

PRACTICES FOR CLUB ACTIVITIES

Group Rides:

Ontario Cycling Association affiliated clubs have several group rides per week during most of the year, all with a slightly different emphasis. For the OCA's insurance policy to be in effect the rides must be reported to the OCA. Insurance is not 24/7 cycling insurance. It is for OCA club members during sanctioned activities. Examples of unsanctioned activities can include local coffee shop rides or "donut" rides and unsanctioned charity rides.

Example of a Weekly Group Ride Schedule:

Sunday Morning: This is a friendly ride where efforts will be taken to ensure that no-one will be dropped. The group will probably wait for you, periodically, if necessary. Destinations and approximate distances are posted on the website. Approx. 2 – 6 hours.

Membership:

You must be a member in good standing to join in any group ride or race event.

Group Etiquette:

Since these are group rides, you should be prepared to ride as a group, using these practices as your guide. (If you prefer to ride at your own pace in your own way, please choose to ride on your own at another time and place.) You must ride according to the Highway Traffic Act, which means things like: staying to the right hand side of the lane (single or double file), stopping at STOP signs and red traffic lights; signaling turns; waiting in line at the back of a traffic queue (no filtering to the front) and using good observation at all times. We will ride as a group, which means things like: going at the same speed and waiting for the rest of the group if it gets stuck at traffic lights or at a busy intersection; or if someone has a flat. Waiting may mean stopping and waiting, well over to the side of the road away from traffic, or it may mean riding on SLOWLY, in proper formation, so that the back riders can easily catch up. If for any reason you do not want the group to wait for you, please be sure to let someone know.

Safety:

Each individual is responsible for her or his own safety. You must wear a helmet and brightly coloured clothing is recommended. You can use the check lists of items you may want to carry with you (see below) but it is up to you to carry enough food and drink, clothing, medical supplies, repair kit, cell phone and anything else you may need to satisfy your level of risk. There is no designated ride leader who will carry such items. The club holds skills training clinics from time to time, designed to improve safety for you and those around you. Every member is encouraged to attend these clinics regularly. See the website for further information. Although the club makes a reasonable attempt to conduct its events safely, you should recognize that riding a bicycle on public roads can be hazardous and you must prepare adequately. MP3 PLAYERS ARE NOT TO BE USED AT CLUB EVENTS. THIS INCLUDES PRE AND POST RACE, WHILE RIDING WITH OTHER CLUB MEMBERS. RIDERS NEED TO BE ABLE TO HEAR OTHER RIDERS, CARS AND INSTRUCTIONS FROM TIMEKEEPERS/OFFICIALS AT ALL TIMES.

Equipment:

You should always bring a bike in good working order. If you show up on a machine that an experienced member thinks is unsafe, you may not be welcome to join the group. Triathlon bars are very unsafe in a group setting and are therefore not permitted. They must be removed from the bicycle before arriving at the meeting place. Gears and brakes must be easily accessible from the drop bar position - which is the most stable position on a bike. Wheels should be running true and tires should be in good condition and inflated appropriately. Check all nuts and bolts for tightness. You must carry a reliable pump – with the right adapter for your tubes/tubeless tires, and at least one spare, intact inner tube/tubeless tire with the right valve stem for your rims. Carry allen keys, tire levers, cash, an ID card and sufficient fluid for the ride. Most of these items must be attended to for the safety and convenience of your fellow riders. You may wish to invest in taking a bicycle maintenance course (see your local bike store) and know how to use the tools you carry with you. Most people will be on road bikes except during our winter rides. Mountain bikes are fine but you may have trouble keeping up with the group, depending on tires, road conditions etc.

Formation:

We will quickly form into tight *single file* or *double file* formation, according to traffic conditions or upon the advice of an 'ad hoc' leader. The default formation is always double file, but if conditions are unsafe for this, single file is used. Very often, the first few kms of the ride will be single file until we get out of town.

Double Paceline:

Double Pace Line begins with riders in *double file* formation. Ride side by side with your front wheel in line with your partner's. Try not to pull ahead (known as 'half-wheeling' and very un-cool). Check your computer to ensure you are maintaining the group's speed when you are at the front. Otherwise, follow the rider in front of you, but with a slight offset to provide extra braking distance in case of emergency. Ideally, your front wheel should be a few inches behind the back wheel of the person in front of you. Increase that distance according to your skill-level and comfort, the skill-level of the person you are following and the skill-level of the group as a whole. You will also want to increase that distance a little to account for rough road conditions, higher speeds during descents or any other time you need more visibility or manoeuvring space. Do not make sudden changes in speed or direction. Remember, other riders are very close behind you, and they depend on your consistency. Always have your hands close to your brakes so that you can react quickly in an emergency; that is, on the drops or hoods only; NEVER on the top of the bars.

