



Community
Bike Rides

In partnership with 

GUIDE TO CYCLING ON THE ROAD



STAGE 1

STAGE 2

STAGE 3

STAGE 4



GUIDE TO CYCLING ON THE ROAD

CODE/DISCIPLINE:



STAGE/LEVEL:

✓ STAGE 1

STAGE 2

STAGE 3

STAGE 4

As a body, Cycling Ireland has grown dramatically in recent years, reflecting an explosion of cyclist numbers on the roads. With the increase in numbers participating in formal (constituted) clubs or informal (non-constituted) groups, there is a growing appetite for information, support and guidance on riding in groups on the road.

This guide is intended to promote and develop best practice for all Cycling Ireland groups riding on the road.

GENERAL SAFETY



- 1 A cyclist should know the Rules of the Road and should understand signs and road markings.
- 2 Every cyclist should start a cycle by performing four checks – helmet, clothes, bike and conditions. Done in less than a minute, each one adds to safety on the road.



- 3 Correct road positioning is vital to ensure that other road users are aware of a cyclist and this can vary from being on the left side (but not in the gutter) of a wide, fast moving road, to keeping to the middle of the lane on a narrow, winding, back road to prevent dangerous overtaking. At all times, a cyclist should be where other road users can clearly see them, should cycle steadily and consistently, and should occupy the position that is SAFEST for them.
- 4 Visibility is always key on the road – this means always being sure to wear bright colours and supplement with hi-viz (vests, bands, belts, bag covers etc.).
- 5 This also means having good lighting outside daylight hours – a strong white light to the front to see with and to be

seen by approaching traffic, and a strong red light to the rear so that other road users are aware of a cyclist from behind. The generally held position on lights is that flashing lights attract attention, but can make it hard to judge distance and speed. At night, a good compromise is two lights, one steady and one flashing, to allow maximum visibility and attention-grabbing impact.

- 6 A cyclist should always cycle well within the limits of their vision – this means slowing into corners, allowing for poor weather such as fog, mist and rain, and slowing down at night where vision and visibility is compromised.
- 7 A cyclist needs to scan continuously and widely to stay aware of problems on the road and to have time to react safely.
- 8 A cyclist needs to know the road and the weather and needs to constantly adapt their cycling to allow for both these factors in combination.
 - a. Slow down for weather – wet, icy, dazzling sun, fog
 - b. Slow for corners in poor weather
 - c. Slow for poor surfaces – gravel, sand, potholes, broken edges, drains, oil etc.
- 9 A cyclist always needs to keep a Safe Stopping Distance – this is the space between the bike and whatever is ahead on the road – it varies according to speed and conditions.
- 10 A cyclist should always LOOK and consider a SIGNAL before moving position on the road – with only time for one or the other, LOOK to be sure not to move into danger.
- 11 A cyclist should NEVER go up the path side of a large vehicle (bus or lorry) even if there is a bike lane there – wait until it turns or drives away.
- 12 In stopped or slow-moving traffic, a cyclist should watch out for drivers from the opposing lane turning across the road, through the queue of traffic – they may not anticipate or see the cyclist.



- 13 A cyclist should always watch out for opening doors when passing stopped or slow-moving vehicles.
- 14 Crossing rail or tram tracks poses a real danger for cyclists. To avoid getting a wheel caught, cross the tracks at an angle (90 degrees) and avoid braking on them, as they can be hazardous, especially in wet weather. Approaching the tracks at an angle may necessitate you coming out into the road to create the desired angle. Make sure you signal clearly and leave plenty of room between yourself and other traffic on the road.

- e. By law, a cyclist must use any cycle lane provided as part of a pedestrian street or area or as part of a contra-flow cycle lane.
- f. A cyclist can use the same lanes as buses, even where there is a parallel cycle lane, but needs to be careful of buses and taxis stopping along the route.
- g. Advanced Stop Lines mark out an area ahead of the main stop line at a junction, where cyclists can stop in front of traffic – this allows bikes to get in position to turn to the right while waiting for the red light to turn to green.

