

Welcome to Otley Cycle Club

Cycling in a group is fun, healthy and very sociable. All groups need to cooperate and here are a few tips on how cyclists work together when they are riding in a group. No one will do all of these things all of the time; just when it is safe and you feel confident enough to do so. We don't expect you to be an expert on your first ride; there is plenty of time to pick things up as you go along.

Cyclists riding in a group cooperate to make sure that everyone has a pleasant, enjoyable ride and returns home happy. Talk to your cycling companions. Pass hand signals or shouts forward and back along the line to warn of turns, potholes, stops, vehicles, mechanical problems and other hazards. Listen to them and act on the calls, and most importantly, repeat them for the cyclists around you.

Follow the Highway Code at all times – it applies to ALL road users.

Cooperate with ALL road users.

You and your bike: Ensure your bike is roadworthy, the brakes work well and your tyres are pumped up to the recommended PSI (written on the side of the tyre).

You are the best person to keep yourself safe. Your first priority in a group is to ride so that you are safe. Get used to basic balancing, pedalling and turning skills before you attend. Practice looking over your shoulder before you set off.

Two abreast: Cyclists may ride a maximum of two abreast.

Singling out: Be prepared on small, winding or busy roads to ride in single file. Usually, the rider nearest the edge of the road keeps their speed steady or accelerates; the rider nearest the centre of the road slows and eases in behind.

Stopping: Call "stopping" before you brake. Brake as gently and smoothly as you can when riding in a group. When the group stops always make sure that *you* stop in a safe place. Don't leave your rear wheel sticking out into the road; make sure that you are out of the way of any traffic coming from behind.

Overtaking: Only overtake another cyclist on their right. Never on their left.

Traffic lights and some roundabouts: Bunch up at junctions so the group occupies the whole width of a lane. Single out as you accelerate across the junction. This prevents cars attempting to overtake the turn left through the line of bikes.

Keep a steady pace: When riding in a group keep pedalling gently and steadily. If you stop pedalling you slow down fractionally and those behind will have to brake.

Make it easy for other road users: It helps other vehicles if you keep the group as a compact unit. Ten bikes in a line, wheel to wheel, would be 50ft long – as long as an articulated lorry. If each rider is 10ft apart (less than a car length) then the line would be nearly 150ft and impossible for any vehicle to overtake safely. Generally, ride in a compact group and leave a gap of about 20ft, big enough for a car every ten riders or so. Thank drivers who pass considerately.

Horses: Always call to horse riders well ahead of passing them. Horses cannot see behind and may be spooked by a cycle – several voices giving a cheery “Good morning” or “Hello, lovely day for a ride” will make the horse and rider aware. Slow right down and pass them as wide as it is safe to do so. The rider may want to turn the horse so it can see you. Remember it is the horse that is the potential hazard not the rider. Never ring a bell or sound a horn – horses are not trained to respond to bells and they haven’t read the Highway Code!

Runners, pedestrians, dog walkers and other cyclists: Treat the same as horses but using your bell is quite acceptable. They need to know you are approaching.

CALLS

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

Car Up – Vehicle approaching from behind

Car Down - Vehicle approaching from front

Stopping – Brake!

Heads up – Hazard ahead, pay attention

Single out – Get into single file safely and promptly

HAND SIGNALS

It is essential that you repeat signals so those behind you can see and pass it on.

Pointing down at the road – This is to point out hazards such as pot holes, manhole covers etc. Please copy the signal for the riders behind you if it is safe to do so.

Arm out to the right or left – Everyone in the group needs to indicate when turning left or right.

Left arm signalling behind back, pointing right – Hazard on the left, move out into the road e.g. to pass a pedestrian, parked car, to go round debris in the road.

General tips

Peddalling: It is easier on your muscles and joints to pedal rapidly. This may feel odd at first but legs soon get the hang of it and cycling gets a whole lot easier. Aim for a pedal ‘cadence’ of more than 60 revolutions per minute. Change down your gears when approaching hills so that you can keep a high pedal cadence and you will soon be flying up those hills. If you have difficulty knowing when to change gear, just ask someone to show you.

Braking: Try not to brake heavily when going downhill. If you do need to slow down use your rear brake gently (left hand lever on most bikes), As your skills and confidence increase allow yourself the excitement of maintaining your speed and momentum to help you up the next hill.

Stopping: In an emergency stop apply more pressure on the rear brake (usually the left hand lever) and shift your weight toward the back of the bike. Practice this in a safe place before you need to do it. It's worth practising because it helps you to be absolutely confident of stopping really quickly when you need to whilst keeping control of your bike.

Cornering: When cornering quickly try these:

- Keep the outside pedal at bottom centre and shift some of your weight to your outside foot to change your centre of gravity.
- Gently shift some weight onto the front wheel. This increases the traction of the front wheel while it is doing all the work of changing your direction of travel.

Sand and gravel sometimes gathers at corners or dips in the road particularly after heavy rain or winter gritting. Try to avoid it when cornering and shout to warn others behind you.

Happy Cycling!