pace with which you are comfortable; preferably a pace that is slower than you would normally ride on your own. Groups are naturally slower than individuals because of delays at junctions or because the group can only move at the speed of the slowest rider. Leading at a slower pace than you would ride when alone means that you will be able to pull the entire way.

What distance should I ride?

As with pace, choose a distance that you can ride comfortably on your own. Our Grade D rides tend to be between 20 and 30 miles, Grade C rides are usually from 25 to 40 miles, and Grade B rides from 35 to 50 miles. As ride leader you may have to back-track during the ride and you do not want to be flagging towards the end.

Hills? Gravel Track? Major Roads?

There are not many serious hills on the Wirral but there are some that are not suitable for D rides and, in the surrounding areas of Wales, Cheshire and Lancashire there are some hills that are only suitable for B rides. So in general terms gentle hills for D rides, moderate hills for C and serious hills for B.

Conversely no Gravel Tracks or canal tow paths for Grade B rides, but provided they are in good condition with wide tracks and well-compacted gravel, they are ok for C and D rides.

And it is best to stay clear of major roads, dual carriageways and busy A-roads completely

Selecting a route

Safety should be the deciding factor for all route-related decisions. If you can't find a safe way to go somewhere, then don't go there! Bear in mind that riding with a group is very different to riding by yourself; and it is never simpler; particularly at junctions and on busier roads.

The best choice for a route is often one that you've ridden and enjoyed yourself. But ride leaders rarely mind if someone else uses their routes or cue sheets, so you needn't worry about plagiarism (it's nice to ask, however). And feel free to add your own variations to a route; just because you're borrowing someone else's route doesn't mean that you can't give it your own personal touch.

If you know a ride leader who has led rides in the area where you want to go, contact them and ask for a cue sheet or a GPX file and talk to them about roads to use or avoid, good places for a mid-ride snack, and other relevant details. In addition, the list of Established Rides (under the Routes tab on the website) contains nearly a hundred possible routes to choose from.

Choose a starting point that people can find and get to easily. If possible, the starting point should also have public toilets nearby. The WCG website has a list of numerous popular starting places.

When planning a lunch stop, consider stopping after the midpoint rather than before. The riders who are feeling a bit tired can take solace in the knowledge that they are more than half way.

And, if you can, try to plot a route that passes close to railway stations so that riders have an alternative way back if they cannot complete the whole route.

Try *not* to pick a route that everyone often uses. Aim to find an interesting alternative to get to your destination. But, if you are leading your first ride and are nervous about the route, then use a tried and tested route. People will be happy to have a well-led ride, even if it is not new. Then, on your next ride, think about an alternative route.

Plotting the route on paper or online

Paper maps are an endangered species, but if you have some for our areas they are a good way to get the "big picture." Or Google Maps on a computer screen is a good way to get the overall context of a route. Google Maps has an option (under Layers) to show dedicated cycle tracks, cycle-friendly roads and roads with cycle lanes.

As you would expect, having previously cycled in an area helps tremendously as it provides a foundation of quiet roads that you will eventually tie together into a route. The best rides come from finding a good destination, then searching for suitable roads to get there.

There are some very good online tools (best on a bigger computer screen) to help you connect a destination via good safe roads. Komoot, Garmin Connect and Cycle.Travel (all free to use) are the most commonly used and these have the advantage of producing a GPX file with the planned route for other riders to download. And Google Street View is an excellent way to check (and often rule-out) potential roads and junctions without having to see them in the flesh.

3. *Scouting the Route*

However, what looks good on paper or a computer screen is often not good in reality. Some cycling friendly routes turn out to be narrow muddy dirt tracks, some potential paths don't exist, some quiet roads are, in practice, busy rat-runs and most importantly junctions that looked safe on Street View are not when you see them in the real world.

So regardless of the pace and distance of a particular ride, scouting a ride is strongly recommended. That way you will know everything about road conditions, junctions, distance, and snack, lunch and toilet stops. And will have had the opportunity to resolve any issues you find without twenty people behind witnessing your indecision.

Plus scouting a ride beforehand allows you to focus more on leading the group safely on ride day, rather than on trying to read a cue sheet while moving. This is especially true when you have to lead a large group through busy intersections or into right-hand turns. Try to scout with another ride leader or experienced back-marker so that you can discuss the potential hazards, where to stop, and alternative routes.

If you've been on the route before, but not recently, you may want to go over it again to ensure that nothing has changed significantly - no new junctions, roads closed or paths that have deteriorated, for example. If you're using a route that you've never ridden, or that you're designing on your own, it's even more important that you travel it before the ride (on a bicycle rather than by car)

Posting your ride

Post your ride onto the website by logging onto <https://wirralcycling.org/wp-admin/>. There will be a skeleton record for the date that you are scheduled to lead. All you need to do is to add the

- Title of the ride (in the form "Starting place to Destination via Place on route")
- Location of the start point (from a drop-down list),
- Maximum number of riders
- Details of the ride: the grade, the mileage, arrangements for lunch and an outline of the route (preferably with a link to route planning software such as Komoot or Garmin Connect from which riders can download a GPX file)

Then set the Status to Public and take off the 'Rota Only' flag

Book the cafe in advance if necessary

Some cafes can cope easily with a dozen or more cyclists arriving all at once, but many cannot. And you do not want to arrive at a cafe with a bunch of ravenous cyclists to find it full. So call the planned cafe a few days before the ride to make sure it is open, warn them of the visit and, if necessary, book tables in advance.

