



Ride Guidelines 2026

Before You Ride You Must Have:

1. A current Ottawa Women's Cycling Club (OWCC) membership and Ontario Cycling (OC) membership.
2. CYQL App installed on your phone, with your name flagged as participating on that particular ride, and up to date Emergency Contact information in the app.
3. Drop handlebar bike. Bikes with straight handlebars are not permitted. E-assist bikes are permitted (for more details please see OWCC e-Bike Policy). The bike may be equipped with aerobars, however the rider must not use them at any point during the ride.
4. A bike in good repair. This includes proper air pressure in tires, lubricated chain, brakes and all other components in good working order.
5. A helmet is mandatory. Sunglasses and mirrors are highly recommended
6. Lights (front and rear). Lights are to be turned on thirty minutes before sunset and are to remain on thirty minutes after sunrise. OWCC recommends using daytime running lights at all times.
7. Water and food sufficient for the ride. If the ride is longer and a stop to refill water is necessary, bring cash/credit card.
8. Cell phone and ID.
9. Clothing appropriate for the weather.
10. Tools and capability to repair flats or make other minor repairs.
11. Basic riding skills and the ability to ride for the length (time and distance) of the ride at the published pace.
12. Understanding of group riding techniques.
13. Familiarity with these OWCC Ride Guidelines, the OWCC Risk Management Plan, and Weather Policy (available at <https://ottawawomenscyclingclub.ca/policies-documents/>).

How OWCC Group Rides Work:

1. Rides are led by volunteer leaders. They set the route, the pace and whether there will be any stops. If you are uncertain if you are able to meet the ride expectations, please contact the ride leader for any clarification or join / lead rides better matched to your capabilities.
2. If you plan to join a ride you must indicate in the CYQL app as most rides have a maximum number of participants. If you are unable to join the ride for any reason, please update the CYQL app so others can take the slot.
3. Some OWCC rides are recurring, others are single events. Watch the CYQL app for new rides to be posted.
4. Ride Leaders are asked to cancel rides (for any reason including weather) two (2) hours before a ride starts - if possible. With the exception of environmental concerns such as poor air quality, the Ride Leader will determine, in accordance with her best judgment,

whether a ride will proceed. It is each members' responsibility to decide whether to join the ride based on their comfort with adverse conditions.

5. Each ride posted will include a GPX file of the planned route. It is the responsibility of each rider to have access to or a copy of that route.
6. Arrive at the start location with enough time to have your bike ready, get the Ride Leader briefing and introductions and be rolling at the posted start time.
7. For safety, OWCC group rides are capped at a maximum of twelve (12) riders or less as set by the Ride Leader.
8. Pace/ speed / distance / duration. Ride Leaders will indicate the planned average pace / speed for each ride. There are several factors that can impact the pace during a ride including; hills, wind, group formation, etc. As the season progresses you will become better at understanding your pace. If you are uncertain there are a couple of things you can do. First, go for a one hour ride on a flat route and record how many kilometers you covered. This is your baseline. Second, you should understand what distances and length of ride you are comfortable with. This will change as your fitness improves over the season. However, as an example do not sign up for a 100 km ride if you have never ridden that far yet. Start with easier distances / durations and build up over the season.

Group Riding Techniques

We ride in groups, one of the best cycling experiences around. There are huge benefits to utilizing a paceline or echelon formation. The exact execution of these rides is determined by the Ride Leader based on; rider skill, road, traffic, weather, group conditions, and provincial Highway Traffic Acts.

A few tips to keep in mind:

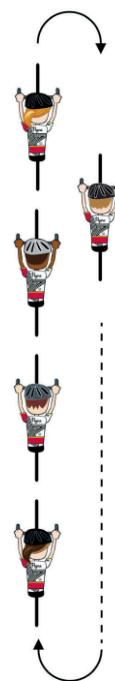
Tight and to the Right (TNR)

- Steady and compact formations have a calming effect on passing motorists. When a group is moving in a steady, tight, and predictable way and allowing for a clear view ahead, motorists are generally more appreciative and respectful.
- Double echelon formations when 'Tight and to the Right', leave the left side of the lane open for drivers to clearly see ahead to make safe lane changing passes.
- TNR is the safest way to get large groups of cyclists to share the roads with vehicles.
- A double echelon is half the length of single file groups; therefore, it is half the length and much easier to pass.

