

## **Group Riding - Introduction**

Now that Leicester Forest CC is expanding, it is important that riders doing the Saturday Club rides are familiar with the basic principles of how to ride in a group. I have put together a few pages that are designed to help people understand what things you may see or hear on these rides.

There are 4 parts to this information which can be used for new riders as well as riders that have been in the Club for 100s of years!! It applies pretty much to any group ride and isn't meant to "teach anyone to suck eggs", but to let everybody know what the various shouts and calls are that you will hear on Saturdays.

Please don't feel intimidated by these details...no-one at Leicester Forest is quite ready for the Tour de France peloton as yet, but nevertheless, we all need to try and stay as safe as possible when riding in groups.

For anybody looking to ride for the first time in our Club Ride, please feel free to ask any existing members about group riding.

Above all, the essence of Leicester Forest Cycling Club is that rides should be fun, friendly and safe. We will do our best to make sure that ALL levels of rider are catered for and you will always be made welcome on the rides. Please see the Club Forum for details of ride times and routes..... ENJOY!!!

## Riding in a group – Part 1

(What do you need)?

Firstly here are a few basic pointers regarding getting prepared to ride in a group that we should aim to follow:-

- Follow the Highway Code at all times – it applies to ALL road-users.
  
- Wear a cycle helmet. (Not compulsory, but recommended)
  
- Ensure your bike is road worthy, brakes are fully operational and that your tyres are pumped up to the recommended PSI (as written on the tyre). Other Club Members will be happy to help with this.
  
- Cycle with confidence. If you're nervous you will tense up and then are less likely to be able to respond to things quickly.
  
- When cycling at dusk or night wear appropriate reflective bright clothing and ensure you have working lights on the front and rear of your bike.
  
- Dress in appropriate clothing for the weather
  
- Bring everything you might need. Prepare for every eventuality. For example, puncture kit, tyre levers, inner tubes, pump, multi tool (including chain tool), helmet, waterproof jacket, food, water, money, mobile, contact details in emergency. Again, other Club Members will always help you out, and if in doubt feel free to ask what you may need.

## Group Riding – Part 2 (Out on the Road)

When the Club goes out in a group, it is important that we all try to carry out a few simple procedures to help keep everyone safe, and to be as helpful as possible to other road users.

If we are all strung out in 3's and 4's for half a mile down a narrow road, it is hard for vehicles to pass and then they make rash manoeuvres and end up taking risks that may endanger both them and us. So, this is where we can help ourselves!

Try to keep the group together. The riders at the front should stay at a pace that riders at the back can keep with. There is nothing wrong with a couple of groups forming, but not 1 and 2 riders all over the road

Riders should try to ride no more than 2 abreast. This makes it easier for cars to pass and keeps the group tight, whilst still giving the opportunity to chat and enjoy the ride!

Be prepared on small or busy roads to ride in single file.

Riders at the back of the pack to shout "Car back" if there are vehicles behind. Listen and act on their calls, DON'T look back and check for yourself, as you will move off your line and may cause an accident.

Lead cyclists to navigate and point out hazards in the road by either shouting or using hand signals. Listen to them and act on the calls, and most importantly, repeat them for the cyclist behind you.

Ride directly behind the wheel of the rider in front. If you cycle in the middle of the two wheels in front of you, you WILL push the cyclist on your outside into the path of passing vehicles. But please ride at a distance behind the wheel, that YOU feel safe at. If you are not comfortable with a few inches behind, then drop back a little. Nobody will mind! We aim to ride in a friendly manner – not one that will scare the hell out of people!

Brake as gently and smoothly as you can when riding in a pack. If you brake hard, this will cause riders at the back a lot of problems. Think of when cars suddenly brake on the motorway and how it affects cars behind, especially if they are too close.

Cover your brakes at all times. This means ride with one or two fingers over the brakes so that you don't have to "snatch" at them if something happens in front.

☑ When on the front keep pedalling, this is particularly important going downhill. If you freewheel everyone behind will have to brake.

☑ Talk to each other. Point out either with hand signals or shouts, all potholes, manhole covers and other dangers in the road that could cause punctures or accidents. Follow the hand signals and calls of the riders in front as they will have seen the danger before you and then you can all communicate down the pack. (see signals below)

☑ If you are the back of the group and either see someone dropping back it is your responsibility to call to the cyclists in front that the pace is too high. The pack must communicate this up to the front. The lead cyclists will not be aware if you start to drop. Ask them to slow down, it is your ride too.

☑ When asked to “ease up’ or “slow a little” do not brake suddenly. Gentle ease your pace by pedalling less hard or freewheeling for a moment. Look at your speedo – if someone is being dropped you probably only need to reduce your speed by half a mile an hour to allow them to stay on.

☑ Ride at a steady pace, keeping the pack as a compact unit

☑ Check over your shoulder for other riders or traffic before moving out to the right

☑ Slow right down when passing horses, and pass them as wide as it is safe to do so. Always call to the horse riders well ahead of catching them – a cheery “Good morning” or “Hello” will. Keep calling until the riders indicate they know you are there. They may want to turn the horse so it can see you.

