



With special thanks to the Collingwood Cycling Club, the following are the Ride Guidelines for the Etobicoke Cycling Club.

Group riding, by definition, is a collective experience requiring a certain degree of harmony and cooperation between the participating cyclists. In many ways, it's like a group dance where the better everyone understands the various steps the safer and more fun the whole ride experience becomes. In this case, the steps are not difficult but what's essential is that everyone is doing the same dance at the same time. And that's what this article is about. We at the Etobicoke Cycling Club (ECC) would like to define how we ride so everyone is on the same page.

To view our Risk Management Plan, [click here](#).

First some prerequisites:

1. As per OCA rules all participants must be an ECC club member or a declared guest of an OCA/UCI affiliated club.
2. You need a road bike in good working order.
3. Be self-sufficient. Do not rely on others for flat repairs, water, food etc. Bring a charged cell phone, ID, emergency information and the proper clothing for the day.
4. You need to have a certain minimal level of fitness. Members should be able to ride for 2 hrs at 25km/hr.
5. You need to have a basic understanding of group riding skills. If you don't we offer beginner group riding skill sessions in the early season.
6. You need to be familiar with and willing to abide by our ride guidelines, be courteous and respectful of other cyclists and road users.
7. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent and have the appropriate minimum level of ability a per #4 above.
8. If the Ride Leader determines that a rider is not prepared for a ride, as per above, the ride leader has the discretion to refuse to allow participation in that day's ride.



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RAIN POLICY

Club rides will be canceled, as a club insured & sanctioned event, due to weather if:

1. It is raining at the start of the ride.
2. If the forecast calls for a 70% or higher chance of rain.
3. If there are winds in excess of 50 kph.

Of course, that doesn't mean you can't ride, it just means that we don't recommend you ride and that Ride Leaders will not be attending in that capacity. You're welcome to ride in any sort of weather but for safety reasons, it will not be as a club sanctioned event.

Remember we try our best to keep you safe and that we are only as good as the forecasts.

HOW WE RIDE

Our weekend ride meeting points are Sanremo Bakery and Second Cup at Humbertown Plaza. Our weekday morning rides meet at Lake Crescent and Royal York, and then Kingsway and Twyford. Times vary seasonally. Check the weekly email for start times and the route of the day.

Notwithstanding how many riders show up, no group shall be larger than 12 riders, and ideally just 6 – 9 riders. Groups are primarily defined by speed however the faster speed rides are usually longer than the slower rides.

Rolling speeds of 35 km/h and up.

Challenging even the fittest and fastest riders. These rides are not for beginners.

Rolling speeds of 26 – 32 km/h.

A challenging ride for many but not all.

Rolling speeds of 24 – 26 km/h.

Suitable for newer riders, those coming back from injury, a recovery ride, etc.

Rolling speeds of 20 – 22 km/h.

Purely social.



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The goal is to have groups of 6 to 9 compatible riders. (Our experience has shown that to have a group of cyclists who have similar fitness, and goals in mind for that days ride results in a more enjoyable, safer, and harmonious ride. So think about whether you want to go hard or easy that day and pick the appropriate group.)

We attempt to have all groups led by a designated club Ride Leader. These volunteers know the route, carry a cell phone, and have been instructed on how we ride. Most importantly the Ride Leader explains all this information to the group before they depart. Repetition of our ride practices week after week is key to members absorbing the information but also necessary to identify new riders and inform them of our ride practices. Nothing ruins a group ride quicker than a new rider not knowing the rotation and being out of sync. It's all about everyone being on the same page.

Groups are to depart the meeting area in at least 5 minutes intervals. We ask that riders do not try to catch up to the groups ahead as this causes confusion and creates groups that are too big (remember, 6 – 9 people per group). We usually have all the groups ride predominantly the same route so that riders who have miscalculated their fitness can easily drift back to the next group.

RIDE FORMATION AND HOW WE ROTATE

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

Our goal as a disciplined and well-organized club 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. To reduce the potential conflict between these two groups we travel at off-peak hours, and we frequent only the least traveled roads possible at all times. In order to further protect ourselves, we travel two abreast or in a double paceline. This is an internationally recognized cycling formation used by professionals and amateurs around the world. The main objective of the double paceline 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'. Aggressive drivers will attempt the dangerous pass between the center line and the group, “known as threading the needle”.



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Taking a cue from the Collingwood Cycling Club, we at the Etobicoke Cycling Club have implemented a compromised position we call “Tight and to the Right”. The idea is to take a traditional two abreast formation and position it as far right as is safely possible. ***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.***

In order for us to accomplish this, we as a club, are required to ride in a formation that is ‘tight’ and well disciplined. By ‘tight’ we mean that the cyclists are to be 2-3ft apart laterally at the shoulders, and 2-3ft apart front to back (wheel to wheel). The group’s primary goal is to maintain the cohesion of this formation. It is the individual discipline of each rider to hold their position in a smooth predictable manner and not create gaps or overlaps which jeopardize the ride quality.

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 Social Paceline and the other as a Rotating Paceline. The Ride Leader will call out the appropriate formation for the needs of the group but any cyclists within the group can call out a suggestion.

SOCIAL PACELINE

This is our standard rotation used while warming up or just cruising along. In the Social Paceline, we start from the premise of the two abreast formation where everybody is 2-3ft apart laterally and fore/aft. The two leading cyclists are breaking the wind and setting the pace. The lead cyclist on the right, after a reasonable period of time (ie 1- 2 minutes, it’s 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



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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.

ROTATING PACELINE

This rotation is different from the Social Paceline 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 Rotating Paceline all the cyclists should be moving through the rotation at the same speed.

Here are some important points to remember when executing the Rotating Paceline 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-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.



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We generally opt for the left to the right rotation because the HTA specifies passing on the left.

SINGLE FILE PACELINE

We make every effort to ride on the quietest roads at the quietest times. In the event that for some unusual reason we are forced to travel on an excessively busy road, we will ride single file to get past the congested section. We also will ride long descents single file, more on that later. Otherwise, all our group rides are two abreast.

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 contrary to our “Tight and to the Right” strategy where the driver is to be given a view up the left side of the lane.

DESCENDING

In Etobicoke and the surrounding areas in which we ride, we do not have any really long or challenging descents however if we venture north to Collingwood we have several descents that are long and can generate sustained speeds in excess of 80 kph. On those descents 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 metres from the right edge of the road. It is not safe to ride close to the edge of the road at high speeds as you need more road surface to manage the effects of wind gusts, etc.
3. Riders should open up gaps of at least 4 metres between each rider front to back.
4. The fastest riders should descend first to reduce the amount of passing to a minimum.
5. All passing must happen on the left. Never pass on the right.



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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. If you see someone riding inappropriately (overlapping wheels, surging off the front, etc) say something to them. 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. Don't let bad habits go unaddressed. Speak up 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. You don't need to 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 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.



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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, it 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 overreactions 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 ie 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 use a ‘Social Paceline’ and then as a group, climb slightly easier but descend harder. The group speed will be more consistent and the group will more likely remain intact.
6. When picking your group, be realistic. It's better to be comfortable in your group then maxed out all the time.



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7. 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.
8. When you see someone committing a ride foul politely say something. We are all responsible for the quality of our rides.
9. 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.
10. 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. This includes hand gestures involving the center digit. We are working hard to improve the reputation of the ECC and all cyclists in general. If words have to be exchanged let the Group Ride Leader do the talking. (Feel free to video the exchange if you feel the individual is dangerous.) 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, have fun and thanks for riding with the Etobicoke Cycling Club.