

Skipton Cycling Club (SCC) Group Riding Guidance

CLUB RIDE RULES AND BEST PRACTICE

- Please read and follow this guidance on SCC club rides which is based on British Cycling Best Practice. (We recognise that although this is Best Practice, we know this is not always feasible because of our mixed riding abilities, experience and road conditions, however we should all be aware of best practice.)
- Cycling on the public roads has some inherent danger attached, but as a club we want to support and encourage people to ride safely and enjoyably, respecting their fellow riders and other road users.
- By following a few basic Ride Rules we can achieve this. If you are unsure about anything then please contact a member of the committee in advance of the rides, or ask your ride leader before the ride sets off. The following are intended to provide information to help us all ride in a group which is safe and comfortable for everyone whilst also appreciating that members may be more/less experienced and more/less comfortable riding in a tight, two up group.
- Some rides may be 'pace line' tight but this should be with agreement with the whole group.
- It's not the intention to discourage or alienate riders, but to provide enjoyable and satisfying riding for all.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT RIDE

Always ride with a group that goes at a pace you can sustain over the entire route. SCC has a number of rides, so please choose the ones that best suit your ability and fitness.

The Cyql app, and Club website <https://www.skipton.cc/upcoming-rides/> allows riders to view upcoming rides and confirm their intention to join a particular ride. Please make use of this as it is helpful to the ride leaders.

Club rides may be grouped according to target pace, depending on the number of riders who attend the rides. Saturdays and Wednesdays tend to be most popular, so three or more groups are usually possible.

'A' ride - Target pace 14-16 mph (22- 25 kph) non-drop with leader managing the ride pace to keep the group together calling 'mile off' as required. Minimising stopping as far as possible but regrouping where the group splits particularly on larger hills. Riding in pairs where appropriate for the road

conditions with the expectation that **all** riders are comfortable following a wheel (up to a wheel's length between you and the rider in front) and prepared to take their turn on the front.

'B' ride - Target pace 12-15 mph (19- 25 kph) non-drop with leader managing the ride pace to keep the group together calling 'mile off' as required. Minimising stopping as far as possible but regrouping where the group splits particularly on larger hills. The ride leader will **agree** with the group members on the ride protocol regarding riding in pairs where appropriate for the road conditions, with those riders who are comfortable following a wheel doing so and being prepared to take their turn on the front.

'C' ride - Target pace by agreement with the ride leader, a non-drop ride with group leader managing the ride pace to keep the group together as far as possible. Regrouping will be as required to avoid any member of the group being dropped. The ride leader will agree with the group members on the ride protocol regarding riding in pairs where appropriate for the road conditions, with those riders who are comfortable following a wheel doing so and being prepared to take their turn on the front.

NOTE: As a general rule it will be worth starting with a slower group than a faster one.

SAFETY – RESPECT – FUN

SAFETY

This is the single most important consideration for our club rides, and we ask you to take this very seriously:

- Helmets are required on all SCC rides. Please make sure yours is in good condition. If you have had a fall or it has been hit or damaged, replace it immediately.
- It is essential that your bike is in a safe and roadworthy condition. If you are unsure, many local bike shops will offer a bike-check.
- Lighting and high-visibility clothing should also be used as appropriate. If cycling outside of daylight hours or within half an hour of dawn or dusk, a front (white) and a rear (red) bike light must be used.
- Should there be an incident, please support the ride leader and offer any help you can, whether it be making a phone call to seek help, warning other road users (often the most critical thing to do), or assisting with any injured riders.
- Ride leaders will always try to help with mechanical issues, but are not trained mechanics. All riders should be able to fix basic problems such as punctures and be familiar with the workings of their own bike. Always carry some spare inner tubes that are the correct size for your tyres.
- On every ride, it is the responsibility of each rider to have their own plan to get home in the event of a major mechanical failure or similar. We recommend that riders carry a spare layer of clothing to stay warm in case of an incident, or needing to pause to fix a mechanical.