If you have to make a reservation, make sure you have their phone number so you can let the cafe know if anything changes (such as larger or smaller numbers of riders, or delays due to punctures etc.).

4. *The Day Before the Ride*

Emergency contact details

Print out the riders' details by logging onto the Website and either downloading a CSV file from the list of events, or taking a screenshot of the participants' details.

Check your own equipment

You don't want to be fixing a last-minute problem or trying to buy replacement parts on the morning of the ride, so check out your bicycle and your cycling kit the day before.

Check the weather

The BBC Weather Forecast is notoriously unreliable, but if it is forecasting the type of weather that would force a cancellation (high winds, very heavy rain, snow or ice) then let everyone know that there is a possibility that the ride may be cancelled and ask them to check before setting off for the ride.

If you do have to cancel the ride because of the weather (or for any other reason), then do so before 08:00 on the day of the ride and post the cancellation on the Group's Facebook page [WCG Facebook](#) and, if possible, send a text or an email to all the participants.

What to take with you on the ride as ride leader

- A copy of the route (with information on nearby railway stations)
- A paper map, or a device with GPS mapping
- Cue Sheets that list Turns, Street Names, Landmarks and mileage for the route
- Or a GPS device such as Garmin or Komoot on a 'phone with a GPX file loaded
- A list of participants and their contact details (+ the number of the cafe), and an extra copy of the list for your backmarker
- One or two spare inner tubes (someone on the ride won't have a spare)
- A tool kit with tyre levers, allen keys, a chain link breaking tool & a spare chain link
- A frame pump and/or a CO2 cartridge system; or the strength to use a mini-pump
- A fully charged mobile phone
- First Aid supplies: plasters, antibiotic ointment, latex gloves, aspirin & antacid tablets (they contain fast-acting electrolytes, sometimes effective with cramping)
- Access to a train schedule
- Access to Google maps to find the best route to nearby stations, bike shops, etc.

5. At the Start of the Ride

Arrive early to coordinate pre-ride activities

Be available to answer questions about the ride, mileage, lunch stops, food etc. to introduce yourself and to be able to identify all the participants on your ride.

Riders' contact details

Bring a print out of the riders names, phone numbers and emergency contact details or have those details on your phone.

Check the sheet to ensure that all riders have provided their emergency contact details; if they have not, have them fill in that information *clearly*. Bring a pen for this purpose (even better, check the sign-in sheet the day before the ride and email anyone who has missing information, particularly emergency contact information).

If participants arrive at the start who have not pre-registered online, you need to decide whether or not to allow them to join the ride. If you allow them to join, ask them for their phone numbers and emergency contact details.

Check out the bikes and riders, especially newcomers

Use the opportunity before the ride starts to discreetly assess riders and their bikes to see if they and their machines are up to the task. If they have not taken part in a club ride before, you can ask them questions about how far they've ridden, at what pace etc., and determine if they might have a problem keeping up with the group.

Although it might seem harsh to turn back a rider at the start of the ride, they could be a significant burden holding up the rest of the group every few miles waiting for them to catch up. Also, if they are physically unprepared, lack adequate water or food, a spare tube and a pump, or their bikes are poorly maintained, it would be equally unfair to leave them stranded half-way through the ride.

If there are any newcomers, introduce them to the group and try to assign another rider to keep an eye on them and help them out during the ride should they need it.

Pre-ride briefing

Communication with your riders is key. Leave yourself enough time before the ride to formulate your pre-ride discussion, or prepare one the night before. Cover the main points about the route, distance and pace of the ride, any potential hazards, and reiterate the need for clear signals, and gaps between and (on busy roads) within groups. Also make sure that everyone knows the drop-policy; normally that each group will wait at junctions and the top of hills while riders catch up; and that each group will stay in touch with the following group.

But keep it short. No one likes standing around on a cold, wet morning listening to a long speech.

Do I need a back-marker?

Yes. It is essential that you assign one rider to be the back-marker. Their role is to stay at the back of the group, so that no one gets left behind. And it is also essential that you, as ride leader, keep an eye on where your back-marker is, so your group does not get split up.

It is also good practice to ask all riders to monitor and stay in contact with the riders behind them. That way, if the people at the back of the group are slowing down, the distances between riders will stretch and you, as ride leader, will know that you are going too fast.

Should I have a co-leader?

We would recommend that for groups with more than eight riders you should split the group into two or more smaller groups. And that for each group you should assign an additional group leader and a back-marker. You can check the booking list the day before to identify experienced riders to assign as group leaders and back-markers.

If you are new to leading rides, we recommend that in addition you have someone with ride leader experience to help you out or ask for guidance when you are unsure.

Make sure you have the mobile phone number of any additional group leaders, in case the groups get separated.

Make use of Experienced Riders

If you find that your group or groups are struggling to stay together, ask one or two of the more experienced riders to help out and keep the group together by encouraging others to speed up and close gaps, or slow down and create gaps (as appropriate).

6. *Leading a Ride*

Every ride is different, so it's impossible to anticipate everything you might encounter on a ride. But, here are some suggestions about how to be an effective ride leader.