☑ If you are on the front, remember that people are following your calls. If you make a decision to pull out on a roundabout or junction, you need to call “Clear” or “Wait” to warn the pack of hazards.

☑ If you are feeling tired let people know. Accidents happen when people are tired and lose concentration. Everyone gets tired, let people know so they can slow the pace down and tuck you in the pack to carry you home.

Always remember – check at junctions and advise riders of what you see. There may be riders behind you who will not get away as quick as you!

## Group Riding – Part 3 (What You Will See and Hear on the Ride)

When we go out on a group ride, we have to look after each other and it is expected that riders on the front (who can see any oncoming danger) will “shout up” and let riders behind know what is ahead.

Riders then pass this info down the line, so that everybody knows what's ahead. For instance, if there is a big pothole on the riding line ahead, the front riders will shout “Hole” and point to whichever side it is on. They will then go around it, but the riders behind will have hopefully passed it down the line and follow the safer route. A rider may also give a hand signal (I don't mean to bad drivers), to show various instructions. Some of these are shown below.

Calls and Messages you may hear

These are some calls you might hear. It is essential that you repeat them down the pack so everyone can hear:

🌻 “Car Up/Back” : Keep tight to the cyclist next to you, and be prepared to cycle in single file. Car up means a car coming towards the group, maybe in a narrow lane. There is no need to shout for every car on a main road! Car back would be shouted by the riders at the back of the group to let everyone know that a car is approaching the rear of the group.

🌻 “Hole” : Upcoming pothole to avoid. This can also be followed by a direction i.e “HOLE LEFT”.

🌻 “Slowing” : Usually accompanied by a hand signal. The cyclist in front needs to slow down for some reason.

🌻 “Stopping” : Brake! – but not suddenly.

🌻 “Wait” : Usually at junctions to indicate there is a car coming

🌻 “Clear” : To indicate that a junction is traffic free. You must check yourself and not rely on others.

🌻 “Single out/ single file” : Get into single file safely and promptly.

## The sign language of cycling

Here are some of the signals you will see on Saturday rides. They MUST be repeated down the line, so that riders behind can prepare to take action. This means that riders should have their heads up if they are riding at the front.



### 1. Signal for potholes/poor surfaces

Potholes can cause punctures, damage wheel rims, buckle wheels, break spokes and even cause a rider to crash. The rider in front should shout a warning and point to the hazard. Use your left hand if passing on the outside of the hole, right hand if passing on the inside.



## 2. Signal to come through

It can get so comfy sitting on someone's wheel that the lead rider sometimes has to encourage the rider behind to take his turn on the front. A stern flick of the elbow gets the message across – you'll have seen riders use this in races. You may not see this on LFCC group rides as it is more for racing rather than group Club rides.



## 3. Signal to slow down

Whether approaching a T-junction, traffic signals, pedestrians or perhaps a horse and rider, the lead cyclist must alert those following that he's stopping. Give a verbal warning and an angled outstretched arm with palm facing downwards, indicating that you're slowing down.



#### **4. Signal for parked car**

Always warn each other of hazards, especially parked cars but also roadworks or slower cyclists. If you're the lead rider, fold your left arm behind your back and indicate to move over to the right with a wave of your hand. (Switch arm for hazards on the right.)...

## **Group Riding – Part 4**

### **(Bike speak)**

**There are a few terms that you will hear people talking about regarding riding bikes and here are a few below, with what they mean. As I said in earlier parts to this information, please ask other riders if you don't understand what is being said. Nobody at Leicester Forest will look down on anybody else!**

#### **1. "Taking your turn"**

Where you spend time on the front of a group of cyclists. You do your fair share of work hard and then drop to the back. It is harder at the front as you are the rider taking the majority of the wind, whilst others are sheltering behind you.

#### **2. "Through and off" or Chaingang Riding**

Group riding where everyone takes it in turns on the front, before either peeling off and going to the back of the line, or the line "rolls" forward, each rider on the outside becoming the new front man. This is quite a fast paced way of riding and is usually carried out by more experienced riders.

#### **3. "On the rivet"**

An old term for riding at maximum effort, leaning forward, perched on the end of the saddle just on the point where old leather saddles were riveted to the rails.

#### **4. "Half wheeling"**

The quickest way to lose friends. The guy riding next to you is half a wheel ahead of you, so you catch up with him and he moves on half a wheel again. It's very annoying and it disrupts the whole group.

#### **5. "Sitting up"**

Means what it says: you've done your bit and that's it, so sitting up in the saddle is a signal to other riders that you've had enough.

#### **6. "Getting dropped"**

The pace is so high you can't hold the wheel and you start to drift off the back of the group.

#### **7. "Car up"**

Generally shouted from the front of the group, warning riders of oncoming traffic.

#### **8. "Car back"**

The guys at the back alert the group to traffic from behind.