



GROUP RIDING ETIQUETTE

2025
EDITION

INTRODUCTION

Garioch Road and Gravel (GRG) organises various types of Club ride throughout the year for their Club members. See the [Garioch Road and Gravel](#) website for details of what GRG has to offer.

The Club endeavours to follow best practice guidelines when organising Club rides. Having said that, the safety of each rider involved on a Club ride is the responsibility of the individual rider. It should be noted that GRG Club rides are not coached sessions and no coaching will be offered.

As part of the Club's affiliation to Scottish Cycling, the Club is provided with Third party (public) liability insurance which indemnifies the club and its officials against their legal liability for personal injury, death and/or property damage to a third party arising from their negligence. The term "club officials" extends to group leaders who have been appointed beforehand by the Club to take responsibility for a particular group. Club members participating in GRG Club runs are not covered by this insurance. It is up to the individual to decide the level of insurance, if any, they require and for them to put it in place. There are various providers of insurance available including, amongst others, [British Cycling](#), [Cycling UK](#) and [Yellow Jersey](#).

Non-members of GRG are invited to participate in GRG Club rides if they have a genuine view to joining the Club, and would like to see if the Club is a good fit for them before joining. After being on one or two club rides the expectation is that the rider should join the club if they want to continue taking part. The Club's third party (public) liability insurance covers invitees for a maximum of two Club rides.

DEFINITIONS

No Drop

The majority of the GRG rides can be classified as No Drop rides, i.e. if anybody has a flat or mechanical then the group will stop, wait and help, and if a group member is struggling then the group, or a member of the group, will slow down and pace them home. There is a responsibility on riders attending any GRG ride to be self aware and identify when they have been seriously outgunned*, and know when their continued presence in the group is spoiling everyone else's enjoyment. On Club road rides, depending on which speed group they are riding with, this may be easily addressed by simply dropping back to a slower group. In other situations it may be more prudent for arrangements to be made for the struggling rider to take a more direct route home if possible, preferably accompanied by another rider. In either of these scenarios it is important that the group leader is aware of any rider who plans to leave the group.

*Seriously outgunned is different from being last up a hill, but then being able to hang on to the group on the flat.

Club Ride

The majority of GRG road rides will be "Club Rides". Intrinsic to the Club ride ethos is the concept of acting as a group and helping each other around the route through sharing the workload at the front, providing shelter from the wind, and providing verbal encouragement to fellow riders. These rides will be classified as No Drop rides.



Training Ride

Similar to the Club ride ethos, the concept is to act as a group to help each other around the route. However, these will not be classified as No Drop rides, and should you be off the pace in a training ride, you should expect to be dropped and to find your own way to the finish.

Gravel Ride

Gravel rides are, by nature, a more fluid event. Differing bike handling abilities, a range of surfaces, and trails of varying widths means a gravel ride is unlikely to provide much opportunity for the formation of a compact group of cyclists, riding two abreast. However, GRG gravel rides still retain the goal of everyone starting and finishing together, and are classified as No Drop rides. This is especially important on our gravel rides in the dark, when all riders are asked to be aware of the riders near to you and be prepared to stop, or turn around to look for fellow riders if they can not be seen.

WHAT WE DO

GRG organise various Road and Gravel Club Rides in the City and the 'Shire (and beyond) throughout the year. The principle aim of our road rides is to function as a group and, most importantly, to return home safely without incident or accident. The road rides are strictly for dropped bar road bikes. Strong MTB riders are welcome to join the gravel rides. E-bikes, ridden responsibly on the hills, are welcome on all GRG rides.

GRG Club Road Rides are generally social rides with some offering an element of training. During the summer months, we will also run rides that are specifically designed as Training Rides. As discussed previously, these training rides will adopt the same group riding ethos as the social rides, but will cater less sympathetically for a "dropped" rider. **It is very important that you are aware of which type of ride you are attending – is it a "Club Ride" or is it a "Training Ride"?**

Average pace on Club runs will vary depending on attendees, and where numbers permit, groups will be formed to suit abilities. Ideally we hope to provide on Club road rides at least three groups: a 15mph group, a 17mph group, and a 19mph+ group.