Set a good example. Ride safely, be respectful to pedestrians, drivers, and other cyclists and remember that you represent the Wirral Cycling Group. For example it is never wise to lead a group inside a long line of cars to get closer to the traffic lights; cars turning left are not expecting cyclists to be there and may not be aware of them. The extra seconds it takes to wait in line will not spoil your ride and can prevent a nasty accident or just being really annoying to a driver. Remember, you are not just riding for yourself; you are responsible for the entire group.

Be courteous. Anticipate situations where your group may inconvenience others. For example, always notify pedestrians that you are approaching by ringing your bell or calling out to them. And when you stop to regroup, be sure your riders aren't blocking the road, the pavement, or a driveway. When you re-enter the road, wait until there's a break in the traffic, so drivers aren't forced to slow down for your group.

Passing other riders: If your group needs to pass other cyclists on the road, announce yourselves clearly ("passing on the right") and do not move back to the left until the entire group has passed the cyclists. Do not box in riders you are passing.

Unforeseen problems: If you run into unforeseen problems (new construction, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic, a closed bakery shop), be creative. Change the route, take shelter, choose a different rest stop. Consider asking for suggestions from your riders. They may know the area better than you do. However, you're in charge, so don't let yourself be railroaded into something that you think is unwise. Consider safety above all else.

Mid-ride announcements: Periodically, regroup and re-emphasise safety, especially related to upcoming conditions. For example, if you need to move into the right lane to make a turn, remind riders to look before they change lanes. Remind them not to yell "Clear" at intersections. What might be clear for them might not be clear for riders further back. Yelling "Clear" could absolve other riders of their responsibility to look out for their own safety. The preferred term, "Going Through," simply states *one's own* intentions and forces each individual to decide for themselves. However, do remind riders to alert the group if a car is approaching them at an intersection by yelling "Car Right" or "Car Left".

Safety Issues: Pull the group over if you see unsafe riding practices to explain what the proper/safe practice is. Try not to point out a particular rider's mistakes to the entire group; if needed, talk to that rider later when you are able to discuss the issue in private. A basic principle of leadership is "Praise publicly, admonish privately."

Food and rest stops: When it's time to start riding again, announce your departure well enough in advance so that everyone has time to pay their bill, get their helmets and gloves on, and refill their water bottles. In addition, be alert for riders who have wandered off or are in the toilets. You might consider having everyone stand by their bikes so that you can be sure not to leave anyone behind.

7. *During the Ride*

Remember:

**The Objective of a Group Ride is to
Ride Together as a Group**

Pace and how to keep groups together

It is not a race. Although you may need to keep the group moving, the objective is to keep everyone moving at the same pace. So by all means press on when you can, but make sure that your group stays together. The best way to do that is to keep your back-marker in sight, and if you lose them, wait at the next junction or a safe stopping point near that junction for them to appear.

Leave gaps between (and occasionally within) groups

If there is more than one group of riders on the road, then it is important to leave a gap of 50m to 100m between each group. Although we may all be having a great time tootling along country roads at 10 mph, motorists will just see a long line of very slow vehicles, with no chance of overtaking. At best we will just annoy some motorists; at worst one may get frustrated and try to overtake with potentially disastrous results. The gap gives following vehicles the chance to overtake safely.

On some narrow and twisty roads it is good practice to split up a group into sets of three or four riders each and leave a gap of around 25m between each set. Again this is to give faster vehicles a way to overtake the group safely in short stages. As the ride leader you should give such instructions to the rest of the group when necessary.

If, despite your efforts, four or five vehicles get stuck behind your group then it would be polite and in everyone's interest to pull the group over (in a safe place) and allow those vehicles to pass before proceeding.

Snaking and shepherding (role of leader & back marker)

The ride leaders' job on the ride is to lead the way, set the pace and make sure that the group stays with them. You set the position of the group on the road and you lead people through and past any obstructions or hazards.

The back-markers' role is just as important as the ride leader's, in particular because they can see what is happening in front of them. They will know if the pace is too fast or too slow and they will be aware of any incidents as soon as they happen. And they need to get the message to the ride leader as soon as they can.

Hand signals and communication down the line

Make sure that the group is passing your hand signals and instructions down the line: you should hear the shouts of Pothole, Barrier, Bollards, etc., repeated behind you. Of course your back-marker will know when it isn't working as they swerve to avoid potholes, barriers and bollards!

Position on the road

Where you lead the others will follow. So it is important that you and your back-marker position yourselves correctly on the road. Normally you will be a metre or more from the kerb, but rather than think about how far you are from the kerb, it is better to think of your position relative to the traffic stream on the road, that is, where vehicles are actually driving (and where drivers are usually looking).

There are two positions to choose from relative to the traffic stream:

1. The first, the "**Primary Position**", is in the centre of the lane in which you are riding. This position means you can be seen more easily and is the best way of deterring unsafe passes. The primary position is best suited to slower urban roads.
2. The second, the "**Secondary Position**", is about a metre to the left of the centre of the traffic stream (as long as that doesn't bring you close to the gutter). This gives you some space to manoeuvre left or right, but still offers a good degree of visibility. It is better suited for faster roads.

You should adopt the primary position on slower urban roads and on narrower country roads or approaching bends where overtaking would not be safe. You should also adopt the primary position at traffic lights or approaching a roundabout so that vehicles cannot get alongside you and turn across you at the junction.

You should adopt the secondary position on faster roads where there is enough room for vehicles to overtake the group safely.

