

Lehigh Valley Cycling Club Guide to Group Riding

Group Riding with other cyclists can enrich your bicycling experience by adding a social dimension to the technical and physical challenges. Successful group riding depends on communication and coordination among riders. This Guide establishes a common understanding of our club's expectations when riding in a group.

The Basics, during the ride

Introduce yourself. Introduce yourself to the ride leader and others in the group if you don't know them from previous ride encounters.

Stay with the ride leader and ride at the pace determined by the ride leader. Advise the ride leader if you will be departing from their ride.

Ride consistently and predictably. Make no sudden stops, no sudden turns and do not weave from your line. Use appropriate hand and voice signals to communicate with the other riders. (See hand and voice signals, below)

Obey traffic laws. Bikes are considered a vehicle and subject to rules of the road. When riding on LVCC group rides please obey all traffic laws. See the PA Motor Vehicle Code reference on the LVCC Rides webpage.

Observe Good Riding Etiquette. A partial list is included later in this Guide.

Why Ride in a Group?

Aside from the interpersonal interactions made possible by a group ride, riding in the draft of another cyclist saves significant energy, from 15% to 50% depending on wind speed and direction and some other factors.

To take advantage of the shadow, your front tire needs to be within about three feet of the leading rider's rear wheel. Experienced riders will often ride within inches of each other, but this takes a great deal of skill and focus. As described in a separate reference, tight "paceline" riding uses specialized techniques, and is not appropriate when casually drafting in a group.

Communication within the Group: Hand and vocal signals

When a group is drafting, it is particularly important to call out changes of pace, approaching vehicles, possible hazards, and the like, as they may not be as visible or obvious to other riders as they are to you. Often there will be hand and vocal signals for the same situation. Vocal signals may be more appropriate when it is risky to remove your hands from the handlebars.

Left turn signal - Left arm out to the side. "LEFT TURN"

Right turn signal – Right arm out to the side. "RIGHT TURN"

Slowing – Hand behind seat, palm open, facing back. "SLOWING"

Stopping – Hand behind seat, palm open, facing back. Augment with vocal signal. "STOPPING", especially for sudden and full stops.

Move to Left to avoid possible obstacle – Tap hip with open right hand as a signal for pedestrians, slow riders, parked or stopped cars to right side of roadway. Can augment with vocal signal such as: "LOOK AHEAD" or "HEADS UP"

Road Surface Hazard – Point down to side of hole, gravel, "roadkill" or other road surface hazard to avoid. Move away from indicated side. Augment with voice signal "HOLE", "GRAVEL", "ROADKILL", "GRATE".

"CAR UP" Any Vehicle - car, truck, tractor, horse & buggy - approaching from front.

"CAR BACK" Any Vehicle overtaking from behind. Note that it is not necessary to warn of cars where the traffic is expected, for example, on heavily traveled roads where cars are constant, or when riding on a defined cycling shoulder or lane.

"LOOK LEFT" or "LOOK RIGHT" You deem intersection is safe for you to cross, but approaching vehicle may necessitate following riders to stop. **DO NOT CALL "CLEAR" AT INTERSECTIONS, AS A LENGTHY GROUP MAY NOW ALLOW FOLLOWING RIDERS TO CROSS SAFELY!**

"ON YOUR LEFT" Alert the rider in front if you are passing on their left. Passing on the right is generally not a good idea, but may be necessary in unusual circumstances. Since passing on the right is not expected, it is vitally important to announce your intention with words such as **"ON YOUR RIGHT"**.

Group Etiquette

In Pennsylvania cyclists may "own the lane" but few drivers are aware of this part of the law. Be courteous to people in cars and share the roads with them. Do not unnecessarily impede or slow down cars. Cycle in a single line unless the size of the road and the absence of traffic permits otherwise.

Talking is fine, but taking your eyes off the road to look at the rider you're talking to is not.

Spitting and blowing "snot rockets" is rude when others are close behind you. Move to the back if you need to spit or clear your nose.

Do not talk on your cell phone while riding. Do not use earbuds or headphones of any type while riding in a group.

Avoid getting lost. If you don't know where you're going, stay with the group or with someone who does.

If you leave a group ride, advise the ride leader of your intentions, even if you have to do it by text or voice message.

If you are a strong rider in a slow group, be considerate of the ride leader who is responsible for leading the entire group. Rather than riding off the front and stringing out the group, help keep the group together. Be the ride leader's wing person or sweeper. Offer encouragement to others and pace stragglers back to the group.