

## Cleveland Touring Club Group Riding Rules & Requirements

The club welcomes cyclists of various levels of ability and skills and will try to accommodate everyone.

Cycling provides enjoyment, social connections, and fitness, but it does come with risks.

When riding in an organized group safety is enhanced: cyclists and drivers are more visible to each other than when riding alone, and the group can discourage drivers from attempting to cut in or to pass when the visibility of on-coming traffic is limited. The group can pass on hazards to each other: holes, rough road, traffic, animals, people, etc.

The image of cyclists and the Cleveland Touring Club depends on each club member. To that end we try to behave with courtesy toward those with whom we share the roads: motorists, pedestrians, or other cyclists. Cyclists are often judged collectively, based on the behavior of individual cyclists. In that sense, we are all ambassadors for the larger pool of cyclists. If we are reckless or rude, we make life more difficult for all other cyclists.

These riding rules and guidelines attempt to address safety and courtesy of group riding.

### **Safety**

Each cyclist has responsibility for his or her own safety. Yet, like a Ride Leader, each cyclist should look out for his fellow riders.

### **Minimum Requirements and Guidelines**

- Although current members of the Cleveland Touring Club are covered by the club's insurance when riding on a club ride, non-members are not covered. They must sign the club's liability waiver to be permitted a one-time club ride. **NOTE:** due to insurance requirements, non-members are allowed only one "waivered" ride with the club.
- All riders must wear a CPSC (Consumer Products Safety Commission) approved bicycle helmet.
- Use of headlights and taillights is mandatory by Ohio law when riding after sunset. Use of lights before sunset is encouraged for best visibility.
- Use of a rear view mirror is recommended.
- Carrying money, an ID, and a mobile phone in case of an emergency is encouraged.
- Use of headphones is not allowed on club rides even though Ohio law allows its use.
- Wearing brightly colored cycling clothing is encouraged for best visibility.
- Ohio law allows riding double file, except where locally prohibited. However, as a courtesy to drivers, when "car back" is called, riders should quickly form a single file. See the Group Safety section below for more information on controlling traffic, where riding single file may not apply.
- Cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as drivers, including stopping for red traffic signals and stop signs. Note: there are times the group can proceed on a red signal after stopping -- see Ohio revised code 4511.132 below.
- Riders must carry their own:
  - Repair items such as a patch-kit / spare-tube, tools, and air supply
  - Hydration fluids
  - Food for long rides
- Any rider having a health concern or other concern must bring it to the attention of the Ride Leader prior to departure.

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### **Group Ride Descriptions**

- The "A" Group riders have an above average skill set for riding in groups under high physical stress. Expect pace line riding, interval efforts, as well as sprints where those who want to push themselves can do so in an unstructured, semi-competitive effort. Riders who cannot maintain the 18 mph or greater pace, or distance of the intended ride, understand they may have to take care of themselves. Riders may be dropped. "A" Group riders might not regroup.
- The "B" Group riders have a good deal of group riding experience. This group is focused on endurance riding. It is for those who have a moderate to high level of fitness and are capable of maintaining a 16-18 mph average speed for hours over varying terrain. The "B" Group skill set is similar to those of the "A" but usually at a slower pace. Expect surge efforts where the pace is increased for a nominal period of time or distance. "B" Groups often ride in pace lines. Riders who cannot maintain the pace or distance of the intended ride understand they may have to take care of themselves. Riders might be dropped. "B" Group riders usually regroup infrequently.
- The "C" group is focused on general fitness and intermediate group riding skills. "C" Ride Leaders might introduce basic pace line riding for those interested learning a new skill. In general, this classification will observe an average speed of 14-16 MPH on varying terrain. "C" Group rides are "no drop" and riders regroup from time to time.
- The "ALT-C" Group is for riders who have the physical fitness level that allows them to ride moderate distances but at a more relaxed pace than the "C" Group. These riders are more comfortable with descents and climbing than the average social rider. They may be working on developing their group riding skills or have been away from cycling for a long time, and want to resume group riding without the pressure of "slowing down" the faster groups. "ALT-C" Group rides are "no drop" and riders frequently regroup.
- The Social Group is the least structured of the group ride classifications. Routes are usually not published in advance. Some Social riders have little to no group riding skills – the Social Group is where riders new to group riding often start. Because many Social riders have only basic riding skills, they may stop to drink their hydration fluids instead of drinking while riding. These riders especially value and enjoy the social aspect of riding with each other on relatively easy routes, rather than the fitness aspect you can expect to find in other classifications.