You should never ride next to the gutter; there are too many dangers: drains, potholes and all sorts of debris. And motorists may not see you if you are not in their direct line of sight.

Find a safe place when stopping

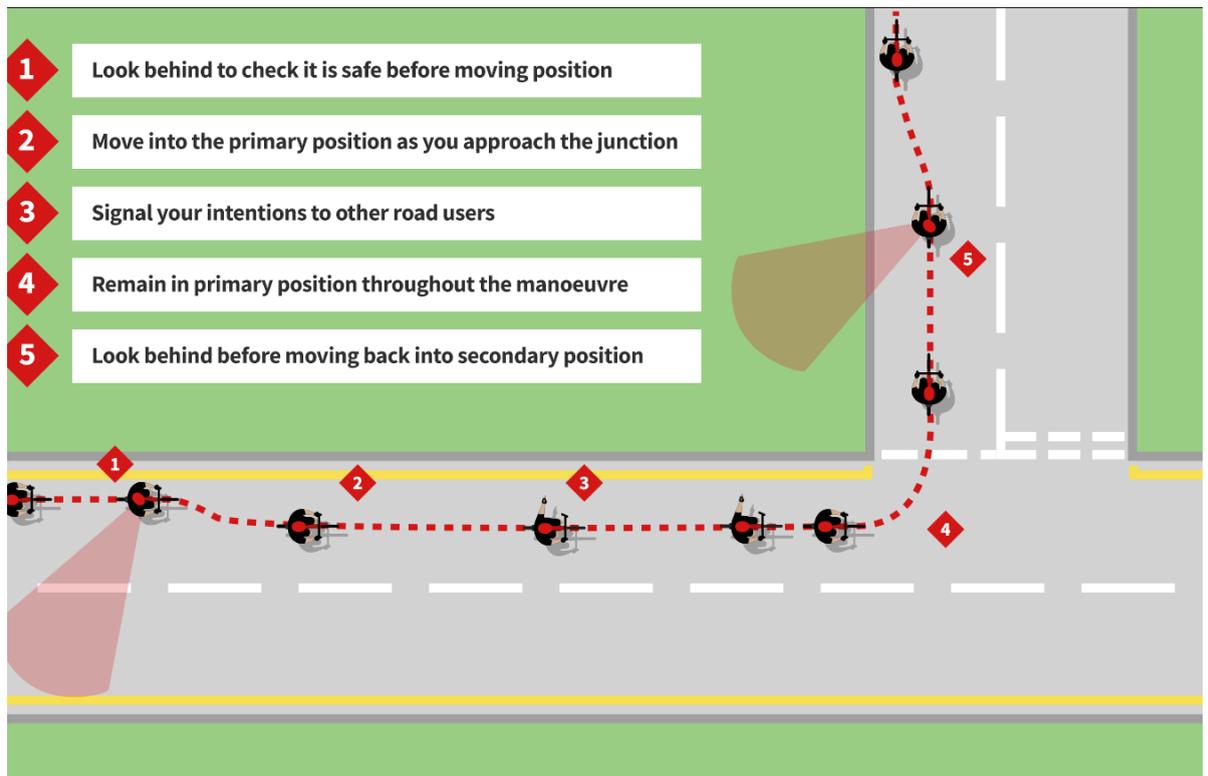
The most important thing that you can do as the ride leader is choosing a safe place when you have to stop the group. You may need to stop to allow people to catch up with the rest of the group, or to allow a following group to catch up, or because of some incident such as a puncture or a fall.

But make sure that you stop the group in a safe place: off the road, away from junctions, where there is no possibility of them blocking the carriageway or being hit by passing traffic. If you are waiting at a junction for stragglers to catch upon it is often best to send the group further along the road to a safe stopping place, while waiting at the junction yourself.

