

Freewheelers of Spartanburg, Inc.

Rules to Ride By...

1. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early and be ready to leave on time.
2. Make sure your bike is in proper working order.
3. Only ride on tires that have sufficient tread, in order to avoid flatting.
4. Carry a spare tube, patch kit, pump & water bottle. Bottles should be filled prior to arrival.
5. Practice safety and obey all traffic laws.
6. Wear an approved helmet.
7. Ride leaders are not responsible for riders ahead of the group; they are responsible for seeing that all riders sign the waiver. The ride leader, the Freewheelers of Spartanburg, its officers and members provide NO warranty as to the safety or suitability of these routes. Time of day as well as day of week will have significant impacts on safety of these routes. Consider all mileage as approximate.

Terminology

Ride Leader:

The tour leader organizes the tour and is responsible for the route, making announcements and giving directions at the start of the tour.

The ride leader is responsible for knowing the route, enforcing the group speed, ensuring each rider follows the rules and group riding techniques, and having all sign the waiver.

Tail Rider:

The tail rider is the last rider on the outside. The tail rider is responsible for signaling vehicles approaching from the rear.

Rotation:

Rotation is the process of changing the lead riders so that all riders share the work - it's about 30% harder "pulling" in front than drafting behind another rider. Riders change positions in the pack so that each rider takes only a short turn at the front, followed by a longer opportunity to draft behind other riders. The rider moving to the front maintains pace and the rider rotating off slows down only slightly so that a surge is not created for those in the rear like an accordion.

Introduction

Group rides are organized in packs of about six to twenty cyclists grouped according to speed, distance, ability and interest of the participants. Riding in a pack allows riders to meet and converse with other riders, saves energy (particularly when riding into the wind), and it is easier for the ride leader to guide and direct riders. And, if you suffer a flat tire or any other problem, you will have other riders in your pack able and willing to help you.

When you join a pack it is your responsibility to stay with the pack until the end of the tour, or until you advise the pack leader that you are leaving. It is important that you become familiar with the terminology and techniques of group riding. This will enable you to be an effective member of the "team" and know what to do, and what the other riders are, or should be, doing.

Riders self-select with which group to ride. Sportif groups are performance-oriented so riders in these groups are expected to be fit, experienced and self-sufficient. The other groups are more social or recreational in nature and any rider experiencing difficulty will get support from other riders.

If you have no experience in riding in a group you will be expected to learn group riding techniques. You should join a slower paced group for your first ride. Lunch breaks vary from group to group. Some groups stop for lunch at restaurants and could spend an hour or so there, while others catch a quick snack at a convenience store and are on their bikes again promptly. If you have a preference it's a good idea to check with the leader before you leave. Businesses are usually quite happy to fill the water bottles of good customers.

Group Maneuvers

Starting:

The leader will announce the group is starting, and moves off slowly. The other riders fall in behind and take up position in double file. When all riders are in formation, the speed is increased.

Formation:

Ride side by side with your wheels level with your partner. Try not to pull ahead (known as "half-wheeling"). Follow the rider in front, but with a slight offset to provide extra braking distance in an emergency. Do not make sudden changes in speed or direction without warning following riders. Always have your hands close to your brakes so that you can react quickly. On busy roads, always ride single file and as close to the right side as practicable.

Rotating:

The lead riders should rotate frequently to avoid fatigue. If you are tired, rotate through the front quickly. If you feel comfortable in front then spend a little more time there, but remember your partner! The pack normally rotates counter-clockwise. He or she accelerates slightly to move up and across in front of the outside rider. Outside lead rider calls "CLEAR" when the inside rider is clear to come across to the outside position. Inside riders move up one place and outside riders back one place. The outside rear rider moves over to become the tail rider.