RULES OF THE ROAD



The Rules of the Road apply to all road users – in general terms, for cyclists, this means:

- a. Having a bike that is in proper working order and that fits.
- b. ALWAYS stopping at a red traffic light.
- c. ALWAYS stopping at a STOP sign and yielding appropriately at a YIELD sign.
- d. ALWAYS stopping at pedestrian facilities (Zebra crossings, pedestrian lights etc.) if someone is crossing.
- e. ALWAYS cycling in the same direction as the rest of the traffic (ie on the left) when on the road or a bike lane.
- f. ALWAYS obey lane markings, unbroken centre lines cannot be crossed.
- g. ALWAYS use hand signals to indicate your intentions.
- h. Only cycling on the path if there is a suitable bike facility there.
- i. When turning left, giving way to pedestrians who have started to cross the road.
- j. Stopping and pulling in to use a mobile phone.
- k. Cycling no more than two abreast, and, keeping to single file to facilitate flow of other vehicles in traffic, unless it is safer to prevent an overtake where the road is narrow, or there are parked vehicles causing a narrowing effect.

The Rules of the Road apply to all road users – in general terms, for cyclists, this means

A cyclist should never cycle on a motorway.

A cyclist must give their name and address, if requested to by a Garda and must obey signals given by a Garda or Traffic Warden.



THE BASICS OF ROAD RIDING AND JUNCTION NEGOTIATION



When riding on urban streets or when riding at the speed of the traffic, solo riders should ride in the primary riding position which is defined as being the centre of the active traffic lane. When traffic is moving more quickly riders should ride to the left of this position but never less than 50cm from the edge of the road.



BIKE FACILITIES



- a. A mandatory cycle lane is edged by a continuous white line between it and the rest of the road – no drivers may drive or park on it, except to cross it for access.
- b. A non-mandatory cycle lane has a broken white line and drivers may move into it when there is no cyclist using it, to pass a vehicle waiting to turn to the right. Drivers may park for up to thirty minutes to facilitate loading or unloading of a vehicle.
- c. A cycle path is off road and cyclists need to watch out for traffic crossing, who may not notice the cyclist.
- d. Cyclists also need to check all round before moving off a cycle path onto or across a road, as vehicles on the road have right of way.

When passing side roads on their left riders should attempt to occupy the primary riding position to allow themselves the opportunity to achieve an earlier view into the junction. Drivers approaching the junction from the side road will have a clearer view of the rider. Try to make eye contact with drivers approaching the junction.

When making left turns at a junction, riders should try to occupy the primary position as they approach the junction. This will protect the lane and discourage drivers from overtaking during the turning manoeuvre.



TURNING LEFT

A sequence of actions should be followed by riders turning left

- On approach to the junction **LOOK** over the right shoulder to check what is behind.
- **SIGNAL** for at least 3 seconds if there is anyone who would benefit from the signal.
- Just before turning **CHECK** over the left shoulder.
- Follow the primary **POSITION** line all the way round the corner.

TURNING RIGHT

When making right turns at a junction riders should move to a position an arm's length from the centre line. They should avoid signalling with their arm extending into the oncoming lane.

A sequence of actions should be followed by riders turning right

- On approach to the junction **LOOK** over the right shoulder to check what is behind.
- **SIGNAL** for at least 3 seconds if there is anyone who would benefit from your signal and move into **POSITION** an arm's length from the centre line.
- Just before turning **CHECK** over the right shoulder.
- Follow the primary **POSITION** line all the way round the corner.
- When turning into a major road the turn should be executed after crossing the centre line of the major road.

ROUND- ABOUTS

Negotiating Roundabouts

- When negotiating roundabouts riders should place themselves where other users can see them.
- This means choosing the appropriate lane and riding in the primary position within it.
- Avoid riding round the edge of roundabouts. Riders will not be in the sightline of drivers there.
- Treat each exit as suggested above for passing side roads.
- Riders should signal their intentions on approach but will generally be safer riding round the roundabout with both hands on the handle bars until passing the exit prior to the riders' exit at which point a left signal should be given.
- All round vigilance, planning of road position, clear signalling and confidence are required for busy roundabouts.

As riders gain in confidence a hazard based approach should be adopted. A hazard is anything that will require the cyclist to adjust their position on the road, their speed or gear.