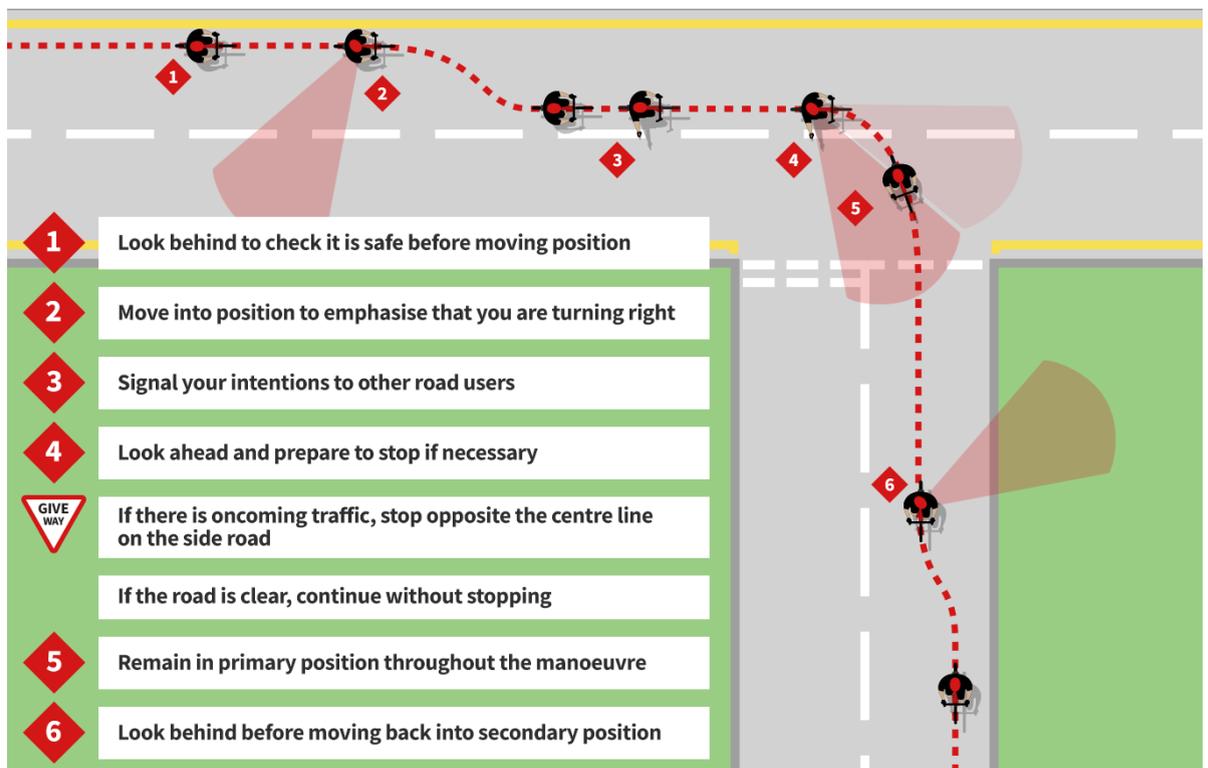
If you cannot clear the carriageway (for example if there is a casualty that you cannot move, get other members of the group to act as guards in each direction to warn and slow any approaching vehicles.

Turns and junctions

Left Turn into a Side Street (adopt primary position before the turn)

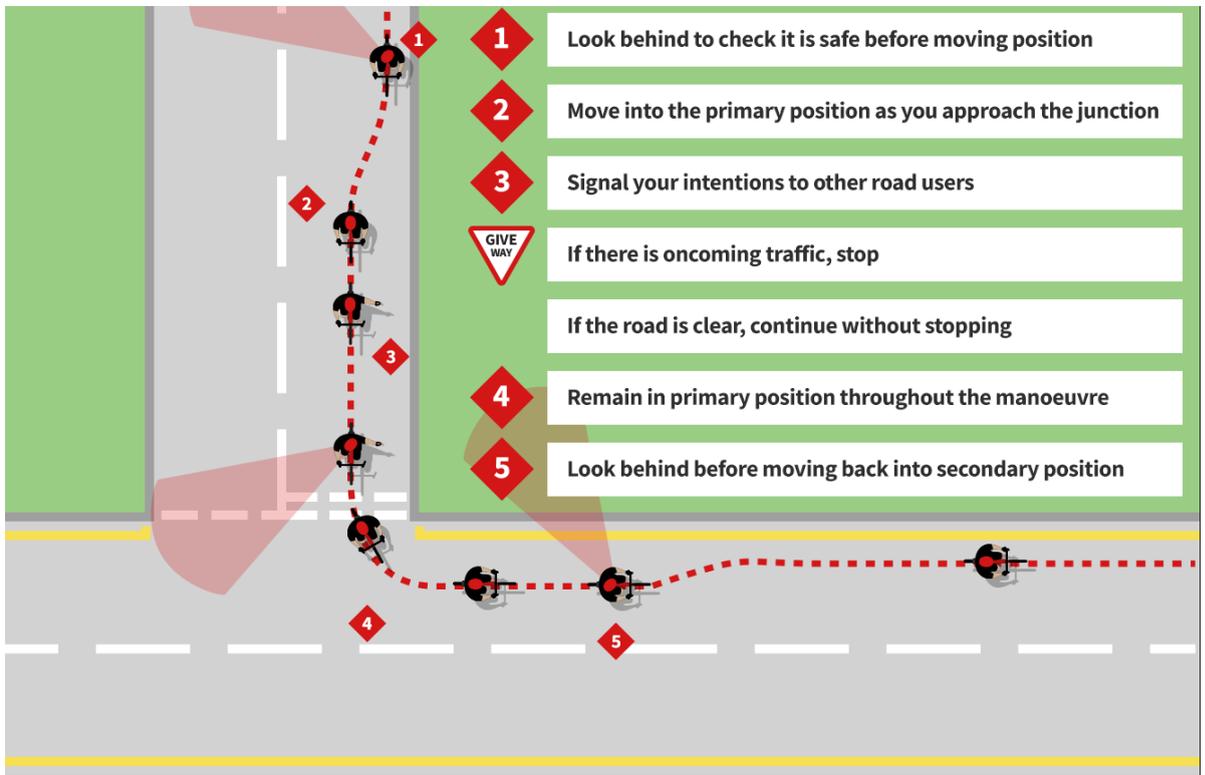


Right Turn into a Side Street (adopt primary position before the turn)

