

## ***Ride Etiquette***

Riding in a bunch can be the most enjoyable experience done in the right manner. Bunch riding gives you the opportunity to ride at a faster pace whilst enjoying a conversation at the same time. However, bunch riding can also be a huge pain if people in the group don't understand a few unwritten rules. Everyone needs to know these rules for everyone's safety.

**STAY TOGETHER:** When riding with a partner in a line of two's, stay close. Don't ride too far away from your partner, because you are intimidated by the wheel in front of you. The gap you've left between you and your partner is a waste of space and to a motorist behind, it appears that you are three wide. This is a good way to antagonise motorists.

**DON'T LEAVE GAPS:** If you are in the bunch and there is no one beside the person in front of you, you should move into that gap (otherwise you will be getting less wind-break than everyone else). Conversely, if you are that person and no-one moves into that gap beside you, you should move to the back of the bunch, the next pair to roll off will come back and one of those riders will fall in beside you.

**HOLD YOUR WHEEL:** An appropriate gap between your front wheel and the person in front is around 50cm. Keep your hands close to the brakes in case of sudden slowing. Sometimes people who are not used to riding in a bunch will feel too nervous at this close range - riding on the right side is generally less nerve-racking for such people as they feel less hemmed in. Watching "through" the wheel in front of you to one or two riders ahead will help you hold a smooth, straight line.

**LOOK AHEAD:** Do not become obsessed with the rear wheel directly in front of you. Try to focus four or five riders up the line so that any 'problem' will not suddenly affect you. Scan the road ahead for potential problems, forthcoming red lights etc, and be ready.

**OBEY THE ROAD RULES:** Especially at traffic lights - if you are on the front, and the lights turn orange, they will definitely be red by the time the back of the bunch goes through the intersection and you will be endangering the lives of others if you run it.

**NO HALF WHEELING:** When you finally make it to the front, don't 'half wheel'. This means keeping half a wheel in front of your partner. This automatically makes your partner speed up slightly to pull back along side you. Often half wheelers will also speed up, so the pace of the bunch invariably speeds up as the riders behind try to catch up. This is the very annoying symptom usually of somebody who is a bit nervous and excited. Not wanting the rest of the group to end up not being next to each other in their pairs, (or not wanting the other guy to think that he's better than you), you speed up to match his pace. But, he still needs to be that little bit in front so he speeds up - again, until everyone in the bunch has gone up two or three gears and 10km/hr and no one is particularly happy. **REMEDY** - when you are second wheel, make sure you know the general speed of the bunch, when you go to the front, keep your speed around the same, and keep your wheels and handlebars in line with the person next to you.

**\*POINT OUT OBSTACLES:** Point out obstacles such as loose gravel, broken glass, holes, rocks or debris on the road, calling out "hole" etc as well as pointing is helpful in case someone is not looking at your hand when you point. It is just as important to pass the message on, not just letting those close to the front know. Another obstacle is a parked car, call out "car" and sweep your hand around your back to let people behind know. Other things to point out are runners or walkers on bike tracks and slower bikes if you are passing someone on the road.

**\*ROLLING THROUGH- SWAPPING OFF:** The most common way to take a turn on the front of the group is for each pair to stay together until they get to the front. After having a turn on the front (generally about the same amount of time as everyone else is taking), the pair separates and moves to each side, allowing the riders behind to come through to the front. To get to the back, stop pedalling for a while to slow down, keep an eye out for the end of the bunch and fall back into line there. It is safer for everyone if you get to the back as quickly as possible as the group is effectively riding 4 abreast until those two riders are back in. **ALTERNATIVELY**, both riders should move into the gutter in single file, allowing the other riders to safely pass. Importantly, call the next riders through with "fresh horses" so every one knows what's going on.

**PACE – LINE RIDING:** When pace-lining there should be a maximum of two a breast at any one time. One way to Pace-Line is for the whole group to move in a circular motion through the bunch. One side (say the right) moves forward, when you get to the front, halfway through your turn, move across to the left. You will then be required to move back to second wheel when the person on your Right is ready to move over. The other way to pace-line is for everyone to do individual turns on the front of the group. Again there should only be a maximum of two a breast whilst doing pace-line in this manner. The person on the front of the group should move to the left when he or she has had enough on the front of the group then the person behind can move through on the right of this person.

**DOING EFFORTS:** If you are on a training program where you are required to do intervals or any sprint training, it is probably a good idea you go and ride by yourself to do this type of training.

**CALL OUT TRAFFIC AT INTERSECTIONS:** Generally the call will be "clear" if there is nothing coming at a turn and "car" if there is something coming.

**DON'T LEAVE PEOPLE ALONE AT THE ROADSIDE:** If somebody gets a puncture or mechanical, either the whole bunch should wait with him or her and make sure they have everything for the repair and are OK. Courteous riders will wait with the person and then help them to pace back onto the bunch. Of course it will depend on the length of the ride and the distance from the destination.

**LEAD IN FRONT:** Remember when you are on the front, you are not only responsible for yourself but for everyone in the group. When you are leading the bunch, try to monitor potential problems and give plenty of warning of impending stops or changes of pace. If you are on the front of the bunch make sure you know where you are going.

**BRAKE CAREFULLY:** Ride safely and try to say off the brakes. If you are inexperienced and too nervous to ride close to the wheel in front of you, stay alone at the back and practice. When the pace eases, don't break suddenly, instead ride to the side of the wheel in front and ease the pedalling off, then drop back on the wheel. Practice on the back and soon you will be able to move up the line with a partner.

**\*DON'T PROP:** Many riders, even the experienced ones, freewheel momentarily when they first get out of the saddle to go over a rise or a hill. When doing this, the bike is forced backwards. This can cause chaos in a tightly bunched group of riders. The sensation of the rider in front coming back at you is unpleasant and can cause crashes. Try to keep forward pressure on the pedals when you get out of the saddle to avoid this situation.

**\*BOMBING DOWN HILLS:** Do not bomb down hills from the back of the bunch ESPECIALLY if you don't have the legs to climb the next hill. This action only causes the faster/ stronger climbers to have to pass when climbing the next hill reeking havoc in the bunch and with traffic trying to pass the slowing riders.

**\*SINGLE FILE:** Where impeding traffic flow on narrow sections of pavement, ride in single file, which means ride as close as safely practical to the kerb or road shoulder and behind the rider in front.

**\*COFFEE SHOP RIDE:** As this is a **social ride**, therefore the ride pace will be kept at a social pace (28-30 kph) until at least the dual lane section of Gowan Road, at which time the stronger climbers may opt to stretch their legs. Remember this is a social ride not a race, if you are unable to comply, ask yourself "*why am I attending a social ride*". From the Motorway **overpass on Wembley Rd along Illaweena Rd to the Gowan Rd intersection** the ride will be conducted in **single file**, see the note above.

For all this information, it is most important to be relaxed in the bunch. This comes only with experience and there is only one way to get experience - get out there and do it. Remember safety first. Safety from traffic and to and from other riders is essential.