

Full Throttle Cycling Club | Ride Guidelines

Recreational cycling continues to grow in Ontario. People love cycling for its freedom, and it helps people stay active and healthy. Group riding requires communication and harmony among the riders so as to minimize the risks. To view our Risk Management Plan please click on this link.

Some Prerequisites

As per OCA rules all members must be in good standing. Club dues and OCA Insurance must be up to date.

1. Each member should have a road bike in good working order
2. Each member should be self-sufficient. Do not rely on others for flat repairs, water, food etc. Bring a charged cell phone, ID and emergency information.
3. Each member should have a certain minimal level of fitness. Please see Club Rides' page for distances and pace.
4. Each member should have a basic understanding of group riding skills. Please contact Coach Wayne if you require an assessment of your riding skills.
5. Each member should be familiar with our riding guidelines.
6. There will be a Ride Leader for all official club rides.

How We Ride

Club rides depart from Cranmore Court in Brampton, Ontario on Saturdays and Sunday mornings. The ride distances and the pace of the rides may vary depending on the make-up of the group.

Standard Ride Formation and How We Rotate

The Basic Ride Formation: **“Tight and to the Right”**

Our goal is to share the enjoyment of the road with our club members as well as the general public. We are well aware that we have to share the road with motorized vehicles. In order to further protect ourselves we travel in two lines, shoulder to shoulder or in a double pace line. This is an internationally recognized cycling formation used by professionals and amateurs around the world. The main objective of the double pace line is to reduce the length of the line of cyclists in order to allow vehicles to pass with greater ease and increased safety. It encourages drivers to make full lane changes when passing which provides a safer gap between the passing vehicle and the cyclists. ***Our goal is to accommodate the approaching driver with a clear view forward so that they make a clean and safe pass as soon as possible.***

How We Rotate

We use two methods to rotate cyclists within a basic “tight and to the right” formation. One we refer to as a rotate and hold and the other as a continuous rotating pace line. The Ride Leader will call out the appropriate formation or the two riders on the front can call out a formation if the ride conditions changes.

Rotate and Hold

This is our standard rotation used while warming up or just cruising along. The two leading cyclists are breaking the wind and setting the pace. The lead cyclist on the right, after a reasonable period of time (i.e. 1- 2 minutes, its flexible) asks the cyclist on their left to “Cover Me”. That means the leading left cyclist will gently ride forward and fade right to shelter the right side of the group. In turn the left side of the group will gently advance forward to the front of the group beside the right line. Those two riders will now lead the group for whatever time they feel comfortable with, again it’s negotiable. All passes are to be done smoothly and gently and make sure that your rear wheel is clear before you fade right.

A very important point to rotating a group: While you are in front of the group, the group is at your mercy. Anything you do, good or bad, will affect the entire group. If your pass is smooth and steady, then the group will remain smooth and steady. If you accelerate aggressively it will start to shatter the group and create gaps and confusion. If you half wheel the lead rider beside you it will offset the whole group or create gaps. We all have a responsibility to the riders behind us to move in a smooth and predictable way and watch the road surface ahead.

Continuously Rotating Pace line

This rotation is different from the rotate and hold in one fundamental way: The act of rotating is constant. There are no static moments. When the left lead rider moves smoothly and gradually forward and clears the right line of riders, he/she then gently fades to the right. The transitioning lead rider must be careful not to touch wheels with the passed rider’s by checking under their arm for the rider’s wheel. The right rider can assist by calling out ‘clear’ when the passing cyclist is safely ahead. As soon as that first rotation is complete the next one begins as if all the cyclists in the group are part of the same chain. In the continuously rotating pace line all the cyclists should be moving through the rotation at the same speed.

Here are some important points to remember when executing the continuously rotating pace line properly:

1. Do not attack or surge off the front when it is your turn to pull. You are supposed to go slightly faster than the receding line. Surging or attacking will cause gaps and jerk the speed of the line around. Pull smoothly and gently to the front and be there to shelter the riders behind you, not gap them.
2. Do not leave gaps within the line when you are in the back of the rotation. All riders need to focus on maintaining the same gaps all the way around the rotation.
3. Riders wishing to miss a rotation can do so by sitting a bike's length back of the group and allowing the group to rotate through. It's best to call out to the rider ahead that you are not pulling through to avoid their hesitation.
4. It's also helpful for the last rider on the advancing side to call out to the last rider to remind the last receding rider that they need to transition next. Gaps often happen when the last rider misses the transition.
5. The rotation can go from left to right or vice versa. Experienced cyclists will tailor the rotation so that the advancing line is sheltered from a crosswind. We generally opt for the left to the right rotation because the HTA specifies passing on the left.

Single File Pace line

In the event that we're forced to travel on a busy road we will ride single file to get past the congested section. Once the traffic eases we safely move back to a double pace line.

Echelons

This is a formation where the cyclists are spread diagonally across the road to gain shelter from a crosswind. This formation is unacceptable for group riding in our community. It completely blocks the lane and is counter to our "Tight and to the Right" strategy where the driver is to be given a view up the left side of the lane.

Hot Spots

Every group ride has to have a degree of compromise. There are sections on our routes where the option exists for the riders to break from the group and go as fast as they wish. We call these the Hot Spots. All long climbs are automatically Hot Spots and as such the groups are permitted to break formation and regroup at the top. We do ask you to stay to the right and not scatter across the hill when the group breaks apart. Slower riders stay right and make room for the faster riders to get by without forcing them too far out. We still want to stay 'Tight and to the Right'.