Safety tips:

- Stay alert at all times.
- Hold your line. Don't overlap wheels
- Don't forget to glance back occasionally to be aware of what's behind you

To be safe it is important to:

- Ride smoothly
- Don't over react
- Avoid hard braking
- Be alert as to what is going on up the road in the front of the pack
- Anticipate what traffic will do
- Focus on the rider(s) and road ahead
- Beware of pot holes and obstacles in the road
- Don't cycle in the gutter/ too close to the inside edge of the road
- Don't brake unless absolutely necessary
- Don't accelerate suddenly, although there may be circumstances when riding on the front of a group where you need to accelerate "through" a situation, to avoid the group behind crashing.

(Inexperienced or inattentive riders who brake suddenly or touch a wheel may crash or cause a crash)

RESPECT

We ask everyone, when riding on a SCC ride to have respect for their fellow riders and other road-users. Please:

- Follow the highway-code at all times, including stopping at red lights and riding no more than two-abreast.
- Respect ALL other road users including drivers, pedestrians, runners, dog-walkers and horse-riders. Where appropriate and safe to do so, allow drivers to get past you on narrow roads.
- Once you've joined a ride, please stay in the group. If you're having one of those days when you're struggling to keep up, let the ride leader know.
- If you see someone struggling, drop back and see if you can help.
- If you're on the front, hold a pace at which the group can stay together.
- If you hear a shout of "mile off", drop your speed slightly.
- On the return leg, don't start racing against each other to get back first.

FUN

Let's not forget that we do this because we love cycling, so let's do it with a smile on our faces. A cheery "hello" to passing cyclists helps spread the fun to everyone else.

GENERAL GROUP RIDING GUIDANCE

- Please get to the rides on time.
- We will have a short announcement before each ride and then look to get going.
- Each SCC group ride will have a leader. The leader will not necessarily ride at the front, but will be familiar with the route and have some cycling experience.
- Please respect the leader's decision, if for example they decide to shorten a route due to weather/light/safety concerns.

Communication is key to a safe group ride

- Roads are full of traffic, obstacles, signs, pot holes, parked cars, animals, pedestrians, etc. and visibility is limited for the cyclist in a pack.
- It is important to communicate to the riders in the group of potential hazards by shouting and pointing out hazards either with Hand-Signals or Shouts (or both)

Hand-Signals

- The leading two riders in a group should always point out hazards, and these hazards should be communicated along the group, but not necessarily by all the riders. If you are a beginner or unsteady, then it's safer (for the whole group) to keep both hands on the handle-bars than it is to point things out.
- The purpose of these signals is that the riders can continue to ride at a steady pace and can ride round the smaller obstacles without constantly having to brake
- Where riders point down in the direction of an oncoming gravel/hole between them, this signifies they are going to ride one either side of it
- If the rider on the left points to their left, it means there is gravel/hole on their left that they will ride to the right of to pass. You will have to take the same line if you also want to avoid it
- Similarly the rider on the right might indicate a similar obstacle to their right.
- A rider may point or wave behind their back. If they are pointing right, it indicates the whole group will have to move to the right to overtake an obstacle such as a parked car or pedestrian.

Shouts

Warnings you're likely to hear when riding with SCC include:

- **Car Back:** car approaching from the rear of the group ride
- **Car Up:** car approaching from the front of the group ride
- **Car right or left:** car is approaching on the left or right of the group ride
- **Car coming through:** a car has started to overtake the group ride
- **Out:** the group needs to move out to avoid an obstacle
- **Mile off/Ease off:** slow down
- **All on:** all the riders are together in the group
- **Gravel or Hole:** a hazard in the road
- **Walker/runner up:** a pedestrian on the road ahead

- **Bike up:** there's a slower cyclist ahead that we're about to overtake; or one approaching us in the opposite direction
- **Clear:** this is called at a junction when there is nothing coming and it's safe to pedal through (but please check yourself before pulling out).
- If it's unsafe to proceed into the junction, then announce the danger (e.g. "Car Right") or/and the action "Stopping" loudly and as soon as possible.
- **Slowing:** potential hazard ahead, control speed (but don't brake sharply to a standstill)
- **Stopping:** there is a hazard and we need to stop

This may all sound complicated at first but you'll soon get used to it. It actually gives a whole new dimension to cycling as it makes it a team event – you have to communicate, support and trust each other, and everyone's safety is in each other's hands. If in doubt, ask a fellow rider.