Note: there are times when riders try riding with a faster group, but cannot maintain the pace because they overestimate their abilities or don't understand what riding at the higher level means. When this happens they should be escorted back to a slower group, escorted to the start, or shown the way back.

### **Ride Leader Responsibilities**

- Introduce self and brief the group on the route, ride-goals, safety, known road or traffic issues, and weather concerns.
- Ensure all participants meet the above minimum requirements.

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- Try to determine if riders new to the group are in fact, in an appropriate group.
- Identify non-club members and permit them to ride only if they sign the one-ride liability waiver.
- Maintain a rider count and ensure all riders return.
- Inform riders to notify the ride leader if they want to leave the group. If a rider leaves but tells no one, the Ride Leader and probably other riders will believe the rider has been dropped and will begin searching for them.
- Match youth or new riders with a riding buddy or two.
- Warn riders who do not adhere to the requirements/guidelines or who otherwise are creating hazards during a club ride. At the discretion of the Ride Leader, an offending rider may be removed from the club ride and shown/escorted to a route the cyclist can take back.
- If the Ride Leader believes a bicycle appears to be a safety hazard to the rider or others, he/she has the responsibility to deny the cyclist inclusion in the group ride unless the problem is corrected.
- Coach riders on their individual and group riding responsibilities (see below).
- Make fair and impartial decisions that are consistent with the club's by-laws.
- Stop the group to provide assistance, as needed, if a rider has a mechanical breakdown or flat tire.
- Decide how much recovery time to give a rider who is struggling to keep in contact with the group. It is understood that riders who are riding with a faster group may struggle. Allowing for recovery time may encourage the rider who is "moving up" to come back to the group for the next ride. However, if a cyclist continues to struggle week after week, the rider should be assigned to a slower group.
- Recruit a volunteer to aid a rider who cannot complete the ride with the group. The escort and rider can complete the route or return to the start.
- Leave on time. Stragglers will only be late once.
- Conduct the group ride at the expected average pace:
  - A Group: 18+ mph
  - B Group: 16-18 mph
  - C Group: 14-16 mph
  - Alt-C Group: 12-14 mph
  - Social Group: 12 mph or less

### **Rider Responsibilities**

- Be predictable. Ride in a straight line. Respect the yellow line – only ride on the right side of the street unless passing stopped vehicles.
- Signal turns, and check for traffic in the rear well before turning or changing lanes.
- Use *The League of American Bicyclists* hand signals: left and right turns, slowing, and stopping; accompany the visual signals with verbal cues of "slowing" and "stopping," etc.
- Watch for turning vehicles and ride outside the door zone of parked cars.
- Cross railroad tracks at right angles.
- Avoid passing on a cyclist's right side. It is a blind spot. If you must pass loudly announce, "On your right!"

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- Alert fellow cyclists of debris, potholes, and other road hazards by sounding-off: “hole” (and point), “rough road,” “gravel,” “on your left,” “car back,” “rider up,” “walker up,” etc.
- Group rides are composed of similar ability riders, but not equal ability riders. Faster riders need to slow down a bit and slower riders need to work a bit harder to keep the group cohesive.
- Uphold your half of the “group contract” – ride at the anticipated pace of the selected group and do your best not to over-estimate your abilities. It’s better to select a group where the skill and fitness level matches your abilities than overextend yourself and get dropped, or constantly slow the group.
- Tell the Ride Leader if you are having difficulty in keeping up with the group, having a mechanical problem, or otherwise decide to leave the group.
- If you feel you can no longer keep in contact with your group for the duration of the ride there are few options:
  - Notify the Ride Leader and, if possible, stop where you are to wait for the next group to pick you up.
  - Finish the course at a slower pace, preferably with a volunteer who knows the route.
  - Ride back to the start, preferably with an escort.
- Do not use aero bars while in a group ride.
- Ensure your bicycle is safe to ride. Remember: “A, B, C, Q” – air, brakes, crank/cogs, quick release,” the very basic items to check.
- Follow motor vehicle laws and regulations. Bicycles are traffic.

