

LCW Group Rider Skills and Code of Conduct

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Safety First

- a) Before cycling in a group can be a great experience, all participants must adhere to a high level of safety. One 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

Individual Skills

- a) **Keep a straight line** - because cycling in a group requires riding very closely to each other, cycling in a straight line is essential. 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 on a solid line on the road, one can improve this issue.
- b) **Maintain a consistent pace** – whether during gear changes or going up 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 slow down, 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 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.

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. Since you can be travelling long distances, the most efficient way to get everyone to the destination and back is to work together. Slowing down to help a dropped cyclist rejoin the group is the right thing to do.

Group Formations

Group cycling in the club touring setting 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. 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) When there are more than 15-20 cyclists it is necessary to form more than one group. This helps maintain safety while at the same time can accommodate the various abilities. They should be formed according to speed and strength.
- b) Choose the group according to your Speed and ability – for example

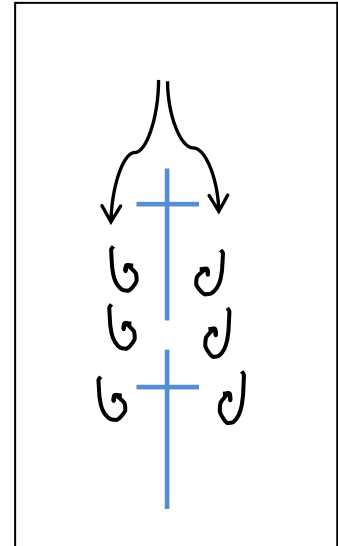
Group Speed Km/hr average	Individual Speed Required Km/hr av.
30 – 32	28
26-28	24
22-24	20
18-20	16

- 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.

Mechanics of the Group

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 ie 3-6 feet 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 line is essential.
- d) While drafting, 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 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** as closely as possible (almost bar to bar). This also helps prevent the unnecessary spread of the group across the road.



2) Communication

- a) 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.
- b) 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 themselves.**
- c) Verbal warnings include, “Car left”, “Car right”, “On your right”, “On your left”, “Stopping”, “Slowing”, “Glass”, “Gravel”, “Tracks” etc

2) Group Pace

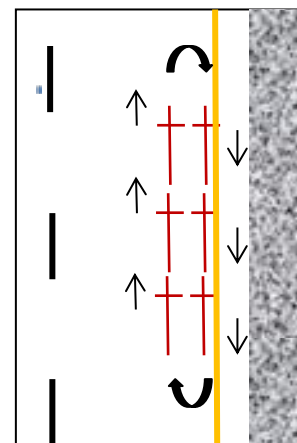
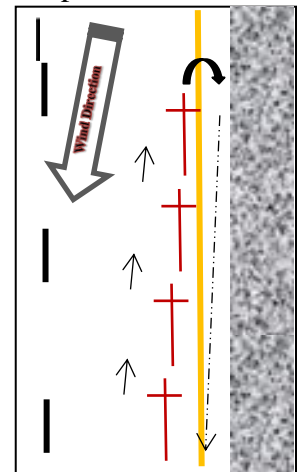
- a) The speed of the pack must be kept steady and consistent with their designated pace ie fast (30+ km/hr average), medium (26-30 km/hr average), slow (20-25 km/hr average).

The group should keep a pace that is 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.

- b) 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.
- c) Do not half wheel the rider at the front of the group – half wheeling is when a rider, who is at the front of the pack and who is itching to go faster and faster, rides such that their front wheel is a half wheel or more than the rider beside them. This only frustrates the slower rider, causing them to maybe peel off and go to the back. Riding “**side by side**” is essential to keep the integrity of the group and maximize the draft.
- d) When stopped at an intersection, the lead cyclists should start off slowly, to again avoid large separations that can occur between riders. Similarly, when going around a sharp corner together, separation of the cyclists is very likely. Lead cyclists should be mindful and slow to maintain the group shape.
- e) When having to stand upon on a steep climb, maintain a consistent pace. Because of poor technique, cyclists often 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.

4) Paceline

- 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) The single file paceline rotates according to wind direction. ie rightward opposing wind, therefore a clockwise rotation and visa versa. With a head wind, rotation is always clockwise. With a double file paceline the rotation will most often be clockwise.
- c) 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.
- d) All transitions must be STEADY and GRADUAL.
- e) 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.



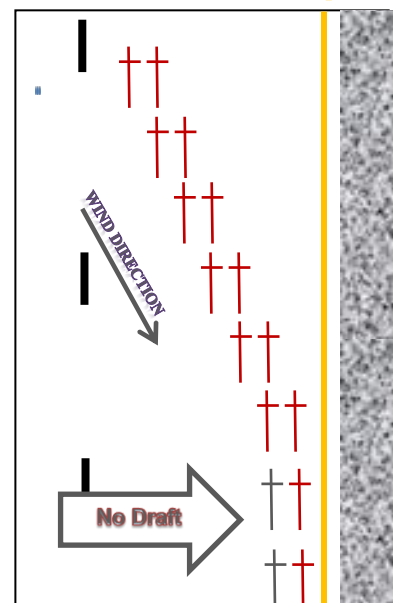
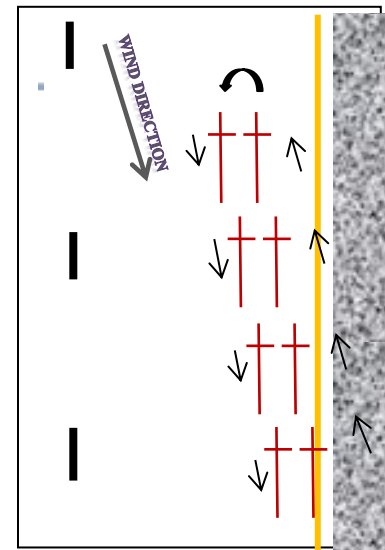
- f) In a double paceline (see diagram), the left lead rider (LL) will VERY SLIGHTLY increase their speed to pass the right lead rider (RL) and move to the right position. At the same time the rider following the LL rider GRADUALLY moves to the new LL position. Also the RL rider may call out “clear” to the transitioning LL rider, to indicate when it is safe to pass and move in front of him.
- g) With each transition it’s important keep the pace the same and not continually increasing.
- h) Again move to the front position with a **SLIGHT INCREASE** in speed. Do not burst into the front position, leaving others trying to catch up. This only fatigues these riders.

5) Continuous Paceline

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

6) Echelon

- a) Echelon is the angulation of the entire cycling pack or paceline 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. 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. Consider a single rotating paceline.

Special 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.