

LCW Group Rider Skills and Code of Conduct

Contents

1. Safety First
2. Individual Skills
3. Why ride in a group?
4. Group Mentality
5. Group Formations
6. Choosing the right group
7. Tour Leader and Group Leaders
8. Mechanics of the group
9. Hazardous Situations

Safety First

Group cycling can be a great experience, only if participants adhere to a high level of safety. An individual's unsafe practices can have serious consequences for the entire group

- a. All cyclists must adhere to the rules of the road and obey the Ontario Highway Traffic Act ie stop at all stop signs
- b. It essential to make sure your bicycle is good working order. Check tires regularly for any significant wear and replace when necessary.
- c. You must wear a certified helmet to join a tour.

Individual Skills

- a) **Keep a straight line** – cycling in a group requires riding in close proximity to each other, therefore it is essential to ride in a straight line. The inability to ride straight is usually caused by poor cycling technique ie inconsistent pedal stroke, excessive body movement and too tight a grip on the handlebars. By practicing riding with a relaxed upper body on a solid line can help improve this issue.
- b) **Maintain a consistent pace** – whether during gear changes or standing on steep hills, it is imperative to maintain your pedal stroke and pace. In a large group of riders, sudden changes in pace will cause a ripple effect slowdown, which can lead to a crash. Match your pace with the person cycling in front and beside you.
- c) **Be aware and ready to respond** - all riders must be very attentive; always looking up and anticipating any change to group movements or potential hazards. A group cyclist must also be well versed in the use of their bicycle ie. use of brakes and changing of gears. While riding in the group, your hands must be close to the brakes at all times. Avoid excessive hard braking.
- d) **Be Predictable** – This is probably the most important quality of a good group rider. Keeping smooth and steady and not making any unexpected movements is critical to preventing accidents. Notify or signal to riders and traffic that you are making movements other than straight.

Why Ride in a Group?

- a) Saves energy – by sharing the work, you can travel farther and faster because of drafting.
- b) More fun – group cycling is the most social form of cycling

Group Mentality

- a) **Cyclists must act and think with the entire group in mind.** - working together is the most efficient way to travel long distances and to ensure everyone gets to the destination and back. Slowing down to help a dropped cyclist rejoin the group is the right thing to do.

Group Formations

Club group cycling is most often a unified array of riders. The cycling group can be in one of two formations.

- a) Single file – single file is the basic group formation. Cyclists closely follow each other in a single line. It is most useful when traffic is heaviest and space for all vehicles is limited. This can be more dangerous because motorists may feel forced to pass by very closely.
- b) Double file or two abreast – this formation is used most often with group cycling. Double file is riding side by side, about shoulder width apart or closer. Even though double file riding will take up more road width space, the length of the group will essentially be shorter. This allows motorists to pass by quickly and safely. Either way, the group should at all times try to keep as far to the right as possible.

Choosing the Right Group

- a) Touring groups are formed based on speed and ability. This helps maintain safety while at the same time accommodate the various abilities. Groups should be no larger than 15-20 riders.
- b) Choose the group according to your Speed and ability – for example

Group Speed Km/hr average	Individual Speed Required Km/hr av.
30 – 32	28
26-28	24
22-24	20
18-20	16

- c) A cyclist must take into consideration, not only the group average speed but also the terrain. It is much harder to maintain 32km/hr average in hilly terrain rather than flat.
- d) If you are new to group riding it is always important to start in the slower groups. You do not have to be an exceptionally strong rider to be a good group rider.

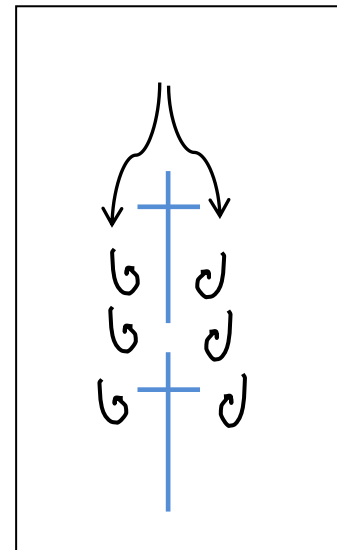
Tour Leader and Group Leaders

- a) All LCW tours are organized and headed up by the Tour Leader. The Tour Leader is responsible to ensure that touring is carried out safely and in accordance with this code of conduct document.
- b) Group Leaders and the Tour Leader will guide individual groups according to their pace and destination as well as maintain a high level of safety.
- c) Riders who do not comply or who jeopardize the safety of the group will be asked to comply or if not, asked to leave the group.
- d) The Tour Leader and or Group Leaders can stop the tour at any time when safety is being compromised and will not start again until the issue is rectified.

