

Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club

Group Riding Etiquette

Be Predictable: Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding alone. Other riders expect you to continue straight ahead at a constant speed unless you indicate differently. Motorists look for vehicles in the road; operating as a vehicle increases safety.

Bicyclists are subject to the same rules of the road as motorists. Pass others on their left. Say "on your left" to warn others that you are passing. If you need to pass someone on the right, say "on your right" clearly since this is an unusual maneuver. If you need to take the lane, signal and communicate to the motorists too. It is safer to take the lane briefly rather than squeeze along on the edge or curb, inviting motorists to split a narrow lane with you.

Use Signals: Use hand and verbal signals to communicate with others in the group and with motorists.

Give Warnings: Warn cyclists behind you of changes in direction or speed. The lead rider should call out "left" or "right," in addition to a hand signal. The lead rider should announce the turn well in advance of the intersection, so members of the group have time to position themselves properly for the turn.

Most of the cyclists will not have a good view of the road surface ahead, so it is important to announce hazards. Indicate hazards by pointing down to the left or right and shouting, "hole," "bump," etc. Everyone should be made aware of the hazard; however everyone does not need to announce them.

Ride Single or Double File: Cyclists commonly ride single or double file as appropriate to the roadway, traffic conditions and where allowed by law. Most state vehicle codes permit narrow vehicles such as bicycles and motorcycles to ride double file or 'split' a lane. Even where riding double is legal, courtesy dictates that you single up when cars are trying to pass you if the lane is wide enough for them to safely do so.

Motor vehicle law says "any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic shall ride

as close as practicable to the right hand curb or edge of the roadway, except: when passing or making a left turn or when reasonably necessary to avoid hazardous conditions that make it unsafe to continue along the right hand curb or edge”.

Maintain Your Place In Line: When a group gets to a signal, do not take this as an opportunity to cut to the front of the others in the group; If you get there first, push the pedestrian button to help more of the group to get through a longer light. If you are the 12th to get there, stay in order.

Slower riders who cut into the front force everyone they cut in front of to pass them again and cause a bunch up at the limit line. Instead, maintain your position in the single or double line and work on your own pace when safely rolling along. Clustering up at intersections clogs traffic and causes unnecessary chaos when the light turns green. Experienced riders line up and stay in order.

Watch Out At Intersections: When approaching intersections requiring vehicles to yield or stop, the lead rider should say "slowing" or "stopping" to alert those behind them. When passing through an intersection, some bicyclists say, "clear" if there is no cross traffic. This is a dangerous practice. It encourages riders to let others do their thinking for them. Each bicyclist is responsible for his or her own safety.

Activate Signals: When a group gets to a signal, the first rider on the right should move over to the white pedestrian cross walk button and push it. This button will hold the cross walk signal longer than the green bicycle button which may only allow a few bicyclists to cross before cycling back to red.

Watch For Traffic Coming From The Rear: Even when you are occupying the proper lane position, it often helps to know when a car is coming. Since those in front cannot see traffic approaching from the rear, it is the responsibility of the riders in back to inform the others by saying "car back." Around curves, on narrow roads, or when riding double, it is also helpful to warn of traffic approaching from ahead with "car up."

Leave a Gap for Cars: When riding up hills or on narrow roads, leave a gap for cars between every three or six bicycles. This way a motorist can use shorter passing intervals and won't have to race to move around the entire group.

Move Off the Road When You Stop: Move well off the road so you do not interfere with traffic. When you start again, each bicyclist should look for, and yield to, traffic.

Sources: Most of these tips are reproduced from "Bicycle USA", magazine of the League of American Bicyclists. The information has been slightly modified and added to for the education of riders with the Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club.