DURING THE RIDE – PACELINES

SINGLE PACELINE

- Used anytime the road narrows to a single lane whether by road design or parked cars.
- When switching from a double to single paceline, the left rider should tuck in safely ahead of the right rider all the way down the line.
- Rotations happen in a clockwise manner as per the Highway Traffic Act which specifies passing on the left.
- Riders should be 1-3' apart (fore/aft). >

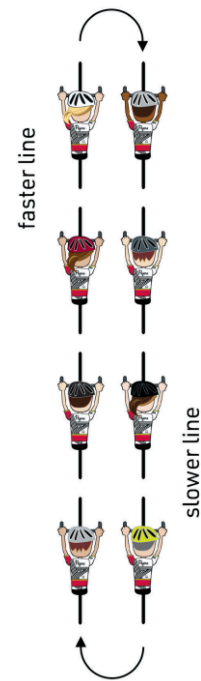


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DURING THE RIDE – PACELINES

SOCIAL PACELINE

- Club's preferred/suggested paceline.
- Riders are two-abreast at all times.
- When rotating, the lead rider in the slower line should yell "Clear" when it safe for the left rider to move into position in front of their wheel and "Last wheel" to the back right rider about to switch lines.
- Practice smooth rotations; no surging.
- Rotations happen in a clockwise manner as per the Highway Traffic Act which specifies passing on the left.
- Riders should be 1-3' apart (fore/aft and bar-to-bar). >



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Cadence. This refers to the number of times you turn the pedals over in a minute while riding. Maintaining a consistent cadence helps you maintain a smooth and efficient pedal stroke and allows for better control and responsiveness on your bike, which in turn contributes to the overall safety of the group. When riding in a group, it is important to maintain a cadence that is consistent, comfortable for you and adapted to the ride conditions, by shifting to a different gear when the speed, intensity and/or elevation change(s).

Keep the Pace. When going to the front, you may need to do more work because of increased wind, but you don't need to speed up. Keep track of the group's pace as you approach the front and hold it while you're there. All riders need to focus on riding at a **consistent** pace to maintain the same gaps all the way around the rotation.

Micro Adjust. To maintain a **consistent** pace while riding, use skills like soft pedalling, air braking (moving slightly laterally away from the peloton to catch a bit of air), and feathering the brakes to make small changes to your speed instead of fully engaging the brakes every time. Don't make any sudden, unexpected movements, and be mindful of the cyclist behind you.

Ease Off the Gas. When preparing to move backwards through the group, you just need to slightly ease the force on your pedals to allow the group to start overtaking you.

Remember - small adjustments.

Rotations. Short pulls keep the paceline moving. A consistently moving paceline doesn't leave any particular rider exposed to the wind, making the ride smoother for everyone involved.

Conserve Energy. If you're getting burned out, let the others know and have them slot in the paceline in front of you. This provides you some time to recover before you 'blow up.' If you are the rider ahead of someone losing pace, you can inform the rider ahead of you and drop back to help the rider catch up to the group.

Don't Stare. It is easy to get locked on the wheel in front of you. Not only is that boring, but it is also not giving you any time to react to changing situations. Keep scanning the road about 10m ahead for upcoming obstacles. Use the gaps in the riders to make this easier.

Cross-wheeling. This refers to a dangerous situation where a rider's front wheel overlaps with the rear wheel of the rider directly in front of them. This creates a high risk situation for a crash and is considered poor practice in road cycling. When riding in a peloton or pace line, be mindful of where you put your front wheel, you should be riding directly behind the cyclist in front of you. Talking with the cyclist in front or behind you can often lead to cross-wheeling, save your chat for coffee time.

Red Lights. Group riders will come to a complete stop at red lights. Groups should go through intersections as a group unless the traffic light turns yellow as the front of the group passes through the intersection. In such cases, the front group will pull over and wait for the rest of the group to catch up.

Stop Signs: Lead rider(s) will come to a stop, behind the white line if one is present, at all stop signs in both urban and rural areas. This does not necessarily require the front riders to unclip and put a shoe down. However, it does require that the lead riders brake to the point where they are either instantaneously stopped or at a speed they could make a foot-down complete stop with no further braking. All group riders behind the lead rider(s) must also brake to a speed where they are safely prepared to make a foot-down stop if necessary. This approach works when the group is first to the intersection and has the right-of-way. If we are not first, we make a complete stop (foot unclipped and down).

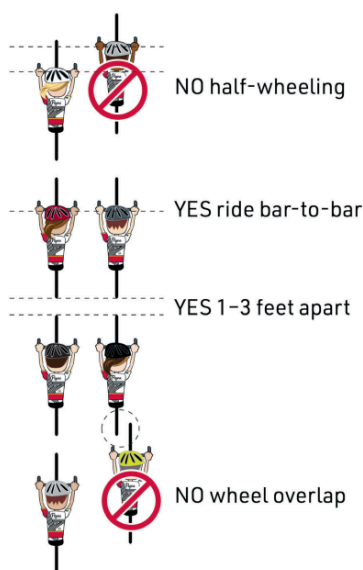
Role of the Sweep. The sweep is the last rider in the line on the outside. Like all other group positions, this is a rotating position. Whoever is in the sweep position is responsible for signalling vehicles approaching from the rear. The sweep is responsible for initiating left turns and calling out "TAKE THE LANE" after confirming that it is safe to do so. The sweep also ensures that nobody is left behind: if riders are at risk of being dropped, the sweep passes this information to the Group Ride Leader so that the speed

can be adjusted. The sweep also calls “ALL IN” when the group has cleared an intersection.

Hills - Ascending. On long climbs, groups may break formation and regroup at the safe, pre-designated spots at the top. Slower riders should keep tight to the right if the group breaks up on longer, steeper hills. By staying right, slower riders allow the faster riders to get by without forcing them too far out. Before passing a rider, always call “ON YOUR LEFT” and shoulder checks for riders or cars coming up behind before pulling out to pass. Never pass on the right.