Passing:

When approaching a single rider or slower group from the rear, check that the way is clear, and then pass, allowing plenty of room announcing "on your left". Do not cut in front of the riders you have passed. If there is oncoming traffic, and the lane is not wide enough for both packs side by side, the pack leader should either wait until it is clear or change to single file and then pass. If there is following traffic the tail rider should indicate that the group is going to cross the centerline, (left turn signal) and signal the following vehicle to wait. The leader of the front pack should assist the pack behind to pass, if necessary by slowing the pace a little.

Stopping:

Lead riders will call "STOPPING". Gear down, stop pedaling, and brake gently. Move completely off the road when stopping to chat, fix a flat, etc.

Slowing:

Lead rider or group rider calls "SLOWING". Stop pedaling and prepare to brake. Riders slow down in order from rear to front to avoid catching the rider ahead.

Traffic Laws, Safe Riding Practices

It is in our own interest to obey traffic laws and follow the rules of the road. It only takes a few inconsiderate cyclists to create a negative perception of cyclists among the general public. Never ride through red lights. There are not many traffic lights on tour routes. If you are at the back of a pack when the light changes to red, please stop. Pack leaders are expected to stop the pack on the other side and wait for riders to get through the lights. Keep out of right turn lanes when going straight or turning left.

Bicycles & Equipment

Bicycles:

Road and hybrid bikes, typically with tires up to about 32 mm (1.25") wide, are best suited to club tours, although some members use mountain bikes. Mountain bikes, with wider and softer tires, offer more rolling resistance, and hence require more effort for the same distance. While a road bike is more suited to touring, more important is your selection of a group whose speed you can match without tiring.

Maintenance:

Bicycles should be in good condition - check tires and brakes. Remember, if a mechanical failure occurs, the rest of the pack is placed at risk. Carry a pump, a spare tube and a basic tool kit to remove and replace the wheel, tire and tube, and for minor adjustments.

Equipment:

Carry sufficient food and water. Ensure that you are adequately prepared for hot, cold or wet weather.

Group Rides

What are group rides all about?

The riders on a Group Rides stay together at the pace designated in the ride schedule for that particular day. The leader is responsible for maintaining this pace. Please respect the average speed posted in the listing. No aerobars on group rides!!

Group riders stop as a group for a reasonable number of flats...

(?maybe? up to 3, but hardly ever any more stops as a group).

Fixing flats takes time and many cyclists need to finish up their rides at reliable times; so, to keep flats to a minimum, riders should check their tires and bikes for safety before each ride.

Riders who want to ride faster or slower than the preset pace are welcome, but on their own.

Ride following traffic rules for cyclists.
Ride at your own risk.
A parent or guardian must accompany children under 16.

Fitness Rides

What are fitness rides all about?
Fitness rides are "road" rides, location, pace and time determined by ride leader.
Fitness Rides do not stop for mechanical problems as a group. Riders should use the "buddy system" to prevent riding alone.
Ride following traffic rules and laws for cyclists. Yes you can be ticketed.
Ride at your own risk.
If you move left or right and leave enough space for another cyclist to occupy the space on your left or right, expect someone to. HOLD YOUR LINE!
A parent or guardian must accompany those under 16.

Club Riders be prepared to:

Fix a flat on your own. Bring a spare tube that fits your bike tire and a pump or CO2 cartridge to fill up.

Make sure your tires are in good shape and not dry rotted or have cuts.

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 the front with "car up." Group bicycling can be very enjoyable. You have both a bits of independence and camaraderie. However, there is a cycling etiquette, or rules of the road, which need to be followed for safety. Here are the key ideas:

Teamwork - Give a helping hand, watch for problems (loose straps, loose equipment), and help each other to be safe and enjoy the ride.

Be Predictable - Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding alone. Other riders expect you to ride straight, at a constant speed, unless you indicate differently.

Be smooth with turns at the front of the group or pace line. Avoid surges as this tends to break the group up. The group will travel quicker when turns are completed smoothly.

Avoid following the person in front too closely when climbing hills. When rising out of the seat a cyclist often loses momentum causing sudden deceleration. This can catch the following rider by surprise and result in a fall due to a wheel touch.