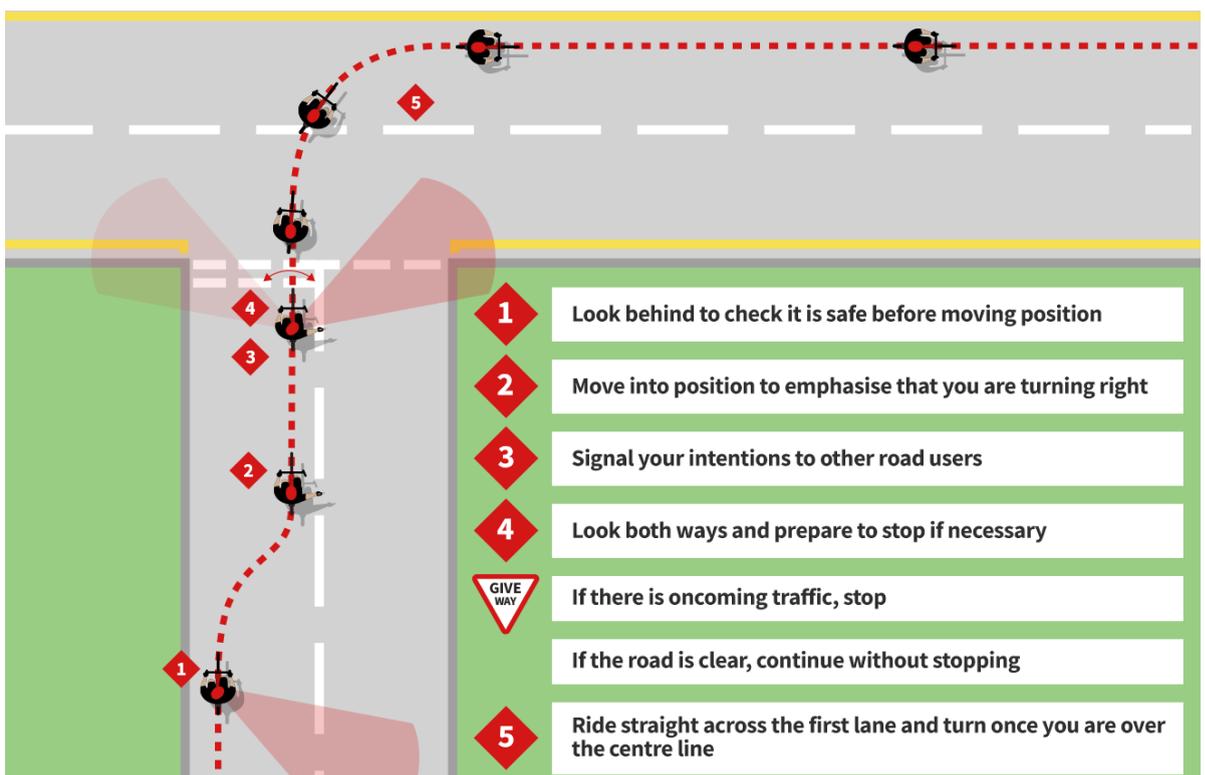


Turns and junctions

Left Turn into a Major Road (adopt primary position before the turn)

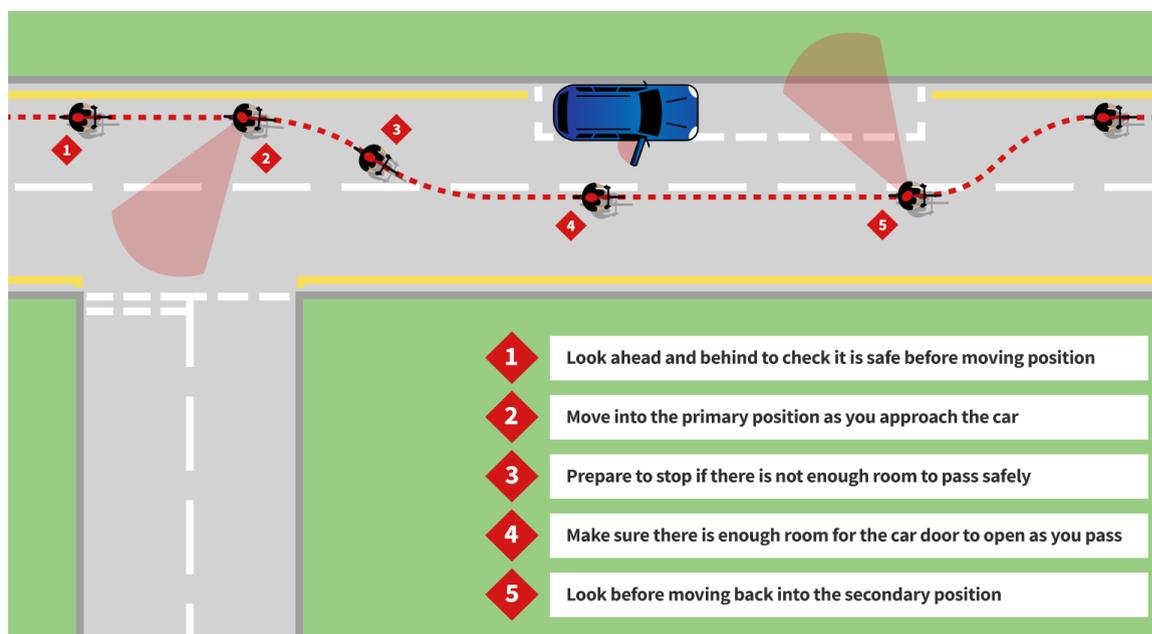


Right Turn into a Major Road (adopt primary position before the turn)



Parked Cars

Parked cars can be dangerous: they force you out further into the road, and drivers often open doors or move off without looking behind them. So give them a wide berth, even going over to the other side of the road, provided if it is safe to do so. Be prepared to stop.



