



CYCLING
NEW ZEALAND

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



WINDOW SOLUTIONS

SHARE
YOUR LOVE OF
BIKING



RIDE LEADER HANDBOOK

FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO SHARE
THEIR **LOVE** OF BIKING WITH OTHERS.

CONTENTS

Section One - Ride Leading	3
1.1 What is ride leading	3
1.2 Who can be a ride leader?	3
1.3 What does ride leading involve?	4
Section Two - Starting a Group Ride	5
2.1 How to begin leading	5
2.2 How to start a new group ride	5
2.3 Meeting and finishing points	6
2.4 Group culture	6
Section Three - Pre-Planning Rides	7
3.1 Route planning	7
3.2 Weather and time of year	8
3.3 Group members and ratios	8
3.4 Equipment as a leader	9
3.5 Pre-ride communication	10
Section Four - The Ride.....	11
4.1 The pre-ride briefing.....	11
4.2 What does a well-led ride look like?	12
4.3 Specific situations you may need to deal with	17
4.4 Stops.....	19
4.5 Road environments	20
4.6 When plans change.....	24
4.7 E-bikes tips and tricks.....	24
Section Five - After The Ride.....	25
5.1 Debriefing.....	25
5.2 Managing group growth.....	26
Section Six - Developing Your Leadership Skills	27
6.1 Reflection	27
6.2 Mentoring	28
6.3 Cycle Skills Instructor.....	28
Section Seven - Further Resources	29
7.1 Ride Leader Website	29
7.2 Cycling New Zealand Youtube	30
7.3 Cycling New Zealand find a ride.....	30
7.4 Cycling New Zealand facebook page	30
7.5 Council.....	30



SECTION ONE

RIDE LEADING

1.1 WHAT IS RIDE LEADING

An ever-increasing number of groups of people are getting together who share a common interest – cycling! These groups could be people forming a small casual group who meet for an occasional ride and a coffee afterwards. Alternatively, it could be a regular weekly training ride organised by a bike shop or members of a cycling club. A Ride Leader is any one person from these groups who acts in a leadership or guiding role during these rides. Most groups tend to have one or more designated leaders who are considered by all riders to be ‘in charge’ of the group, whether that be in planning and directing the course or encouraging good behaviour while the group is together out riding. Also, there may be other senior group members recognised as having greater knowledge or experience who can further contribute to the overall management and guidance of the group.

1.2 WHO CAN BE A RIDE LEADER?

Anyone who is capable and competent at riding a bicycle on the road and who has a desire to share their enthusiasm may become a Ride Leader. Cycling New Zealand’s Ride Leader Workshop, along with this handbook, outlines everything prospective leaders should consider for successful group ride leading.

Ride Leaders generally come from a variety of backgrounds and lead rides for many reasons, including:

1. Sharing their love of biking
2. Giving something back to their community and meeting new people
3. For the enjoyment of being adventurous with others and exploring their community and the broader environment

The Ride Leader workshop and this manual both give a useful framework of aspects to consider when leading.



1.3 WHAT DOES RIDE LEADING INVOLVE?

Ride leading entails responsibility for many activities and duties that are necessary for successful group riding. There may often be more than one Ride Leader in a group. We encourage each group to have multiple leaders so that not only are responsibilities shared, but the group benefits further from capitalising on other members' strengths. Multiple leaders also help make ride groups more sustainable. If a leader moves on or goes away for some time, the group has others in place who can continue leading. Holding a current first aid certificate is also strongly recommended as there is always a possibility of an accident when riding a bicycle.

Typical activities and duties of ride leading involve:

- Route planning and preparation
- Make decisions when required for the benefit of the group and other road or pathway users
- Encourage and role model safe cycling
- Educating group members
- Creating and nurturing the group culture
- Role modelling expected group behaviour
- Managing and communicating expectations of the group
- Managing the dynamics of the group
- Helping support people to develop their skills and confidence



SECTION TWO

STARTING A GROUP RIDE

2.1 HOW TO BEGIN LEADING

Considering taking on the role of Ride Leader can seem daunting, so starting on a small scale may be helpful. For instance, you could start by leading rides with one or two of your friends whom you know well, and whose biking ability you also know well. Starting with small groups may be less overwhelming while your leading ability grows and allows you to gain experience at a manageable level.

Regardless of whether you are starting a new group, with people you do or do not know, mentoring may also prove helpful. You could seek a mentor in someone who is an experienced leader from another group, or a Cycling New Zealand regional mentor. Mentors help by giving support and advice while out on a ride, or they can provide advice and guidance afterwards. Either way, they oversee and support your decision-making and assist where needed with group dynamics.