Group Mechanics

1) Drafting

- a) Drafting is the skill of cycling very closely (6-12 inches) behind another rider's rear tire. Riding within their slipstream reduces the cycling effort by up to 30%. The lead rider creates swirling currents of air behind them that propels the following cyclist forward.
- b) Cycling too far away from the lead rider puts you out of the draft and risks not being able to keep up to the group.
- c) Drafting positioning is dependent on wind direction.
 - i) Head Wind – position somewhat directly behind the lead rider (avoid being exactly behind the rear tire to avoid a crash in case of a sudden slow down)
 - ii) Shoulder Wind – position behind lead rider slightly to the left or right of their rear tire, opposite to the opposing wind direction. ie traveling north into a NW wind – draft position just to the right of the lead riders rear tire.
 - iii) Side Wind – position even more right or left of the rear tire, opposite to the opposing wind direction. However, with larger groups this could be hazardous as the group fans out across the entire lane. Starting another drafting line is essential.
- d) While drafting, be alert and ready to respond. Focus on the riders that are ahead of you so as to anticipate any sudden changes ie stopping, swerving or hazards etc. Focusing on someone's rear tire can lure you to touch tires and crash.
- e) To further aid in drafting when in a double file formation, ride directly ***side by side***, shoulder width apart or closer. The tighter the group, the better the draft. This also helps prevent the unnecessary spread of the group across the road. The group should look like 2 parallel lines not in a V shape.



2) Communication

- a) Communication is primarily initiated by the lead riders in a group so they need to be vigilant in knowing what is ahead. Lead riders warn following riders of upcoming hazards with hand signals and verbal cues. ***Every rider following must repeat and pass this signal on to the back of the group.***
- b) Hand signals are to be used in advance of stopping, slowing, turning and hazards ie potholes, dead animals, parked cars, other riders etc. Shouting verbal cues should be done sparingly since these warnings are often misinterpreted and may cause a sudden slow-down in the group.
- c) Once stopped at intersections, the front cyclists may shout “clear” when the way is safe to cross and free of traffic. Even though it is proper to warn others about oncoming vehicles, ***all cyclists are responsible for their own safety and must check that the way is clear for them.***
- d) Verbal warnings include, “Car left”, “Car right”, “On your right”, “On your left”, “Stopping”, “Slowing”, “Glass”, “Gravel”, “Tracks” etc

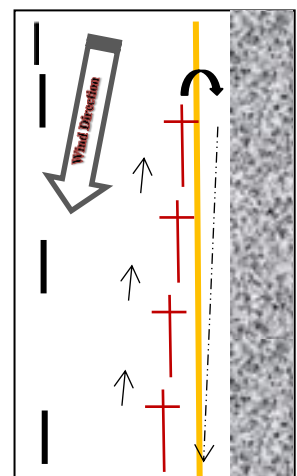
3) Group Pace

- a. The rule of thumb is, “ride the group pace, not your pace”. The pace of the pack is mainly dependent on the **lead riders**. As a **lead rider**, it is very important that you keep to the following group riding principles.
 - i. **The speed of the pack must be kept *steady* and consistent** with their designated pace ie fast (30+ km/hr average), medium (26-30 km/hr average), slow (20-25 km/hr average). Remember this is not racing and it is not the time to show how you can drop riders.
 - ii. **The group should keep a pace that is generally good for all in the group.** If the pace is too high, there is the risk of dropping a number of riders who have been sharing in the effort. If riders are being dropped, those at the back of the group should call out to the lead riders to slow down and wait for them. If a person is continually being dropped, this would indicate the cyclist should be riding in a slower group.
 - iii. **Increases in speed should be done *gradually* and *smoothly*.** This will prevent large separations between cyclists and premature fatigue. Sudden bursts of speed at the front should be left for road racing, not touring.
 - iv. **Use your brakes sparingly.** Avoid unnecessary sudden hard braking. Instead, if the group slows, soft pedal and feather your brakes to slow yourself.
 - v. **Do not leave gaps.** Do your utmost to keep the gaps small between yourself and the rider in front of you. If a large gap opens up, it is best to have other riders fill the gap to maintain the shape and pace of the group.
 - vi. **Do not half-wheel the rider at the front of the group.** Half-wheeling is when a lead rider in a double line formation continually wants to go faster than the person beside them. As a result they ride such that their front wheel is always ahead of the

