

The 7 Golden Rules of Cooperative Group Riding

[Revised 4/24/2023]

Bike handling skills, panoramic awareness, situational awareness, and a willingness to cooperate and adapt one's riding behavior, are the hallmarks of safe and effective group riding. We urge you to join us in becoming avid students of the best practices to ride well, ride cooperatively, and ride safely!

The 7 Golden Rules

1. Establish & communicate group norms. *[all group members responsible]*

- ~ Before the ride, determine the type of ride, route, pace, regroupings, group norms, etc.
- ~ Focus on at least one group riding skill for the ride

2. Relax, breathe, and maintain a soft focus, or "panoramic awareness".

- ~ Maintain an easy, relaxed riding position *[especially relax the arms, shoulders, and neck]*
- ~ Keep the eyes looking ahead while looking around and through riders in front of you

3. Ride evenly and predictably so that riders and drivers can respond to you in a timely way.

- ~ Track in a **straight line** directly behind the rider in front of you; hold your line
- ~ Anticipate - make adjustments and changes early, gradually, and smoothly
- ~ Don't make sudden changes such as swerving, hard braking, or sudden standing
- ~ Don't look down at the back wheel in front of you, or overlap wheels
- ~ Don't ride 'sidecar' or in the middle of the lane; don't "bunch up" at intersections or in transitions

4. Maintain the group's level of effort and pace so as to encourage group cohesiveness.

- ~ Ride as a part of the group or team, not as an individual
- ~ Hold your position in the group relative to other riders
- ~ At transitions (stops, left turns, etc.) don't start riding helter-skelter as an individual
- ~ Don't surge; respectfully moderate surging riders . . . or let them go

5. Maintain a 360-degree situational awareness every second of the ride.

- ~ Be mindful of the general environment, road conditions, traffic, and other riders
- ~ Respond **quickly** and **cooperatively** to pedestrians, drivers, and other riders
- ~ Don't become inattentive or distracted, even for a moment

6. Communicate.

- ~ Point out hazards early with a clear gesture and voice
- ~ Signal changes such as starting, slowing, stopping, turning, starting up or down hill, etc.
- ~ Respectfully give and take feedback so as to improve riding practices

7. Promote safe and cooperative group riding skills and attitudes.

- ~ Challenge yourself to continuously hone your skills; one never "arrives"
- ~ Improve your ability to read conditions, situations, and other riders

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Cooperative Group Riding

When we ride with others we can enjoy each other's company, help out in emergencies, become more aerodynamically efficient and save energy, and be more visible to traffic. These are some of the many perks of group riding. At one end of the spectrum we may ride with others to enjoy the sun, fresh air, and beautiful scenery. At the other end we might ride fast in a pace-line to achieve a goal or win a race. The suggestion is to consider both variations, and everything in between, as forms of cooperative group riding. The safest and most efficient way to ride around other riders is in a line or lines. Riding with others requires certain essential skills. These skills vary depending on the situation and conditions, and evolve as abilities grow over time. Whether we are riding near others or as part of a defined group, we are participating in group riding. Ride cooperatively so as to maximize safety, enjoyment, and efficiency!

Hold Your Position [Don't Ride Helter-Skelter]

Hold your position relative to other riders, especially during transitions. Transitions include slowing, accelerating, stopping, turning left or right, starting up or down hill, etc. Don't make sudden changes or degenerate into riding helter-skelter, especially at lights, stop signs, when making left turns, and around traffic. Ride as part of a cohesive team that is predictable and easy for other road users to read.

Follow Distance: "The 6 to 6 Rule"

How close should we ride to others? It depends on a number of changing variables, so we have to adjust continuously. In general, follow by six feet. Move closer as the situation, conditions, and skill levels of riders indicate. When situations and conditions are favorable, and riders are judged to be aware, skilled and cooperative, it is possible to safely follow a wheel by six or fewer inches. These variables can also indicate a follow distance of greater than six feet. Keep in mind that while riding everything is constantly changing . . . and we have to adjust in an ongoing way. It is more effective and safer when we anticipate needs, and **very quickly and smoothly adapt**. Ongoing awareness and adjustments performed smoothly and consistently allow a group to shift into a cohesive team.

Riding Position: "The 18 - 24 Inch Rule"

How close should we ride to the right-hand side of the road? The basic goal is to maintain a minimum margin of safety whereby you can steer to the right as well as the left. The guideline is that the wheel should be at least 18 - 24 inches from the ride-able edge of the road. Another way to estimate how far to the right our bike should track is to keep the outside edge of your shoulder well inside the ride-able edge of the roadway

When some riders are at the front of the group, they tend to steer a pathway as far to the right as possible. They track as close to the ride-able edge as they can. Usually the riders following will tend to echelon to the left into the road because they can't see the road as well. **This is not recommended**. Rider error, an emergency maneuver, a gust of wind, or a car passing too closely can push the leader one way or the other. The margin of safety decreases for those that can't see the road as well. When riding in first position lead with an awareness of others, abide by "The 18 - 24 Inch Rule", and make moment-by-moment adjustments to the right as well as the left.

Group Size: "The Rule of 5"

This rule comes into play when a road is narrow, twisty, or such that it is difficult for cars to pass easily with a good line-of-sight. Keep the groups to 5 or fewer riders. A starting group of 6 would break into 2 groups of 3. A group of 7 breaks into one of 3 and one of 4. And so forth. A distance of at least 100 yards between groups enables cars to pass more easily and safely.

Ride as Good Ambassadors

Obey traffic laws and treat everyone on the road, including drivers, pedestrians, and other riders, with respect and due consideration. Communicate clearly, ride cautiously, and act cooperatively with all road users. It is as simple as that, and yet it is not always that easy to achieve in the real world. Please, ride to promote goodwill on the road!