Hills - Descending. We may also have speed differences on extended downhills when some riders want to speed down the hill, and others prefer to descend more slowly. When descending, riders should ensure a gap of at least 2m or more between each rider front to back. The fastest riders should go down first to minimize passing. Always pass on the left, never on the right.

No Drop. All OWCC rides are no-drop. The ride group will adjust so that all riders remain with the group. Communication is key to keeping the group together. Call out gaps when they appear, and slow down slightly to encourage the group to adjust the pace. If for reasons of illness, injury or a mechanical failure, a rider cannot remain with the group, they must first confirm with the Ride Leader they are detaching from the group. The Ride Leader will ask the rider to confirm her safe arrival at the start location (or home) via text message. All cyclists should have a plan for someone to retrieve them in the event they are unable to continue with a ride.



If you are new to group riding and feeling overwhelmed, a simple guideline is to keep the following in mind: **Communication, Consistency and Cadence.** The **3 Cs** are essential cycling skills that our coaches and ride leaders will refer to regularly.

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Communications

Communication is absolutely critical to the success of all group rides. It starts right from the beginning, even before the group leaves:

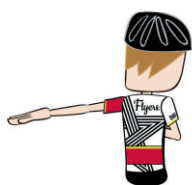
- Every rider needs to communicate their attendance with the Ride Leader and if they are new to the group.
- En route, riders need to communicate the ride formation, rotation, and pace.
- Riders at the front need to alert riders to road hazards, traffic situations, and other users of the road or path.
- Riders at the back need to call out cars or other vehicles approaching from the back.

The bottom line is that the ride's quality and safety depend on frequent and clear communication between all the riders. Never assume everyone in the group knows a vehicle is approaching or that the group is turning. Everything that could potentially affect the group needs to be called out.

As you are part of the flow of traffic, you need to be able to communicate with your fellow drivers and riders. You may use hand signals and/or verbal warnings. Remember, wind noise, traffic, and other auditory interference over the length of a peloton can make verbal communication unreliable and verbal communication with motor vehicles is impractical.

One final but important point regarding communication. Ride Leaders make every effort to maintain the quality and safety of the ride, but it is up to each rider to follow and communicate best ride practices. When riding at the front, we are responsible for providing a smooth and steady pull for the riders behind and pointing out hazards. When riding at the back, we are responsible for calling out cars from the back and maintaining the group's integrity by not allowing gaps. On a group ride, we are all responsible for each other's safety; correcting dangerous ride behaviours is in our best interest. You should politely point it out if you observe someone on your ride behaving inappropriately (e.g., overlapping wheels, surging off the front, or braking suddenly).

DURING THE RIDE – HAND SIGNALS



LEFT TURN
Arm out straight, pointing in direction of turn.



STOP
Hand down by your side, palm flat, fingers splayed.



SLOW
Wave/pulse one hand as if patting an invisible dog.



RIGHT TURN
Arm out straight, pointing in direction of turn.



TRACKS
Two fingers waved or held behind your back indicates upcoming train or streetcar tracks.



MOVING IN
Let the rider on your right know you're moving over into their single lane.



HAZARD
Pointing to pothole or hazard that needs to be avoided. Often accompanied with a call of "Hole."



GLASS OR LOOSE GRAVEL
Indicate glass or loose gravel by shaking your hand on the side where the hazard is.



OBSTRUCTION
Alert everyone to get over by pointing the direction to move behind your back.



ROTATE
A circular whirl of the finger/wrist indicating it's time for the group to rotate and for the next rider to take a pull.



SINGLE FILE
One finger raised above the head to alert the group to switch to single file.



DOUBLE FILE
Two fingers raised above the head to let the group know to double up.

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Emergency Stops

When being approached by an emergency vehicle (e.g., fire truck, ambulance, or police) with its lights and siren activated, the ride group is required by law to pull over and stop, whether the emergency vehicle is approaching from the front or behind. Act fast, but act safely and in control. When a siren is heard or lights are seen, immediately shout out to your group to pull over and stop in a controlled and safe manner. Once stopped, cyclists must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersection.

In the Event of an Injury or Accident

If a cyclist is injured, all participants must get off the road or path and the Ride Leader should:

- Stay calm and delegate responsibilities
- Remind others to stay out of harm's way
- Check for danger and assign someone to direct traffic
- Identify mechanisms of injury and minimize further injury
- Don't move victim
- If necessary, call 911 and / or contact the cyclist's emergency contact
- Administer first aid only if you have formal training and certification
- Look for signs of a concussion, any evidence of a head injury, and pay special attention to damage to the helmet. This would result in the removal from the rest of the ride.
- Comfort the victim

A Final Word

It's important to understand that when we ride with the OWCC and wear our Club jersey, we are easily identifiable and, in a sense, become an ambassador for our Club and all cyclists. We always strive as a club to create a positive impression when we are out riding around the region. Our goals are to stay safe, have fun, and enjoy the ride and that means everyone has an active role.