Examples could include:

- A right turn off a busy road
- A steep descent
- A road junction
- A dog not on a lead
- Roadworks



Whilst looking and listening at all times riders should consider:

- Where am I going, where do I need to be on the road?
- **LOOK, SIGNAL, POSITION**
- Is the speed and gear correct
- **LOOK**, (signal if required), manoeuvre

By observing ahead, there is time to plan, adopt the safest position and negotiate the hazard at an appropriate speed and in the correct gear.



CYCLING IN GROUPS - ETIQUETTE AND SAFETY



1. Cycling in a group helps a cyclist in many ways – safety in numbers, benefit of wind resistance, increased average speed etc. but cyclists should remember the following points to ensure safety within the group.
 - a. Communicate clearly, verbal and non-verbal communication will inform everyone around of the riders intended actions and highlight potential hazards to other riders and road users. Cyclists within the group should communicate up and down the line, both by calling out ("car up", "car down", "slowing", "stopping" etc.) and signalling (pointing out potholes or hazards, or intention to change position) so that all riders are made aware of the obstacles/conditions each rider encounters.
 - b. Holding the line – cyclists in a group need to cycle in a steady, straight line, holding the wheel of the rider ahead, so that they are predictable to both the other riders and other road users.
 - c. Sudden braking and changes of speed are dangerous in a group and should be avoided
 - d. A cyclist should be scanning at least two to three riders ahead at all times – by doing this a rider will be aware of any problems further up the line.
 - e. A cyclist should always shoulder check before changing position.
 - f. For narrow roads or where there is other traffic, the group may need to single out and it is essential that this is done smoothly maintaining the existing speed – an agreed system should be used each time e.g. inside rider moves ahead to allow the outside rider slip in behind.
 - g. Cyclists within a group should never tailgate or overlap wheels (ride with half their front wheel alongside the back wheel of the rider in front) with other riders as this allows no reaction space if something happens unexpectedly.
 - h. A group conserves energy and maintains pace by regularly switching the lead riders, but it is essential that this changeover is done smoothly – the rider moving to the front must keep the speed of the group and must be careful to move gradually into position at the head of the line. The rider leaving that position, must on the other hand, ease off, to allow the new leader come up alongside while maintaining the group speed. This momentary easing off allows that rider a short rest before slotting back in to tail the group.
 - i. BEWARE of half-wheeling. Half-wheeling is the action by an individual, when he or she rides beside another rider and is always pushing the pace so that they are just enough ahead and the other rider(s) feel like they are constantly trying to catch up. Half-wheeling by pulling ahead can cause the groups pace to rise because as the rider being half-wheeled tries to pull level and the half-wheeling rider will often increase the pace. The differences in pace will radiate through the group forcing riders in the group to work harder to maintain the pace or alternatively result in the group becoming fragmented.
 - j. When riding downhill where speed increases are expected, it is advisable to spread the group slightly and allow greater gaps between riders. Riders will have clearer view of the road ahead and to minimise the risk of a collision with another rider.
2. When cycling in a group, whether for leisure, training, race or event, the Rules of the Road ALWAYS apply.
3. Cyclists should NEVER cycle more than two abreast on the public roads and should always be prepared to single out to facilitate the flow of traffic and other road users while remaining aware that singling out on a narrow road might invite dangerous overtaking.
4. Limit the group, consider keeping the group to 20 riders of similar standard. Larger group sizes may make it difficult for other road users to safely pass.
5. As part of a large group on the road, cyclists should always be ready to split into smaller groups of 6 to 8 riders, with approximately one hundred metres between sub groups, to facilitate overtaking traffic.
6. Cyclists should be conscious that leaving large spaces between riders to the side or in front is frustrating for following traffic as the length of the group is widened and lengthened – one metre to the side and fifty centimetres to the front are good working measures.
7. Cyclists should also be conscious of organising group spins at times and on routes that will not inconvenience other road users unduly (e.g. rush hour).
8. While part of a group, cyclists should remember at all times that they are responsible for their own safety and should stay fully aware of their surroundings both in and outside the group.
9. It is essential when riding in a group to be constantly aware of the changing environment and the verbal and non-verbal messages of other riders and road users around you. Listening to audio devices or a mobile phone should be avoided at all times. Such devices are a distraction and inhibit your ability to hear and respond to verbal and non-verbal cues.
10. Cyclists should not allow themselves to get drawn into arguments or disputes with other road users – it pays to remember that there are examples of both good and bad cycling, as there are good and bad driving and lost tempers never accomplish any outcomes, but can cause dangerous situations.
11. Cyclists should always apply a "leave no trace" ethos when cycling and should keep any food wrappers, gel packaging or empty bottles etc. until they can be disposed of.