HOW WE DO IT

Where possible, we will nominate a group leader for each of the pace groups on a ride. This group leader is responsible for controlling the group, and ensuring that they comply with good group riding etiquette. They will manage the group speed consistent with the abilities of the group members. In general, after hills they will adjust the group's speed to allow everyone to regroup. On a "Club Ride", no one gets left behind.

WHY RIDE IN A GROUP

Group riding offers many advantages, both physically and mentally. It is definitely easier to drag yourself out of bed on a cold, wet, Sunday morning in January to ride 60 miles if you know you will be with others. A bit of a chat and some banter, the reassurance of help should you suffer a mechanical or flat, and the knowledge that physically your ride will be easier if in a group.

Riding behind someone when in a group means you are riding in their slipstream and therefore using less energy. The rider in front punches a hole through the air and you sit in the vacuum behind.

Group riding however does not come without risk. It requires vigilance on what the other riders and traffic are doing, and as speeds increase and distances between riders decrease concentration becomes essential.

The etiquette, techniques, practices and behaviours described below have been developed over the years through the experience of club riders throughout the world. Adopting these will not only help keep you and your fellow riders safe, but stand you in good stead for any open events you participate in.

COME PREPARED

ID & ICE (In Case of Emergency)

CARRYING ID & ICE INFORMATION IS
COMPULSORY ON ALL GRG RIDES.

There are lots of ways to carry this information with you, ranging from a simple handwritten card through to QR codes and online solutions. See [here](#) for further information on what is available.

GRG do not recommend relying on your phone to provide this information in an emergency. A phone should be considered as a back up measure; your phone may be broken during a tumble, it may be locked, you may have ran out of battery, or your model of phone may be unfamiliar to the first responder and therefore difficult for them to navigate.

There is no need to spend a lot of money on purchasing an ID and ICE card. It can be as simple as that shown below, something that is easily made with some card and a pen. Ideally this should be housed in a plastic pouch/bag in your back pocket.

Alison Byker
DoB: 25-12-1990
Blood Group Rh+
Allergic to Latex and Aspirin
In Case of Emergency
Partner's mobile 07123 456 789



Route Awareness

It is essential that all riders make themselves aware of the route prior to the ride starting, and ideally, have the route available to them during the ride on a bike computer or mobile phone.

Bike Preparation

Before every ride, check your bike over and make sure it is not going to give you any problems.

In winter you will be expected to have mudguards fitted to your bike. (Strongly Recommended from start November to end March in group rides). Your mudguard's prime aim should be to minimise spray to the rider behind. "Ass Savers" are not mudguards. It is also recommended that "be seen" front and rear lights are fitted and switched on during Club rides.

In Your Pocket

You don't need to bring a lot with you on the rides. All you need is your ID, a spare tube or two, a pump, tyre levers, a multi-tool, something to eat and something to drink, and perhaps a fully charged mobile phone.



COMMUNICATIONS

Communication between riders in a group is a key element in staying safe. Generally, the riders on the front of the group will be first to spot hazards and will communicate the type of hazard to the rest of the group by either a shout and/or a hand signal. Hand signals are the preferred method as these are less ambiguous, won't be disrupted due to wind or traffic noise, and in winter won't be muffled if your ears are covered due to cold.

Always pass hand and verbal signals down the line for riders behind.

When to give a signal

Ensure your warnings from the front are timely, so try to give all signals 5-10 seconds in advance of the obstacle. Passing info down the line takes time when travelling at speed.

In practice this means that when the lead riders see a hazard they give the appropriate hand signal and if required gently drift out around the obstacle at least 10 metres before they get there. The rest of the group will follow the lead riders around the hazard with a minimum of disturbance to the pace and spacing between riders.