Rotating:

The 2 riders at the front of the double pace line do the brunt of the work into the wind. The following riders make about 30% less effort, yet ride at the same speed. It benefits the group as a whole to rotate the leaders off the front once in a while and replace them with a fresh pair. The amount of time a pair will spend on the front depends on how fast the pace is, how strong the wind is and how strong that particular pair is. It could be 30 seconds up to 15 minutes. In any case, the leaders go to the back of the pace line when they have had enough. Both go together. They look forward and behind to see that there is no traffic coming. Then they make a *small* hand signal to show they are about to break formation. The rider on the left moves to the left and the rider on the right moves to the right. They must then pedal a little softer so that their speed drops *slightly* relative to the rest of the group. The second pair, still side by side, moves between them and to the front, without changing pace. It will now feel harder for them because they are riding into the wind but the km/hr should remain the same. The pair that has rotated off the front will eventually arrive

at the back of the pace line. A shoulder-check will ensure that they are now the last pair. They should then speed up slightly and pull into position at the back of the pace line.

Other Types of Paceline:

Double pace line is the default formation any time we are on the road, it is the preferred formation for fast and slow touring and most training rides. There are 3 exceptions. 1. When traffic is heavy, we simply ride in *single file*, as described above. 2. When a fast-paced training ride is required, the formation usually develops into **Single Pace Line (Racing Pace Line)**. This is a more advanced technique that is taught at our clinics and on some rides. 3. **Echelon** is the 3rd formation. It too is advanced but should not be used on our training rides. It should only be used when either the road is closed (as in an official race with marshals) or when you are absolutely sure there will be no traffic. It is a racing pace line used when there are strong cross-winds. We recommend that if you have not tried these techniques yet, or if it has been a while since you were skilled at them, that you attend our clinics when offered. They require practice to become proficient. The effort is worth it however; the result is group riding that is smoother, safer, and faster for all.

Communication:

*****Keep your head up and your eyes looking ahead*****

In a close formation, you must be looking up and ahead at all times. Look to the front of the group or at least a few riders ahead of you. This way, you will see any problems or changes in direction or speed, well in advance. The riders close to you (left, right or directly in front) will be sensed using your peripheral vision, which is more adept at judging movement than your straight-ahead vision.

For some things we rely on other group members (when it is hard to see the road ahead) and for other things we must rely on ourselves (traffic safety). In general, we do *not* communicate by yelling things out. It is usually impossible to hear what is being yelled. "Car!" can sound very much like "Clear!" to someone with wind in their ears. At intersections, you **MUST** look for yourself to see if it safe to cross. Do *not* yell about cars coming in either direction (on-coming or passing) on the road in the normal way. They have every right to be there and that is exactly where we should expect to find cars. Since we will be riding in an orderly fashion close to the right hand side of the travel lane, *at all times*, we should have nothing to worry about. It is up to the driver of the vehicle to assess how best to proceed past an orderly group of cyclists, just as she or he would proceed past any other slow-moving road user. An experienced group member may order "Single file" if necessary, but under normal circumstances even on narrow roads, it is safer to ride in double file since it forces the traffic to slow down and pass safely, rather than to try to squeeze past when there isn't quite enough room. So, we will save our yelling for warnings of an urgent or unusual nature.

Please signal all turns and stops with regular arm signals, well in advance. Also, *point out potholes and hazardous objects* in the road so that following riders can avoid them.

Up-hills and Down-hills:

When we ride as a group, we try to keep the pace as even as possible. Increases and decreases in speed must be gradual and all associated gear changes smooth. At an up-hill, we climb at the pace of the two lead riders, who will try to keep the pace steady. If this is too slow for you, hard luck! These are group rides – remember. You should not break ranks and show how fast you can ride to the top. There is no point to that; you will only have to

wait for everyone else to catch up. In the process you will wear out the weaker riders, who, having extended themselves too much on the hill, will not be able to increase their speed at the top. The group will inevitably break up. If you are interested in doing hill intervals, pick a couple of buddies and do it at another place and time, or choose a more advanced group. Alternatively, an even, moderate pace up a hill will keep everyone together and ready to increase speed at the top. This will maximize the average speed of the ride and the training effect for everyone. If you need to get out of the saddle to climb (only on very steep hills), wait for the part of the pedal stroke where you are actively pushing down. This will reduce the 'pause effect'. If you stand while not actively applying power to at least 1 of the pedals, the rider behind you may crash into your back wheel. Practice while out on your own.

