



Information for New Riders & Club Members

Ride Rules & Etiquette

Ride Etiquette - SAFETY - RESPECT - FUN

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 "rules of etiquette", we can achieve this, so please read, and if you are unsure about anything then please ask your ride leader before the ride sets off.

These rules are based on best practice issued to us by British Cycling, and on the collective decades of cycling experience that the ride leaders have.

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

It is essential that your bike is in a safe and roadworthy condition, with for example, working brakes. If you are unsure many local bike shops will offer a bike-check (www.cyclewales.net or Evolution offer club discount) The appropriate lighting and high-visibility clothing should also be worn It is British Cycling best practice that helmets always be worn when riding, and we would strongly encourage that you do so for your own safety, and to set a good example for younger members 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.

All juniors who ride with the club must get their parents to sign a parental consent form (available from Club secretary)

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

Ride leaders (or more likely their sweepers) will help with mechanical issues, but we would ask all riders to be able to fix basic problems such as punctures. Always carry some spare inner tubes that are the correct size for your wheels, as the ride leaders will be unlikely to have a full set of spares

Please follow the highway-code at all times, including stopping at red-lights and riding no more than two-abreast Please 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.

Please get to the rides on time. We will have a short announcement before each ride and then look to get going.

FUN Lets 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 a passing groups helps spread the fun to everyone else

GENERAL GROUP RIDING ETIQUETTE FOR BEGINNERS

As a general rule if you are new to cycling or group riding we advise starting with a Beginners ride.

You might be surprised how much benefit you get from riding in a group (approx. 20%). This means you will go 20% faster with the same effort.

Stronger and more experienced riders should be encouraged to support the Beginners rides and ride behind the weaker riders.

Each HCC Club ride will have a leader and “sweeper”.

The leader will not necessarily have to 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.

On Beginners rides the leader should ensure that basic cycling rules are explained to new riders who may not have cycled in a group before and may not yet have seen this information.

The “sweeper” will ride at the back of the group and make sure riders do not become detached from the main group.

Ride 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 (for example to get past an oncoming car when the road is narrow). On the roads, NEVER go three or more abreast, irrespective of how good the conversation is!

Communication is key to a safe group ride. Roads are full of traffic, rocks, 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.

Hand-Signals: It is not imperative that all the cyclists in the group point out the same hazards or signals. As long as a few are then this is normally sufficient (and the leading two always should). If you are a beginner or unsteady then it is far safer for the group to keep both hands on the handle-bars then 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 (and sudden braking causes most incidents).

The thing you are most likely to see is where riders point down in the direction of an oncoming rock/hole. If the two riders both point to the ground between them, this signifies there is small obstacle (such as a pothole) that they are going to ride one either side of.

If the rider on the left points to their left, it means there is something to their left that they might have to ride slightly to the right of to pass – and if you are behind them then 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.

These signals allow the group to ride at a constant pace.

You will also see a rider pointing or waving behind their lower back. If they are pointing right (the most common) then it indicates that the whole group will have to move to the right to overtake a large obstacle such as a parked car.

Shouts – Warnings you're likely to hear include:

Car Up : there's a car approaching from the rear of the group ride

Car Down: there's a car approaching from the front of the group ride

Out : the whole group will all have to move out to avoid a hazard at the side of the road eg parked car or pedestrian

Car right or left: car is approaching on the left or right of the group ride

Pot: there is a pot hole in the road

Walker/runner up: there is a pedestrian on the road ahead

Biker up: there is a slower cyclist ahead that we are likely to overtake

Clear: perhaps at a junction this is called when there is nothing coming and you know you can pedal through

Slow: potential hazard ahead, control speed (but don't brake sharply to a standstill)

Stopping: we are going to have to stop - there is a hazard we can't ride round, this avoids members of the group from slamming the brakes and causing a pile up

Single-file: asking that we move (whilst still keeping same speed) to single-file to for example let a vehicle pass.

To be safe it is important to ride smooth, don't over react, avoid hard braking, be alert as to what is going on up the road in the front of the pack, and anticipate what traffic will do.

Inexperienced riders who panic and touch a wheel may crash or cause a crash. You can avoid problems by practicing these simple rules:

Stay alert at all times. Hold your line. Don't overlap wheels. Don't look back! Relax!

Focus on the rider(s) ahead. Beware of pot holes in the road. Don't brake unless absolutely necessary

If you are at the back of the group and you or someone else is being dropped, it is your responsibility to call the rider in front by shouting "easy-up" this indicates that the pace is too high and the group needs to slow to allow them to catch up. This must be communicated through the pack to the lead rider. The lead cyclist will not be aware if you start to fall behind

When asked to “ease-up”, do not brake suddenly, reduce your speed by pedalling less hard or freewheeling for a moment. Look at your speedo – if someone is being dropped you probably only need to reduce your speed by 1mph to allow them to catch up and stay in contact with the group.

If you are feeling tired, let other members of the group know. You may be able to shelter within the pack or they may need to slow down to get you home safely. Remember accidents happen when riders are tired and lose concentration

All of this may sound complicated at first but you will soon get into 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. But you will find it one of the most enjoyable elements to riding in a club.

Enjoy !