Voice Commands

When slowing or stopping give a loud clear shout of “**SLOWING!**” or “**STOPPING!**” as appropriate. This lets the rest of the group know to start feathering their brakes. At junctions, the lead rider will call “**SLOWING!**” or “**STOPPING!**” If they can see that the junction is clear of oncoming traffic they may call “**CLEAR!**” This means that in their opinion it is also safe for the next rider to negotiate the junction. It is still your responsibility to ensure your own safety so don’t solely rely on your fellow rider’s shout; check for yourself.

On a narrow road if a vehicle, or other cyclists are approaching from the front, then the front riders should give a shout of “**NOSE!**” Conversely, if the vehicle is approaching from the rear then riders at the back of the group should give a shout of “**TAIL!**”. Depending on the size and formation of the group, some action such as singling out may be considered prudent to allow the vehicle to pass. In this instance a shout of “**SINGLE OUT!**” should be made. Note however, that on some occasions, no action may be the better course of action.

A call of “**EASY!**” can be used by those in the middle or back of the group to advise the leaders to reduce the pace a little because a gap has opened up in the group. As always with group riding all actions should be smooth and progressive rather than knee jerk and reactionary. Therefore on hearing a shout of “**EASY!**” the leaders should ease up marginally and then wait to hear if the shout is repeated.

Another voice command that is good practice to adopt is a shout of “**STANDING!**” when you get out the saddle on a climb. See the later section on climbing for more details.

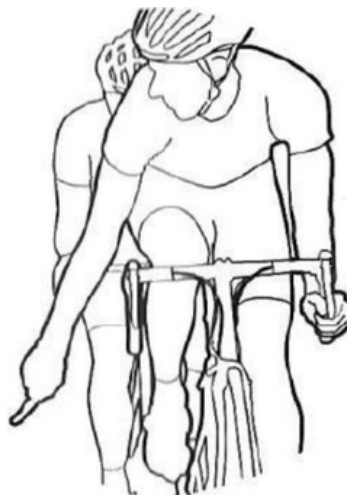
Hand signals

Hand Signals need to be held for enough time to allow the riders behind you have a chance to react and signal the riders behind them. So do make your hand signal sufficiently early. Below are some common hand signals.

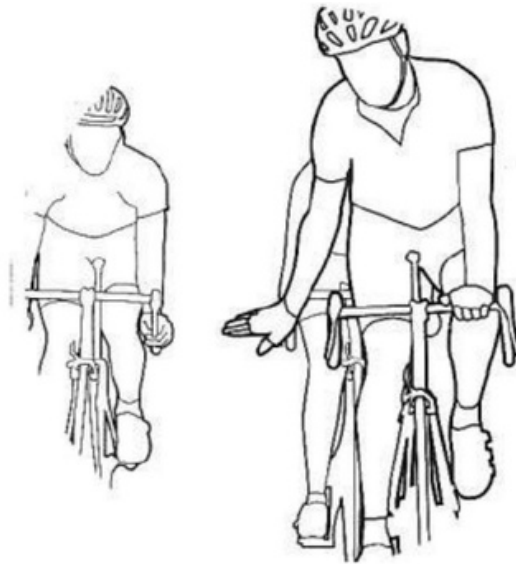
Move Out Place your hand behind your lower back and point to indicate that following riders should move out in that direction due to an obstacle on the left (can be road furniture, parked car, a dog walker, a slower moving group of cyclists etc.)



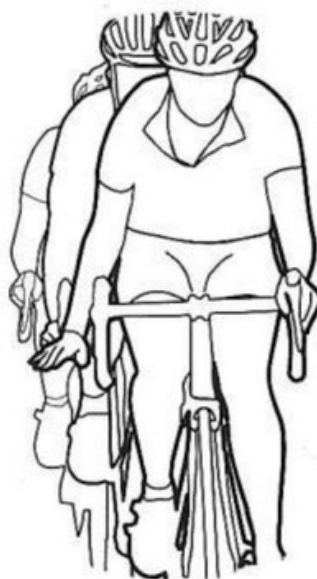
Pothole or Hazard A simple point to the road hazard is usually enough to signal to following riders. Do this well before the hazard is near and predictably move over so you don't roll past too close to it. A call of "**INSIDE!**" for a hazard close to the kerb or "**MIDDLE!**" for a hazard in the middle of the group can accompany this signal.