Down-hills should be approached in the same way. Follow the lead riders. Increase the distance from yourself to the rider in front of you a little, to give yourself a little more reaction time in case of emergency. If your speed picks up too much, do not break ranks or pass other riders. Gradually decrease your speed, by applying the *back* brake lightly, and pedaling against it if necessary. NEVER go down a hill with your hands on the top of the bars. They should always be on the drops. This puts your hands close to the brakes in the most powerful position (in case of emergency) and it lowers your centre of gravity making you more stable and safe.

Changes of Speed and Direction:

All changes should be smooth and gradual. Remember, everyone behind is depending on you to lead them safely up the road, around potholes, dead animals and corners, and up and down hills. There must be *no sudden movements to left or right (switching)*. Switching is very dangerous in a group and can instantly lead to serious injury for fellow riders, as a result of a crash. Common sense is a virtue. Do not remove things from pockets, eat, drink, take off clothing, startle another rider, suddenly break ranks or do anything else that may result in an erratic movement when riding in a group. If the speed is fast you must be especially vigilant. Your hands must be on the bars at all times. To eat, etc. you must wait until it is your turn to be at the back of the group, when no one is following. Drinking and the 'shoulder check' should be practiced ahead of time to ensure that they can be performed without swerving.

Avoid sudden braking at all costs. Be aware that the front brake has a very abrupt stopping action whereas the back brake is less abrupt. Know which is which. To reduce speed slightly, use the back brake lightly and pedal against it at the same time. To increase speed, first pedal faster in the gear you are in, then change up to your next gear. Your cadence should be between 80 and 120 rpm for regular flat riding, on hills this may be reduced down to 60 rpm or lower. The higher the cadence, the smoother rider you will be, better able to adapt to changes of speed and other maneuvers.

Time Trials/Hill Climbs:

Time Trials are a great opportunity to test personal fitness. There should be no influence from any other cyclists as you try to ride your fastest.

The OCA bases their rules on those of the Canadian Cycling Association (CCA) who can be found at: www.canadiancycling.ca. Ultimately, the CCA conforms to the rules as set out by the Union Cycliste International (UCI), the world's regulatory body for cycling.

Their website is: www.uci.ch/english/index.htm

Rules:

1. Obey the starter's instructions.
2. Respect the wishes of all marshals and timekeepers.
3. Warm up using a piece of road away from the start/finish area.
4. Once the event has started, do not cross the start or finish line unless you are starting or finishing your time trial.
5. While you are waiting to start, keep over to the side, well off the travel lane of the road.
6. Have respect for nearby residents. Do not pee on their bushes or buildings, or otherwise be disrespectful. If you do, we will lose the opportunity to use the location.
7. You may use aero bars in a TT.
8. You must wear a helmet. Brightly coloured clothing is recommended for greater visibility.
9. The front tire not beyond the front edge of the start line. The start intervals are usually one minute. The starter will count down the last few seconds. You may start after the starter says "Go".
9. TT's are individual. This means that you cannot draft on any part of the course. If you do, you will be disqualified. Drafting, means not following in anyone's slipstream and leaving a lateral distance of 1 metre when you are passing someone. If you are passed you must drop back 7 metres (about 4-4.5 bike lengths). In the last 500 meters you must not try and overtake a rider that has already passed you (ie not sprinting with someone to the line).
10. Be aware of the dangers of intersections along the course, even if you do have 'Right of Way,' and act accordingly. Remember, you are ultimately responsible for your own safety.
11. Many of our courses have a turn-around point at midway. Be aware of the traffic around you and turn safely. If there is a turn marshal, she or he is there for guidance only. Ultimately, you must determine when you can safely turn, but you must stop if a marshal gives that instruction. The turn is around the outside of the cone, or if there is no cone around the outside of a mark, or just in front of the marshal.
12. As you pass the timekeeper, you must call out your number. Failure to do so may mean that you will not get a result.
13. Do not disturb the timekeeper while he or she is trying to get results.
14. When you finish, move quickly away from the start/finish area to begin your cool-down.
15. When you stop, remain aware of traffic, move off the road and, once again, respect local residents.
16. If you choose to discontinue the race before the end, you MUST inform the timekeeper before leaving the start/finish area.
17. Aero bars are not to be used on hill climbs.
18. Timekeepers will attempt to have a first aid kit and cell phone available.
19. Time trials and Hill climbs to be abandoned if rain occurs.
20. Timekeepers reserve the right to start the events based on the weather and road conditions.

Summary:

Clubs hold a great variety of events which should be suitable for most levels of ability and need. We do not expect new members to be expert cyclists, but we would like to encourage all members to develop their skills and emphasize that adherence to the safe riding practices discussed in this document is essential for all members.