- rider beside them. This only frustrates and of course fatigues the slower rider. ***Riding “side by side” is essential to keep the integrity of the entire group and maximize the draft.***
- vii. **When stopped at an intersection or going around a corner, the lead cyclists should *accelerate gradually*, to again avoid large separations that can occur between riders.** The quicker everyone regroups, the sooner the group will get back to its designated pace.
 - viii. **Pull off the front before you are tired.** Leave yourself some gas in the tank before you get off the front. If you tire out or similarly stop pedaling before you get off the front, you will lose speed and slow the entire group. This can cause an accordion effect. Riders hate the accordion effect because it makes people in the back have to suddenly slow then quickly speed up, increasing the risk for a crash and causing premature fatigue.
 - ix. **As a lead rider, keep pedaling when riding down a hill.** If you stop pedaling, you will end up going slower than the riders who are drafting behind you. This will cause riders to brake and again result in the accordion effect.
 - x. **When having to stand upon on a steep climb, maintain a consistent pace.** Because of poor technique, cyclists often stop pedaling or do not apply constant pressure to the pedals when standing, which causes a small, sudden slow down. This can result in the rider behind them hitting their rear wheel and crashing. Stand only while you are actively pressing down on the pedals.
 - xi. **When climbing a hill, keep to the right if you are a weaker rider.** This will enable the stronger riders to pass you on the left safely while maintaining the pace of the group.

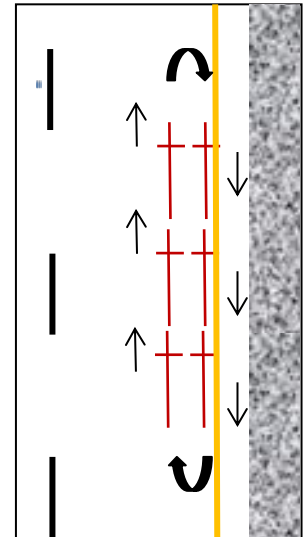
4) Pace Line

- a. This is a group of cyclists drafting in a tight, single or double file formation, which rotates positions and shares the work of riding at the front.
- b. Generally, leaders riders will pull the group for 1-5 minutes before switching positions. If you are too tired to do a pull at the front, continue with your turn but pull through or switch positions immediately. At the same time wave then next rider to continue to pull through and move in front of you.
- c. The single file pace line rotates according to wind direction. ie rightward opposing wind, therefore a clockwise rotation and vice versa. With a head wind, rotation is always clockwise. With a double file pace line the rotation will most often be clockwise.
- d. The lead rider(s) should position themselves as ***far to the right edge*** of the road as possible when there is a rightward opposing or side wind. When there are a lot of potholes along the road edge then it is legal and



appropriate to ride out a bit from the roads edge. Lead rider(s) should position themselves only *mid lane* when winds are from the left, to avoid obstructing a vehicles view that wishes to pass from the rear.

- e. The lead cyclists will use a rotating hand signal to indicate they are tired and need to switch. It is essential to switch before you are exhausted.
- f. All transitions must be *steady* and *gradual*. Do not burst into the front position leaving others trying to catch up. This only fatigues these riders.
- g. In a single file paceline (see diagram), the lead rider moves over slightly and drops back to the back of the line once tired. The following rider fills his or her position until they are tired and the process is repeated.
- h. In a double pace line (see diagram), the left lead rider (LL) will *very slightly* increase their speed to *gradually* pass the right lead rider (RL) and move to the right position. At the same time the rider following the LL rider *gradually* moves to the new LL position. Also the RL rider may call out “clear” to the transitioning LL rider, to indicate when it is safe to pass and move in front of him. With each transition it’s important keep the pace the same and not continually increasing.
- i. The default group position is always to ride tight to the right side of the road. It is essential therefore, that the front right lead rider stays tight to the right where it is safe to do so.