Loose Gravel Almost like pointing to signal a pothole but using a waving action. This denotes that you're approaching a scattered hazard such as glass or gravel. Consider adding a call of "**GRAVEL!**" to accompany this signal.



Slowing or Stopping Hand turned palm facing down and back accompanied by a 'dog patting' motion. Make a clear call of "**SLOWING!**" or "**STOPPING!**" to notify riders behind.





STAYING SAFE

Group riding is fun, but it does bring the risk of wheels touching and the possibility of falling off. Observing a few basic rules, and adopting the generally accepted etiquette of group riding, as described in this guide can reduce the likely hood of this happening:

Taking Responsibility

You are always responsible for your own safety, and by taking part in the GRG rides you accept that you have a duty to act in a responsible manner. Responsibilities include;


Assuming responsibility for your own safety. If you feel unsafe at any time then do remove yourself from the group and let the ride leader know at the earliest, safe opportunity.

Abiding by the law. We will be on public roads open to traffic and you will be expected to follow the Highway Code and abide by the law.

Contributing to the safety of the group by participating in what is accepted as “good group riding etiquette”, as discussed in this guide.

Improving the safety of the group. You are required to advise the group leader if you think any aspect of a GRG ride is unsafe, or if you think our safety can be improved in any way.

Wearing a helmet. If you want to join us on GRG rides you must wear a helmet that is undamaged, of the correct size and conforms to a recognised standard.



Using a properly maintained bike. Your bike should be deemed to be road worthy, and in good working order. This means working brakes, gears, maintained tyres inflated correctly and the bike should be the right size for the rider. If the ride leader thinks that your bike is not road/trail safe you will not be allowed to take part in the ride.

Hold Your Line

Ride in a straight line with no sudden deviations and be aware of who or what is behind you at all times. That doesn't mean looking back. Glance to the side only rather than turn to look behind. If you need to see behind e.g. observing progress of a dropped rider catching up, then go to the back of the group.

Half Wheeling

If your front wheel overlaps the rider in front's rear wheel, even by only a few inches, if that rider moves off his/her current line and your wheels touch, you WILL go down. The rider in front probably will not, but there is every chance that several riders behind you will also come down. The rider in front cannot see where your front wheel is, so the crash will be your fault.

Never allow your front wheel to overlap the rear wheel of the rider ahead of you.

Junctions

Simple rule at Junctions – there should be room for all of the riders to cross a junction or none should proceed. Half a group going through a junction and half staying behind risks causing confusion and resentment with other road users.



Eyes Up

Do not use the rear wheel of the rider in front when gauging your distance from the rider. Look over the shoulders of the rider ahead of you and learn to trust your peripheral vision to give you the clearance you need. There shouldn't be more than a foot or so between their back and your front wheel. Get used to the distance their back is from you when you have a safe gap. Use that gap closing as your early warning that you are getting too close.

Keep Going

Never suddenly slow down or attempt a complete stop until you are on the back of the group. Due to the extremely close proximity of the rider behind you in the group, if you suddenly hit the brakes there is a good chance they will not be able to react in time and their front wheel will touch your rear wheel.

Keep it Steady

Maintain a constant speed and a constant direction, no surging which creates a bungee cord effect. The lead riders are the ones who set the speed. They should never freewheel and always strive to keep the speed constant especially into a strong head wind.

Eating and Drinking

On certain occasions a stop for food will not be possible, therefore you will need to refuel on the move. This has the potential to cause accidents, because you have one hand off the bars and your attention is not fully on the riders around you. Ideally, eating and drinking should be done whilst you are at the back of the group.



Bodily Fluids

At some time on a ride you are going to want to spit, snott, or maybe even pee. So for the comfort of yourself, and others, it is worth learning how to do it cleanly and safely.

Ideally, spitting and snotting should be done when you're at the back of the group. If you can't get there and have to do it in the line, then move out of the line slightly to give those behind a little warning.