GROUP RIDING GUIDELINES - HINTS & TIPS

1. Ride close together, two abreast when it is safe to do so – this way the group is a compact unit which can ride efficiently but easily move to single-file when needed to.

- Riding as a tight group makes it easier to communicate within the group, and easier for motorists to pass the group
- If you're not comfortable riding on the outside, ask the rider on the inside to let you in (they slow, you go in front of them, the outside line moves up).
- Getting comfortable riding tightly together comes with practice.
- Never ride more than two abreast on roads

2. Stay with your group, and make sure those behind can stay with the group.

- Be aware of the riders behind you, ease-up if the rider behind you is not maintaining the pace, and call for "mile off" where required to maintain the group. When riding up slight climbs, aim for consistent effort not consistent speed.
- On longer climbs it's expected that the group may split, so re-group just after the top in a safe place without blocking other road users (see 18 below).
- It may also be best to go at your own pace down a long descent and then regroup at the bottom (not necessarily stopping but rolling on until all members of the group are back together)

3. Ride at the pace of the rider beside you

- If you ride slightly in front of the rider beside [known as half wheeling], they will speed up to stay next to you, so ease up.
- If the rider beside is half wheeling you, tell them to ease-up.

4. Ride directly behind the rider in front to ensure everyone stays in a safe, tidy position.

- Riding in the middle of two riders in front causes the rider on your outside to be pushed wider into the road, makes the group harder to pass and puts that rider in the wind.

5. The gutter is full of stones, mud, and drain covers, so best avoided.

- If you ride in the gutter, you're forcing everyone behind you to do the same.
- Drain covers are slippery and often wide enough to get your wheel stuck in.
- You should be riding to the right of drain covers, about 70cm-1m from the road edge.

6. Braking smoothly, turning smoothly and making it obvious what you're doing will give other riders time to react so everyone has an enjoyable ride.

- Braking hard is particularly dangerous as the concertina effect means riders further back have even less time to react.
- The smoother everyone is, the more relaxed everyone can be.

7. Two riders (two abreast) on the front control the pace of the ride

- If you pass them, they can no longer control the pace, and in passing them you'll be 3 abreast!
- If you want to ride on the front or come past, ask the rider in front.

8. Ride at an inclusive pace when riding on the front to keep the group together.

- When you're on the front, you are responsible for the pace of the group.
- The front inside rider controls the pace of the group
- It takes skill and practise to maintain a pace that can keep a group together.
- Be aware of who is in the group and their abilities and ride at a pace all can keep up with.

9. Keep pedalling on downhills when riding in a group so no one needs to brake behind you

- Wind resistance is exponential, you're going faster when going downhill so are hitting more wind than on the flats and far more than those behind.
- Keep pedalling on the front (rather than free-wheeling), to let riders behind safely freewheel without needing to brake.

10. Stay alert on the front as you are the eyes & ears of the whole group

- Look out for dangers & be prepared to communicate with your group
- Concentrate especially on bends.
- When the road bends to the right, the rider on the left can see further than the rider on the right (and vice-versa).
- When arriving at a junction, shout out "*clear*" if there's no traffic and it's safe to proceed. (Please remember, it's each individual's personal responsibility for checking that a junction is clear before pulling out)
- If it's not clear, shout "*stopping*" and communicate through the group so everyone knows to stop!

11. Rotating the front riders whilst riding two abreast

- Rotate front riders when the road is wide, quiet and visibility is good
- When the signal is made for the front riders to change usually from one of the front riders
- It's best for the front right rider to move across in front of the front left rider
- Call the group past whilst the two ex-front riders drop their speed to allow the next two riders from the right hand side (#2 & #3 behind the front right rider) to take up position on the front.
- The two ex-front riders will now be #2 & #3 behind the new front left rider
- The group should continue to rotate in this way whilst riding two abreast
- *This riding format is possible in ideal road conditions, and may not always be possible on our usual group riding roads. so please do not expect this to always be feasible*

12. Don't overlap wheels with the rider in front - it's dangerous for the whole group

- Ensure you don't overlap wheels with the rider in front to avoid a potential crash.
- If the rider in front moves out, and your wheel is there, you'll touch wheels.
- When someone clips your front wheel you lose the ability to turn and balance, it's very likely you will come off, as will everyone behind you.
- The closest distance your front wheel should be to the rear wheel of the rider in front, should enable you to stop safely if you need to brake in an emergency without contact with the wheel of the rider in front

13. Ride leaders are there to keep the group together and safe.

- Please listen
- Follow the ride leader's instruction on directions, group structure, stopping places, warnings about dangerous roads and junctions, regroupings and general riding.