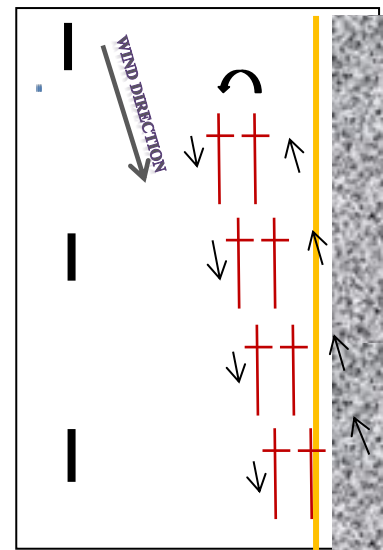


5) Continuous Pace Line

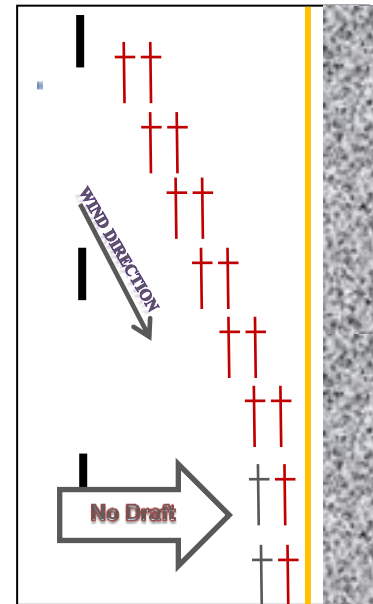
- a) Pace lines of this type rotate continuously or without pause at the front. They are used when there are strong opposing winds.
- b) This form of pace line is very efficient at maximizing the group speed.
- c) A continual pace line requires a higher level of expertise therefore only advanced riders should be performing this maneuver

6) Echelon

- a) Echelon is the angulation of the entire cycling pack or pace line towards an oblique opposing wind to maximize drafting.
- b) The more oblique the winds, the more the echelon will be angled.
- c) The rotation of the echelon is most often clockwise. However if the wind is heavy, rotation will be dependent on the direction of the wind (see diagram). In this case, the pack rotates such that the windward side riders move to the back. This lessens the effort of the windward cyclists. Downwind riders will be sheltered by the windward riders as they move to the front of the group.



- d) Rotate positions at the front long before you become exhausted. Limit your efforts at the front to less than 1 minute intervals in windy conditions.
- e) With a large group in an echelon, the group may fan out across the entire lane, leaving some not able to obtain a draft (see diagram). In this case, it may be better instead ***to form two separate, rotating echelons.***
- f) If the group size is small, and the wind is from the left, there is no need for the lead riders to ride out near the middle of the road, taking up the whole lane. This will only infuriate motorists. The lead riders should ride half way or less out from the side of the road. This should still give ample space for following riders to fan out and receive a draft. Similarly, with a rightward wind, the lead riders must be as close to the far right edge of the road as safely possible. This will again, prevent the group from being sprawled across the road unnecessarily.
- g) If traffic is heavy, echelons must be avoided. A Group Leader may tell the group to go single file.



Be Courteous to Others

- a) We all need to share the road with other vehicles and cyclists. The LCW desires to be an example good cycling practices and attitude.
- b) When it comes to incidents with car drivers who think they own the road, it is essential to stay calm and when necessary record their license plate, the time and what happened.

Hazardous Circumstances

- a) **Never attempt to pass other cyclists by crossing the yellow line into oncoming traffic.** Not only are you at risk to be hit by an oncoming car but also by a car that is passing from behind.
- b) **Never pass on the inside of the group.**
- c) **Do not ride 3 or more abreast.**
- d) **Do not overlap wheels** - In order to gain as much of a draft as possible a cyclist may ride past the wheel of the rider ahead of them or “overlap”. This significantly increases the risk of a crash to themselves and others behind them if there was a sudden swerve or slowdown. Overlapping wheels is strictly prohibited.
- e) **Never use aerobars while riding within a cycling group.** The use of aerobars can cause a rider to have excessive body and bike wavering which increases the risk of colliding with another rider.
- f) **Wet roads, gravel roads**– Cyclists must ride according to the road conditions to avoid crashes. Therefore it is imperative to ride slower around corners and give yourself more distance behind other riders for more stopping distance

- g) **Dogs free to roam** – dogs that are loose in the country are a potential hazard to cyclists. They can run into a cyclist or cause the group to swerve and risk a crash. It's imperative to call out "dog" to the group if a dog is chasing the group down, to help prevent any accidents.
- h) **Use of electronic equipment** – the use of electronic equipment ie phone, headphone earpieces etc while riding in a group formation is strictly prohibited. Move to the back of the group so you are not a risk to other cyclists if you need to answer a call.
- i) **A person who has not paid for a LCW membership or insurance for the corresponding event is strictly prohibited from riding in the organized group setting.** If an uninsured cyclist tries to join in during the ride, it is imperative that the group leader is notified immediately. The leader will ask the rider to leave the group and if necessary, stop the group until he or she has done so.