VERBAL AND NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION



SLOWING

CALL: "Slowing" usually accompanied by a hand signal to indicate that the rider or riders are slowing down for some reason. For example, approaching a signal controlled junction.

HAND SIGNAL: Raise your arm, move up and down



POTHOLE OR HAZARD

HAND SIGNAL: Extend arm (left or right depending on which side the hazard is on) pointing down at the road, to point out hazards such as pot holes, manhole covers etc. In the event of a pothole rider should shout "Hole" while pointing toward the hazard.



STOPPING

CALL: "Stopping" usually accompanied by a hand signal to indicate that the rider or riders are stopping for some reason. For example, approaching a signal controlled junction.

HAND SIGNAL: Raise your arm, open palm



GLASS OR LOOSE GRAVEL OR UNEVEN GROUND

HAND SIGNAL: Extend arm (left or right depending on which side the hazard is on) with hand open and palm facing the ground. Move hand left and right to indicate gravel or uneven ground, etc.



WAIT

CALL: "Wait" typically at a junction to indicate there is a car coming or that it is unsafe to proceed.



COME THROUGH

HAND SIGNAL: Hands on the handlebars, flick your left or right elbow away from your body. Flick the elbow on the side that the following riders will come through on.



CLEAR

CALL: "Clear" to indicate that a junction is traffic free or that it is safe to proceed. Rider must check themselves and not rely solely on others.



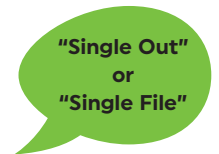
CAR UP

CALL: "Car Up" to warn riders that a car is approaching from the rear of the group. Riders should be prepared to single out if riding two abreast to accommodate the car(s) moving through.



SINGLE OUT

CALL: "Single Out or Single File" to instruct riders to get into single file.



MOVE OUT

HAND SIGNAL: Bring hand behind the back (left or right depending on which side the obstruction is on) and wave or point behind back indicating that there is an obstruction such as a parked car or pedestrian, etc. Riders should move in the direction indicated to avoid the obstruction.



CAR DOWN

CALL: "Car Down" to warn riders that a car is approaching from the front of the group. Riders should be prepared to single out if riding two abreast to accommodate the car(s) coming down, particularly on narrow rural roads.



PUNCTURE

CALL: "Puncture" to inform riders in the group that rider has got a puncture.

HAND SIGNAL: Raise your hand, stop pedalling and hold in a straight line until everyone has passed. When all the riders are ahead it is safe to pull over.



RIDER(S) UP

CALL: "Rider Up" to warn rider(s) that the rider(s) behind intend to pass. Riders should be prepared to move over or single out to accommodate the rider(s) coming through.





THE BASICS OF GROUP RIDING - UP AND OVER OR RIDING THROUGH AND OFF



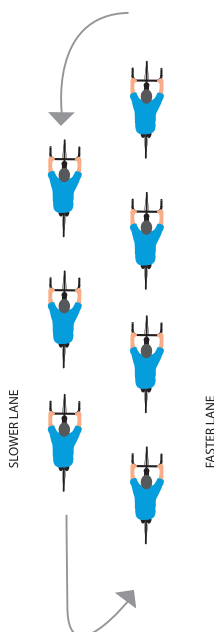
When riding in a paired formation changing the lead rider is achieved by one of the pair (usually the rider nearest the road centre) increasing their speed very slightly and moving over in front of the lead rider in the inner line. When in position at the head of the inner line the rider will ease back to the speed of that line.

Meantime the new lead rider in the outer line will move forward until riding alongside the inner line leader. At the rear of the group the last rider in the inner line will adjust their speed slightly and as a gap appears to their right, move over and join the outer line.

The key to smooth and efficient progress is to ensure that there are no sudden accelerations and that lead riders changing do not sprint through, opening up gaps.