Communicate - Use hand and verbal signals to communicate with members of the group and with other traffic.

Hand Signals - Hand signals for turning and stopping are as follows: Left arm straight out to signal a left turn. Left arm out and down with your palm to the rear to signal slowing or stopping. And, for a right turn, put your right arm straight out (in areas where this is legal) or put your left arm out and bent up.

Don't overlap wheels. To avoid touching wheels when a rider in front veers unexpectedly, make sure no part of your front wheel overlaps the rear wheel of riders in front of you. It is easy to touch wheels in the event of a slight direction change or a gust of wind. Stay calm if contact is made with other riders. If you stay relaxed in the upper body it is easier to absorb any bumps from riders next to you.

Verbal Warnings - Along with hand signals, verbally warn cyclists behind you of your changes in direction or speed. The lead rider should call out "left turn," "right turn," "slowing," "stopping," etc. Announce a turn well in advance of the intersection, so that members of the group have time to position themselves properly.

Announce Hazards - When riding in a tight group, most of the cyclists do not have a good view of the road surface ahead, so it is important to announce holes, gravel, grates, and other hazards. Indicate road hazards by pointing down to the left or right, and by shouting "hole," "bump," etc., where required for safety. Everyone in a group should be made aware of hazards. However, not everyone needs to announce them.

Change Positions Correctly - Generally, slow traffic stays right, so you should try to pass others on their left. Say "on your left" to warn the cyclist ahead that you are passing. If you need to pass someone on the right, say "on your right" clearly since this is an unusual maneuver.

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 the front with "car up."

Watch Out At Intersections - When approaching intersections requiring vehicles to yield or stop the lead rider will say, "slowing" or "stopping" to alert those behind to the change in speed. Each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the way is clear before enter the intersection.

Move Off the Road When You Stop - Whether you are stopping because of mechanical problems or to regroup with your companions, move well off the road so you don't interfere with traffic. It is usually best for the lead rider to pull forward in the stopping area and for other riders to pull in behind the rider in front of them. When you start up again, each cyclist should look for, and yield to, traffic.

Ride One Or Two Across - Ride single file or double file as appropriate to the roadway and traffic conditions. Single up when cars are trying to pass you if the lane is wide enough for them to safely do so.

Turning - When making a right or left turn, maintain your position within the group. Don't swerve or pass during the turn. Especially avoid passing on the inside of a right turn. Use hand signals when approaching a turn. When making a left turn be especially careful of cars coming from the rear since most cyclist fatalities come from cars hitting cyclists from the rear when they are making a left hand turn.

Socializing with the other riders is part of the fun of group riding but often the safety in numbers allow cyclist have a false sense of security and become lax. Stay tuned in to what's going on around you, scan further up the road, and ride alert.

If something unexpected happens (like if someone drops a water bottle), don't slam on your brakes. That could create a pileup. Keep riding smoothly. The group will usually do a controlled stop a short distance up the road.

You can't ride in a pace line and enjoy the scenery at the same time. (Also, the benefits of "drafting" are minimal at speeds below about 15 mph.) You should be especially careful not to let your front wheel overlap the rear wheel of another rider. If that rider swerves and the wheels touch, you will almost certainly go down.

As you become more experienced, and if you are interested in faster-paced riding, the ability to ride in a pace line can be useful. This is an advanced skill and is best learned in a small group and at moderate speeds. Always make sure the person you're drafting knows you're there. In the beginning, stay two or three feet behind the bike in front and always keep your pace and movements very smooth. It is extremely important to communicate when riding in a pace line since the following riders don't have a clear view of the road ahead. Experienced cyclists tend to be wary of sharing a pace line with someone they haven't ridden with before. You will have to earn their confidence by demonstrating that you can ride responsibly.

By Dennis Johnson & Greg Kyzer - 2002 updated 2004