Pee stops should, preferably be made at ride coffee stops, or at public toilets. In cases when this is not possible, let the leader know that you want to stop. They will get the group to slow and let everyone know what is happening. It is likely others will take advantage of the stop and go as well. The group leader will lead the group further up road before stopping, or may do a loop to stay warm, and give you some privacy.


PEE STOPS SHOULD BE MADE IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS AWAY FROM RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

Climbing

When riding in a group, you need to consciously protect those behind you when you stand to climb.

How you stand on a hill is very important - do it wrong and the rider behind might suddenly be on the road. The issue is the brief deceleration that can occur as you change from sitting to standing, which, relative to other riders has the effect of sending your bike backwards and can cause the following rider's front wheel to hit your rear wheel.

On short, rolling hills, the trick is to click to the next higher gear (smaller rear sprocket, then stand and pedal over the top with a slightly slower cadence.



The correct way to stand: It is good etiquette to announce "**Standing!**" a couple of pedal strokes before you do so. Stand smoothly as one foot begins its downward power stroke - don't lunge, keep your effort constant. As you come off the saddle, push your hands forward a bit. This helps to ensure that the bike won't lose ground. When returning to the saddle, continue pedaling evenly and again push your hands forward to counteract any tendency to decelerate. This will gain several inches and put the seat right under you.

The same deceleration effect as described above can sometimes be seen when riders change from the small chainring to the large - therefore you may also hear "**Changing!**" shouted as a warning.

Group Riding Formations

For the protection of ourselves, and presenting an easily detectable presence to other road users, GRG groups will generally be in a two by two formation. This entails riding side by side and fairly close to each other.

Group Riding is the bit that can spook newcomers. However, if you're relaxed on your bike, riding in a straight line and not looking around to see where your mates are, then the bike will track in a perfect straight line.

One common gripe from drivers is "cyclists riding 3 or 4 abreast". GRG rides will never ride more than 2 abreast. It is extremely important that you ride directly behind the rider in front of you, thus presenting drivers approaching from behind with a clear "2 abreast" group. If you are riding offset from the rider in front, it can give the impression of 3 or 4 abreast as you approach from the rear.



Group Rotation – Double Line

Whenever possible GRG Groups will adopt a Double Line configuration because it is more sociable, and for a given number of riders the group will be shorter in overall length (compared to the same number of riders in a single chain), which can facilitate easier overtakes for following faster moving vehicles.

The peel off direction will be advised by the group leader so that everyone knows the etiquette, and will generally be to the left. In this configuration each rider will take a turn leading each line before working their way back through one line to the rear and then across to the opposite line before working their way forward through this line. Turns can be a set length of time, or almost none, in which case a more ‘rotational movement’ ensues with riders constantly rotating through the various positions within the lines.

How Long on the Front?

How long do you pull on the front of the chain before rotating to the back? As Bob Dylan might say, “The Answer is Blowing in the Wind”. It depends on the number of riders in the group and their relative strength. If you are struggling to maintain speed at the front of the line, then it is past the time to rotate to the back. No matter how short your turn at the front, every contribution, small or large, adds to the complete effort and provides additional rest for the stronger riders that they would not have had without your effort.

Stronger riders should not however ‘hog’ the front for too long; everyone wants a bit of a workout. In a group of equally strong riders, the ideal would be to up the pace a little more so all riders want to get a bit of shelter after their pull. If one rider is sitting on the front for an extended period then the chain is not moving as fast as it could.



SUMMARY

There is safety in numbers, but only if those numbers are made up of riders riding safely.

There are rules of etiquette, rules of physics and rules of the road which we all have to obey. If others don't know them, help and encourage them by sharing your knowledge and experience. Riding past as close as you can, telling them they're doing it wrong and not advising on how to do it correctly doesn't help, and it is not the GRG way of doing things.

Don't be daunted by the previous pages. Cycling is, and should be, fun; especially when riding with the GRG. Get out with us on a club run and enjoy yourself!

Ride Safe.