The length of time at the front will vary. In a training or social situation it might be agreed to ride 500 metres or more at the front. In competition it might be less than 100 metres. When learning it might be 5 - 10 pedal turns.

Where possible the resting line should be sheltered from the wind. If the wind comes from the left, the working line would be on the left, the resting line on the right.



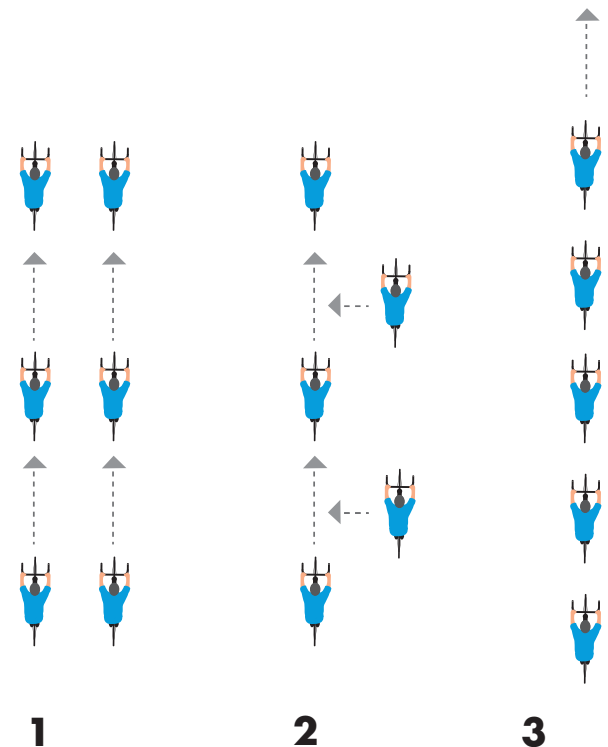
THE BASICS OF GROUP RIDING - SINGLING OUT



Riding in pairs might necessitate singling out to avoid conflict with traffic. Moving to single file will double the length of the group and may encourage drivers to overtake where it is not safe to do so. Decide what is safest for the group.

When the shout comes to single out the lead rider nearest to the kerb should speed up slightly with the lead rider on the outside slotting in behind. Other riders should follow suit. Unless unsafe to do so everyone should keep speed up, at least until the group is in single file.

To move back into pairs the leading riders position side by side with everyone slotting back into their original positions. It is vital that the lead riders proceed slowly as those at the back will have many bike lengths to make up.





PLANNING A CYCLE



1. Select and plan a route, safety of the route should be a major deciding factor
 - a. Choose a starting point that people can find easily.
 - b. Pre-Risk assess the route, Ride Leader should know everything about the route, road conditions, junctions, mileage, stops, etc.
 - c. Plan your stops, consider stopping after halfway, dependent of length of cycle, rather than before.
 - d. Doing a reconnaissance or recce of the route beforehand allows the Ride Leader to focus on leading the group on the day rather than navigating while moving.
 - e. Document a Route Card or Cue Sheet of planned journey and consider additional copies for other riders in the group. Also consider emailing the cue sheets in advance so that riders in the group can familiarise themselves with the intended route.
2. Decide on pace and distance, appropriate to riding goals and abilities of the group.
3. Consider ways of equalising the group where the group is of mixed ability or consider exit routes or detours for tiring riders to cut planned journey short whilst still arriving at the same finishing location.
4. Arrive early, be available to answer questions about the ride, mileage, rest stops, etc.
5. Pre-Ride briefing to whole group.
6. Reinforce group cycling etiquette, rules of the road and communication which must be adhered to throughout the whole journey.
7. Brief group on emergency and late back procedures in the event of an accident or delay.

DEALING WITH AN EMERGENCY



1. Some of the initial steps the leader may take if there is an accident:
 - a. Direct traffic around and away from the site of the accident.
 - b. Get all cyclists in the group off the road.
 - c. If required, call 999 or 112.
 - i. Details of the emergency
 - ii. Give location
 - iii. Follow the instructions from emergency operator
 - d. In the event that the rider needs to attend hospital, one of the leaders or responsible adults goes with them.
 - e. Contact their emergency contact person.
 - f. Get details of the accident from others riders.
 - g. Complete an incident/accident report form.