### **Group Safety**

- Climbing Hills – Give riders in front of you extra room on climbs. One or more of those cyclists may not compensate soon enough for the change in elevation and suddenly slow, while you do not. That is a recipe for a crash. Slower climbers should stay to the right. Pass slower riders on the left.
- Descending Hills – The first downhill rider faces the most wind resistance ( $F = Ma$ ). Riding in a draft can quickly cause a rider to overtake another. Avoid passing on a descent. Maintain your position and hold your line as the group descends a hill.
- Riding offset – Don’t overlap wheels or allow a front wheel to touch a rear wheel. Instead ride slightly offset from the rider in front, so that if there is a sudden slowing, wheels won’t immediately touch and you have more time to react.
- Controlling traffic -- This is not an intuitive skill and not all riders are comfortable in doing it. Most riders want to stay as far to the right as possible.
  - Blind Curves and Hills
    - When passing a group on a blind curve or hill, an overtaking vehicle places the group in danger due to unseen, on-coming vehicles.
    - The last person, or the whole group, should “take-the-lane” on blind hills and curves to help prevent overtaking drivers from passing the group. When a driver has to drive completely in the left lane they are less likely to pass. *This tactic is consistent with Ohio law.*

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- To reinforce “taking-the-lane,” and if it is safe to ride one handed, cyclists can wave their left hand, held head high, or higher if possible, with fingers spread and palm facing the driver, making a “DON’T PASS” signal.
- Making eye contact with the driver also reinforces your intent.
- The lane should be held until it is obvious that it is safe for the driver to pass the group.
- Finally, do not “wave through” a rear-approaching vehicle that is waiting to overtake your group – let the driver make this decision. This will avoid the risk of being held responsible if the overtaking results in any form of accident.
- Right Tire Position
  - Riding in the car’s right tire position is permitted. The group does not have to ride at the road’s edge when cars approach because it may be unsafe to do so.
  - In fact, riding at the road’s edge encourages overtaking drivers to “squeeze” past a group even when there is on-coming traffic.
  - By occupying the right tire position, overtaking drivers are forced to get at least partially in the on-coming traffic lane, and, therefore, are less likely to pass. *This tactic is also consistent with Ohio law.*
- Intersections
  - Do not pull alongside stopped cars at traffic lights and stop signs even if you are in a bike lane (Ohio Revised Code §4511.25, 4511.27).
  - When proceeding through an intersection, EACH RIDER is responsible for crossing safely.
  - Riders should look both ways even if someone calls out “clear” because that cyclist may be mistaken. It may be “clear for George,” but not clear for you.
  - Riders should avoid acting like a “herd of goats.” Just because the first few riders go forward through an intersection doesn’t mean the whole group should automatically follow suit. That is not to say the whole group should never proceed together through an intersection. Use good situational awareness to decide.
  - After the first riders in a group cross the intersection, they should soft-pedal until they see that the balance of the group has cleared the intersection and is with them again. This reduces the motivation for the back riders to run the stop.
  - Do not block intersections when stopped as a group. Instead, there should be no more than two cyclists side-by-side at the intersection. This is “rule no. 6.” It is seen as being discourteous when a group of cyclists blocks the whole road.

## (\* ) Excerpts from OHIO Revised Code

§4511.01, 4511.55 — Bikes are legal vehicles and belong on the road. Cyclists can use the full travel lane just like cars. Take the lane if you feel the need to do so; it’s your right.

4511.27 KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE

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The operator of a vehicle overtaking another vehicle shall pass to the left at a safe distance and shall not again drive to the right until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle. When a motor vehicle overtakes and passes a bicycle, three feet or greater is considered a safe passing distance.

### 4511.132 TRAFFIC LIGHT - special consideration:

Ohio law permits any Ohio vehicle to proceed through an intersection after stopping and yielding right-of-way, even when not detected by the device meant to move the signal from red to green.

### RIDING TWO ABREAST

Ohio Revised Code §4511.55(B) — Ohio law allows cyclists to ride side by side (but it's been suggested that bikes "single up" out of courtesy when we cyclists deem it safe and reasonable to do so if the traffic is backing up).

### RIDE WITH THE FLOW

Ohio Revised Code §4511.25, 4511.27 — Always ride with the flow of traffic, and do not pass slow or stopped vehicles on the right even when there is a bike lane.

### BE BRIGHT, HAVE LIGHTS

Ohio Revised Code §4511.56 — Bike lights are required at night. Red for the back, white for the front; you're invisible at night without them.

### EQUALITY CUTS BOTH WAYS

Ohio Revised Code §4511.01 — Bikes are legal vehicles and should follow all the laws of the road. If you don't, you can be ticketed like any other vehicle.

### BE PREDICTABLE

Ohio Revised Code §4511.39 — Use hand signals when turning so people understand your movements. However, you do not have to take your hand off the bars to signal if you feel it is unsafe to do so.

### ANYWHERE BUT THE FREEWAY

Ohio Revised Code §4511.07(A)(8), 4511.051(2) — No local regulation can prohibit the use of bicycles on any roadway with the exception that a cyclist cannot ride on a Freeway.