14. A driver's ability, vision, reactions and car performance affect when it's safe to pass.

- Let drivers decide whether they want to pass you and your group.
- Waving them past may influence their decision. (You don't want a nervous driver pulling into the group halfway through passing, or clipping a rider)

15. Single file/line-out sometimes makes sense

- The front riders will most likely make the call to line-out/single out
- We need to be pragmatic, as often the road conditions are not safe for us to always ride two abreast eg parked cars, traffic build up behind the group, narrow roads with oncoming traffic, traffic wanting to pass from behind, long climbs
- Take note of traffic behind us as lining out can often cause the group to split, and often does not make it easier for a car to pass.
- When the group does split up, the front riders will need to steady up for a while to let everyone get back to the group
- Once the group is all together again, the rider at the back shouts 'All On', and the message passed up to the front so the pace can be increased again.

16. Getting cars past the group

- This can be tricky and even perhaps contentious as it's probably instinctive to single-out to allow cars to pass
- Often this isn't necessary as it can cause problems in larger (longer) groups as vehicles have further in the "danger zone" to pass the long line of cyclists
- So stay tight in pairs for as long as possible to keep the group shorter, recognising it may be necessary to single-out

- Where it is known beforehand that the traffic is likely to be a problem on a particular section of road (eg Grassington Road) it may be safest to approach that section in singled-out small groups of 6 riders maximum with a gap (large enough to allow a couple of vehicles to fit) to the next small group

17. Point out ALL hazards in the road and pass back through the group

- Call out all obstacles and dangers and ensure riders behind you hear & pass on the message
- It helps to keep the ride free from punctures, lost water bottles, broken wheels and crashes.
- Common calls are "Gravel", "Hole", "Middle" etc
- Try to make it clear what you mean and point to where it is.
- Shouts and hand signals will make sure everyone avoids all hazards

18. Regroup in a safe place.

- Regroup off the carriageway wherever possible
- Groups of riders gathered at a road junction is not recommended. It can make it difficult for vehicles to see and potentially dangerous for everyone! (Stopping at least a few car lengths before or after a junction is better)

19. Bike lights - not only for riding at night

- Front bike lights cast strong shadows and can dazzle riders close behind, lower the brightness when riding in the group.
- For a front light, use a low setting when not riding on the front and you'll avoid casting shadows of the riders in front affecting their vision.
- For a rear light, a low, constant setting is far better for the vision and comfort of those behind.

20. Compulsory Mudguards and Mudflap

- When it's wet, it's common courtesy on all group rides to have at least a rear mudguard and mudflap (It's also in line with respect for all your fellow club members)
- In the winter, our local roads get very muddy too, so mudguards will help protect your bike
- If you don't have a mudflap, here's a link to RAW, who can provide mudflaps in various shapes, sizes and colours. **No excuses!**

<https://rawmudflap.uk/about-mudflaps/>

20. Winter takes it's toll on bikes.

- Check your gears, rims, brakes and tyres before every ride.
- Salt rusts bolts and cables, seizing brakes and gears. Grit wears away brake pads and wears through rims.
- Wash, check and maintain your bike throughout the winter and you will spend less time standing around in the rain trying to fix bikes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Highway Code - Rules for Cyclists

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-cyclists-59-to-82>

Useful Group Riding Videos (a selection)

Group Riding Etiquette -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRxel6zXEww>

British Cycling - How to ride in a group/Ride Smart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GeRonLnj70>

Global Cycling Network (GCN) How to Ride in a Group -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPXijIKgFVM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93dprSqdL5s&t=14s>