We also offer Hot Spots on flatter terrain Your Ride Leader should inform you of the Hot Spot locations before and during each ride. There are three common denominators to a Hot Spot:

1. A very quiet section of road
2. No traffic lights or stop signs
3. A safe regrouping location at the end of the section

Some rules about Hot Spots:

1. Going hard is optional, not compulsory. Those that choose to cruise can rest assure that the group will wait for them at the regrouping point which is often a coffee stop.
2. All riders must wait at the regrouping spot. Under no circumstances can anybody soft pedal down the road. This causes confusion for the late arrivers. They think the group is leaving them behind. If you feel the need to keep moving come back toward the late arrivers and then ride back with them.
3. Never regroup in a manner that would obstruct traffic in any way. All of our regrouping spots offer plenty of space to pull over safely. No excuses for blocking traffic.

Descending

When descending we recommend the group take the following actions:

1. The group should move into a single file formation.
2. Riders should move 1 to 2 m from the right edge of the road. It is not safe to ride close to the edge of the road at high speeds due to wind gusts.
3. Riders should open up gaps of at least 2 m plus between each rider front to back.
4. Send the heaviest and presumably the fastest riders down first to avoid bottlenecks. The goal is to reduce the amount of passing on the descent.
5. All passing must happen on the left. Never pass on the right.

Communications

Communication is absolutely critical to the success of all group rides. It starts right from the beginning even before the group leaves: The rider needs to communicate with their group or Ride Leader to determine which group and pace of ride they want. On the road riders need to communicate the ride formation, rotation and pace. Riders at the front need to call out road hazards and traffic situations. Riders at the back need to call out cars approaching from the back. The bottom line is that the quality and safety of the ride is dependent on frequent and clear communications between all the riders. Never assume everyone in the group knows a car is approaching or that the group is turning. Everything that can affect the group needs to be called out.

One final but important point regarding communication. We have Ride Leaders who are there to try to maintain the quality of the ride but the best way to keep us all at our best is when we all communicate best ride practices. So if you see someone riding inappropriately i.e. overlapping wheels, surging off the front we all should say something. Be polite but make it known that that was not proper. We all own these rides and if someone does something dangerous it's in everyone's best interest to correct it. So don't let bad habits go unaddressed. Say something before it's too late. We all have a responsibility to the riders around us. When we are at the front we are responsible to the riders behind to provide a smooth and steady pull and to point out hazards. When we are at the back we are responsible to call out cars coming from the back and to maintain the integrity of the group by not allowing gaps. So don't wait for the Ride Leader to say something, we all own the ride equally.

Emergency Stops

When being approached by an emergency vehicle (fire truck, ambulance, or police) with its lights and siren activated, we are required under the HTA to pull over our group and stop. It doesn't matter if the emergency vehicle is approaching from the front or behind.

Act fast, but act safely and in control: when a siren is heard or lights are seen, immediately shout out to your group to pull over and stop. A siren or lights means stop now but not a panic stop, a controlled and safe stop.

How to stop a group: let's presume your group is riding 2 abreast.

1. The Ride Leader calls out to the group
 - "EMERGENCY STOP, GROUP STOPPING NOW"
 - "RIGHT LINE STOP FIRST"
 - "LEFT LINE PASS AND STOP"
2. The right line applies their brakes to reduce the speed in a controlled manner, eventually pulling over to a complete stop. Once stopped, cyclists must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersections.
3. The left line completely passes the right line and once safely clear, slows in a controlled manner. Once stopped, cyclists must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersections.

This can all happen within seconds. There is no need for panic. What is essential is that the decision to perform an "emergency stop" be made quickly, loudly and clearly so that the group has time to perform the stop safely.

Some Random, But Important Tips

1. Ride smooth and steady all the time. No sudden or abrupt movements or over reactions to potholes etc.

2. Don't be that person who surges when it's their turn to pull or leaves gaps in the rotation and finally never ever overlap.
3. When following a wheel be just slightly offset i.e. 3-4" so that if there is a sudden stop you don't immediately slam into the wheel ahead. The offset gives you an additional few feet to recover.
4. When you are at the front of the group on a short descents pedal to keep the pace up. Remember there are riders drafting behind you who will have to brake if you don't keep the pace up.
5. To keep a group together on rolling terrain, climb slightly easier but descend harder. The group speed will be more consistent and the group will more likely remain intact.
6. Group rides are not races. We are there to support each other by taking turns in the wind. Only in Hot Spots is it ok to try to drop your friends.
7. When you see someone committing a ride foul politely say something. We are all responsible for the quality of our rides.
8. If you get a flat give a loud shout out right away or there is a good chance the pack will ride away without even noticing you. If the group knows they will stop and help you fix it quickly.
9. Do not yell obscenities to motorists or get into arguments with the police. It's never productive and will lead to more bad blood and possible retribution. We ask that cyclists not engage in any kind of confrontation with drivers or police officers. It's important to understand that when you ride with the club and when you wear our club jersey you become an Ambassador for both the club and all cyclists in general. Let's not do anything to fuel the flames of discontent. Nothing meaningful gets resolved on the road

KEEP SAFE AND HAVE FUN