Dealing with incidents (punctures, breakdowns, accidents, etc.)

If there is an unexpected incident, stop the group in a safe place and then assess the situation. You need to consider if the incident can be resolved quickly, in which case it may be best to wait with the whole group, or if the incident will take a long time to resolve, it may be better to leave some riders to deal with the incident, while the rest of the group moves on. If you do decide to split the group, arrange a place to meet further along the ride and make sure each party has the other's mobile phone number to keep each other informed.

And don't be concerned about having to make such decisions alone; there are sure to be plenty of people with experience of this and similar issues on the ride.

Sending someone home early

At some point on a ride, for example with a breakdown that cannot be repaired, or if someone cannot keep up with the group, you may have to consider sending a person home early. Don't feel too guilty about making that decision; your responsibility as ride leader is to the group as a whole.

If a rider must leave mid-ride, be sure that they are capable of getting home or to a train station on their own and consider whether you should ask another rider to go with them. If a rider is exhausted or has a mechanical problem it is important that we do everything that we can to support them. This is particularly important when something happens to a new member; we want people to feel the club is supporting them.

8. *Dealing with Incidents*

Getting lost or unexpected diversions

Everyone gets lost at some time; and everyone at some time will find their intended route blocked by an unexpected event or circumstances.

The main thing is “Don’t Panic”. Assess the situation and then decide what to do.

Did you miss a turn and realise it immediately? If so, don’t stop immediately, but slow down gradually and turn at the first safe opportunity. Try humour: ‘Just Practising U-turns’ etc.

Have you been going for miles without noticing? Can you easily back-track and get back on the planned route?

When it happens to you, explain to the rest of the group that you are lost or missed a turn and what is happening. If you are lost you can, and should, ask fellow riders if they know the way or how to get back on course.

You can check your Garmin or GPS, or find another rider who has a Garmin or GPS.

Take out your map or mobile phone app and plot the course back to the original route, or aim to catch up on the planned route at a point further ahead in the ride.

If you are close to a cafe or petrol station, have a pit stop and ask directions.

If you are a long way off course, you may have to change the destination of the ride.

But, whatever you do, don't panic: it happens to everybody sooner or later (although it happens a lot less often if you've scouted the ride in advance).

Understand that usually there is someone on the ride who knows more about the area where you are, so don't be bashful about asking for help. Even if you do, you are still in charge.

Accidents or medical emergencies

As a leader, the first thing for you to do if there is an accident is to remain calm, then attend to and assess the condition of the victim. Next assign some people to:

- A. Direct traffic around the site
- B. Get all cyclists off the road and not overwhelm the victim
- C. Get details of the accident from other riders
- D. If necessary, call 999 and be prepared to:
 - Describe the emergency
 - Give the proper location (use your route planner or Google or paper maps)
 - Listen to and follow any instructions by the call dispatcher

Initially, tell the victim not to move or get up and do not try to move them. In order to get a quick assessment of the victim's condition, you can calmly ask if he/she has any serious pain, specifically in the head or neck areas. You can then ask questions such as "do you know where you are" or "do you know what month it is?". Ask those who witnessed the accident what happened, and if the victim banged their head or was unconscious at any time.

You can then decide whether to call 999, always erring on the side of caution when making this decision. Do not rely on the victim alone to determine if help is to be called. If a rider is unconscious or disoriented, even for a few seconds, call for an ambulance; even minor concussions can be fatal.

If emergency help is summoned, the victim is not to be moved at all and should be encouraged to stay still until help arrives. Under no circumstances should the victim's helmet be removed or should they be given food or drink or painkillers.

If the victim is to be taken to the hospital, have someone go with the person unless you have arranged for the injured person's family to meet him/her at the hospital. If you do send someone to accompany the victim, give them the victim's emergency contact data and ask them to get in touch with the emergency contact person once the location of the hospital is known. Also, have that person pass on to you any information that they get at the hospital, so that you can complete an accident report and inform the rest of the group of the situation.

It is also the leader's responsibility to ensure that the injured person's bicycle (and the bike of the person accompanying them) is taken to a safe location. Sometimes the police will be able to take the bicycle to the police station where it can be picked up later, or the leader can ask a local householder to hold onto it until it can be recovered.

You will need to notify the Ride Coordinator about the accident (email is fine) and fill out an Insurance Incident Report as soon as possible. This form is available on the website and must be signed by the ride leader (not the injured rider). Fill out the essential information on the first page as completely as possible. The form should then be scanned and emailed or physically mailed to the Ride Coordinator.

Wirral Cycling Group will offer a first-aid course open to all club members every year. We recommend that you carry a simple first aid kit in your saddle bag, and that you attend one of the first aid courses and go to refresher courses every few years.

Resolving Conflicts

Conflict on your ride can arise for a number of reasons; it can be between a rider and a member of the public, between two riders, or could be directed at you, the leader

Whatever happens don't take it personally, remaining calm and independent is the best way to resolve any conflict. The basic steps in any resolution are:

- Listen to each person involved and find out the root of the issue.
- Get your rider(s) to tell you what they experienced.
- Get past the emotion and get to the facts.

By doing so, you should be able to reduce the emotion surrounding an issue and come to a logical resolution; one that hopefully the rider(s) will understand and support

But whatever happens, take action to defuse the issue.

