

Bunch Riding Etiquette

1. Be Predictable

It is important that you ride predictably in the group. Sudden changes in direction or behaviour should be avoided. Sudden or abrupt movements will also impact on the reaction time of the other riders in the group and create an unnecessary hazard.

2. Riding 2 Abreast

The law dictates that cyclists can only ride 2 abreast continuously. (It can be 3 wide if you are overtaking or rolling off the front). This applies regardless of if you are riding on the shoulder of the road or in a lane. Certain roads or conditions might require single file. Some double lane roads without a shoulder dictate that it is better (and legal) to sit in the middle of the lane rather than have vehicles squeeze past.

3. Maintain a Steady Pace

Maintain a constant speed and avoid abrupt or unnecessary use of your brakes or hard acceleration then easing off. This may cause a collision amongst riders following behind. The objective is to ride “tempo”, where your cadence is steady. Not only does this create better cycling technique, it stops the perpetual “yo-yo” effect where gaps form between riders, requiring further acceleration and effort to get back onto the bunch. Once up to speed the rider brakes.... yet again causing the “yo-yo” effect.

4. Hold the Wheel

The benefit of riding in a bunch is you get wind protection. Holding the wheel relates to keeping a steady but close distance between you and the rider in front. While conditions will vary, you should be about 1-2 feet behind. If the gap closes, don't brake, but rather ease off on pedalling and free wheel. Again, consistency is key and leaving a gap between you and the rider in front starts the dreaded yo-yo and also causes uneasiness in the bunch which could force errors.

5. Road Rules

You have a right to be on the road and a right to be in a lane, but with that right comes responsibility. You are classified as a vehicle and are required to obey all of the road rules that would apply to you in a car. This includes stopping at red lights.

6. Communicate

Use verbal and non-verbal (hand) communication to indicate hazards such as rocks or glass, pot holes and approaching vehicles. Be sure to pass on the calls made in front or behind you to fellow riders in a loud and clear voice.

Communicate your intentions with phrases such as:

- “stopping” - called from the front, indicates that the group is pulling up to a complete stop.
eg: red light ahead
- “slowing” - called from the front, the group is on the brakes, be cautious and slow down.
eg: give way sign, pedestrian crossing
- “car back” - called from the back, move closer to the gutter or move into single file
eg: a car can't pass you and is hesitating and unsure how to move around you
- “hole/glass” - called from the front, and accompanied by a point, be aware and follow the direction of the rider ahead. Do not go the opposite direction of the rider in front or swerve erratically.

7. Rolling Through & Peeling Off

Most of our rides involve all riders taking a turn at the front on the bunch, then rotating or “peeling off” to the back of the bunch. The bunch continues to “roll through” for the duration of the ride. This is how professional cyclists train, as it is safer, keeps the group together and offers fantastic interval style training as riders battle the headwind, then recover with some protection in the bunch. Riding 2 abreast, the rider on the left peels off on the left side and the rider on the right peels off to the right. Try to indicate with the raise of an elbow, so the person behind you is aware you are peeling off. Always retire to the very back of the bunch. Always change when it is safe, particularly when riding 2 abreast. You have no set time frame for riding on the front of the bunch. Just monitor your fitness and make sure you have enough energy to hold the wheel and remain with the group when you have done your turn. As a general rule, the smaller the bunch, the longer the turn and the bigger the bunch, the shorter the turn, so everyone gets a fair go on the front.

8. Riding at the Front

When you are at the front of the bunch, your aim is to maintain the same speed you were doing at second rider. Don't exert yourself trying to increase the speed of the bunch dramatically, but rather aim to maintain the speed consistently. Also, don't half wheel at the front of the bunch. Half wheeling is when someone wants to be the leader and ride ahead of the person next to them. This causes the second person to constantly feel like they need to speed up to catch up, causing an increase in overall speed of the bunch. Ride beside the person next to you, not in front of them.

9. Leave the Smasher

If someone at the front of the bunch decides to increase the pace dramatically and ride off the front of the bunch, let that rider go. Your job is to maintain your speed. Choosing to undertake a bunch ride means you want to ride with others and respect the etiquette of the bunch. A rider who goes off the front either wants to ride at a pace faster than the bunch, in which case they can ride alone. In most cases this person will decide to return to the bunch and ride at the pace the group has deemed appropriate.

10. Climbing or Ascending

Standing up on the pedals will cause an immediate deceleration of your bike which means your bike could drop back anywhere up to half a metre. To minimise the impact on the group, try to stay seated as long as possible, using the gears on your bike to do so. Not only is this safer, but it is also a fantastic way to build strength. Try to give the rider in front a little bit more room should they need to stand up during the climb.

11. Pedal Downhill

Those at the front of the bunch should never coast or freewheel on the downhill as this leads to the group behind bunching up and causes unnecessary braking... and introduces the “yo-yo” effect yet again.

12. Fill the Gap

If there is a gap next to you, then signal or call for someone to fill the gap from behind, or you can peel off to the rear of the bunch.

13. Hand Positioning & Bars

Keep your thumbs under the handlebars in case of sudden bumps and make sure your handlebars are parallel with others to avoid your bars being hooked by bikes around you. While riding in a bunch, no rider is to be down on their aerobars, regardless of their ability/experience.

14. Re-group

If the group splits after lights or longer climbs slow down or in some cases stop to allow the bunch to regroup. Do so in a safe place.

15. The Ride Leader

If a ride leader has been appointed to your bunch, please follow any instructions this person may ask of you. The ride leader will be monitoring all riders and is responsible for ensuring all people in the group have a safe and enjoyable ride.

16. Be Respectful

If you are participating in an event organised by the Club, please be mindful you are representing the Club and its sponsors. The Club aim is to be inclusive and supportive of all riders, regardless of their ability. We should be respectful of all riders and members of the public while riding.