You can send an uncooperative / unskilled rider to the back of the group, or, alternatively, place him/her directly in back of the leader

You can tell a rider to leave your ride

In extreme circumstances, you can disband the ride. Explain to the group why you are disbanding: some, if not all, may choose to follow you anyway. Typically the rider at the heart of the conflict will leave or see how they are perceived and will modify their behaviour.

As a Ride Leader, your responsibility is to the overall enjoyment and safety of the ride and riders. Any unresolved conflict within the group can pose a danger to you, to other riders, and even the uncooperative rider themselves.

Feel free to contact your Ride Coordinator, or a fellow ride leader if you ever want to discuss an incident or have questions about how to handle a conflict situation. Use your judgement, but realise that the Ride Coordinator and the club Chairman and committee are there to help you deal with a difficult rider. Sometimes one or more of those persons can be effective because they weren't personally involved in the particular incident.

We should point out that these kinds of "personality problems" are incredibly rare but they do happen and it's important for you, as ride leader, to know that the club leadership "has your back."

9. Common Mechanical Problems

Be prepared: ideally carry:

- a multi-tool
- a chain tool + a replaceable chain link
- a tyre boot
- a spoke wrench
- inner tube patch kit
- tyre levers
- at least two inner tubes of the correct size and valve type

If someone has a mechanical problem, you can either:

- Fix it yourself, if you have the parts and expertise to make the repair, or
- Check with your riders to see if anyone else has the parts and the expertise to make the repair, or
- Take the group on a detour to a nearby bike shop, car repair shop, or hardware store. You could also suggest that the rider go alone and give them instructions on how to rejoin the group later, if possible, or
- Suggest that the rider call home for a lift or use public transport to get home.

Below are some problems that you might be able to address to get the rider back underway (some problems are not as severe as they might at first seem):

Broken Spokes

Generally, if you don't have too far to travel, you can just ride with a broken spoke. If you can, remove the broken parts of the spoke or, if you cannot remove them, tie or tape the broken parts to adjacent spokes. If having a broken spoke affects the true of the wheel, you may also need to loosen rim brakes.

Emphasise that the rider should avoid potholes as much as possible.

Jammed Chain

When the chain jams between the chainrings and the chainstay you probably won't be able to just tug it out.

- Insert a screwdriver or similar lever (wrapped in cloth so you don't scratch the frame) between the chainstay and the chainwheel and apply a little mechanical advantage. Most modern chainrings are surprisingly flexible.

If this does not work, see the section on breaking a chain.

Hesitant or Auto-shifting Rear Derailleur

When the rear derailleur does not shift cleanly from one cog to another or seems to shift of its own accord it is usually the result of incorrect derailleur cable tension.

- Check the cable run under the bottom bracket to make sure it is unobstructed.
- Find the barrel adjuster located at the point the cable enters the derailleur.
- Turn the barrel adjuster one quarter turn in the direction in which the derailleur is not shifting correctly. If it hesitates shifting to the larger cogs, turn it to the left. If it hesitates shifting to the smaller cogs, turn it to the right.
- Shift through all the gears while turning the cranks and continue adjusting in quarter turn increments until shifting is smooth.
- Remember: If you want it to shift more smoothly to the large cogs, turn the adjuster towards the large cogs. If you want it to shift more smoothly to the small cogs, turn the adjuster towards the small cogs.

Broken Derailleur Cable

If the rear derailleur cable breaks, the derailleur will automatically shift to the smallest cog. You have three options:

1. Leave it in the smallest cog and ride in the biggest gear. You don't want to ride too far in the small chainwheel and small cog combination or you may damage the cog.
2. Move the chain to a larger cog by pushing inward on the derailleur and tightening the high-limit screw on the derailleur until it lines up with that cog. You may have to fiddle with the limit screws to get it to run quietly. This will give you at least two middle-range gears through using the front derailleur.
3. Push the derailleur inward while turning the cranks and when you reach the cog you want, place a stick between the derailleur cage plates to stabilise the spring tension.

Broken Brake Cable

There are various ways to attempt to repair broken brake cables, but none of them is very reliable for a road bike.

- If the front brake cable breaks and you are not near a bike shop; walk to a railway station or call a cab. If that is not practical, you can try to remove your rear brake cable and use it to replace the front cable.
- If the rear brake cable breaks you should be able to make it home very carefully since you still have over 66% of your braking power. But of course go slowly.

Breaking a Chain

You will have to break and reset a chain if the rear derailleur jockey wheels jam, or the tension spring breaks, the chain becomes lodged between the chainwheel and chainstay, or the chain itself breaks.

- Campagnolo 10-speed chains require a special permalink with two pins and a proprietary tool. Do not attempt to repair these chains with a normal chain tool.
- Shimano hyperglide chains (they have HG embossed on the links) require a new “sub-pin” or rivet each time the chain is broken. If the person is not carrying a spare sub-pin, do not attempt to break and reconnect the chain because it will be significantly weakened and could break under pressure.
- All other chains can be disconnected and re-assembled using the same rivet and a normal chain tool
- If you have a replacement chain link of the right size for the chain you can use it to reattach the chain
- NB: The chain tool has two sets of teeth for holding the chain. The set farthest from the chain tool handle is the set used for pushing and resetting the rivet. The set closest to the handle is used to make adjustments to stiff links.