2.2 HOW TO START A NEW GROUP RIDE

There are several ways to get a group ride up and going, and later grow its membership. While word of mouth can be the fastest way to gain more members, some additional ways may include:

1. Inviting along your friends and family
2. Creating a Facebook page and encouraging sharing amongst your friends and family, or using other websites such as Neighbourly
3. Contacting your local Regional Sports Trust and asking them to list your group in their community newspaper columns
4. Creating posters and asking to display them at your local RSA, sports club, or bike shop
5. Listing your rides with city or town councils that have a cycling section on their website and that list group rides, or encourage them to do so
6. Contacting your local bike advocacy group (see www.can.org.nz for local links)
7. Contacting ride@cyclingtonzealand.nz and having your ride listed on the 'Find a ride' directory on the Cycling New Zealand website

Besides these suggestions above, maintaining consistency of your start and finish locations such as at a café, may provide another opportunity to see your group. Local people will see your group engaging and may seek to join in or know of others who might wish to.

2.3 MEETING AND FINISHING POINTS

As mentioned, consistency of start and finish locations helps with growing your group; however occasionally changing these locations allows for more adventurous rides. While changing location takes a little more organisation, communicating about planned rides using social media platforms, such as your group page on Facebook, allows you to plan ahead and tell the group where these locations will be. Varying start locations may also allow other riders to attend should they see you setting off from somewhere more accessible for them.

There are groups around New Zealand that go out on several scheduled rides each week, and each ride starts from a separate location that remains consistent. For example, the Social Ladies group in Hamilton meets and departs from a location in Hamilton Gardens every Monday, in Flagstaff every Thursday, and in North Hamilton every Saturday. This enables more in-depth exploration of the surrounding area with a certainty of where to meet before the start of each ride.

2.4 GROUP CULTURE

It is important to be clear how you wish to shape and portray your “group culture”. With this in mind, it is ideal when starting a group to think about why you like cycling, and why you want to share it with others. Come up with two to three key things to communicate with group members, and introduce these in your pre-ride briefings. This way, any new people joining can understand what to expect and if the group culture is right for them. Many things may shape the culture of your group (expected behaviours and norms of the group) but it is often determined by you, the Leader, based on what you enjoy about cycling. For example, Ride Leaders who enjoy cycling purely for the adventure of it, will likely have a group culture that centres around exploring new environments and routes. Conversely, a Ride Leader who particularly enjoys the physically demanding challenge of hard riding may set a group culture based on specific training objectives and pushing the pace of a ride. Other examples include socialise, or “no-drop” rides (where the group never leaves people behind).

Whatever the key things that determine your group culture, clearly understanding and communicating these will increase your enjoyment of leading. The members of your group are also more likely to enjoy their rides and their experience of taking part.

No one group fits every rider’s needs. Meeting with other Ride Leaders and getting to know their group cultures gives you the ability to recommend a more suitable group for a rider who finds your group isn’t right for them. Suggesting another group to riders is wholly accepted and encouraged, as a group member who doesn’t fit the culture of a group may be disruptive and/or discouraging of other group members.



3.1 ROUTE PLANNING

There are various ways to go about route planning for led-rides. Creating, for instance, three to four different but consistent route options that loop out and back from the same starting point provides many benefits to your group. When riders are time-constricted, they will know how long a particular ride is likely to take. Also, this enables you, as a Ride Leader to know and always anticipate the particular features of that route and therefore requires less planning. It is common amongst road cycling groups to have set ride routes that may be the same every week, repeated for the purposes of training, that sometimes include additional options which increase difficulty or provide a shorter route if required.

On led-rides where there are less time constraints, the Ride Leader may opt for constructing a different route every ride, thus providing more adventurous outings and/or more challenge for the group. Of course, this will require bespoke planning from the Ride Leader to determine the distance and time needed, either by a pre-ride of the route before taking the group over it or by utilising online mapping tools such as Strava, MapMyRide or Komoot. Going out and physically pre-riding the route is highly recommended so Leaders can determine if there are any hazards they need to be aware of for their group.

Riders who are new to biking, or coming back to it after many years off, always benefit from riding on less challenging terrain and lower density traffic roads. New riders need to spend large amounts of energy and attention to be competent on their bike and therefore have less attention available to cope with complex road environments. Consideration of this must be a factor when planning the route of your led-ride. As group member competencies grow, you can alter the route to increase the challenge.

Whether you have similar repetitive ride routes or multiple ride routes, the key is meeting the expectations that you set out through whatever communication channels you use. If you state your ride length to be 1-1.5 hours, then it is essential to meet this expectation.

The specific loop you choose likely relates to why you like to ride. However, you must consider that some roads may not always be the best choice for group riding, especially if they are typically high-density traffic roads with high speed limits. Safe route choice is imperative and will create a more pleasant and safe riding experience.



3.2 WEATHER AND TIME OF YEAR

Ride Leaders should be prepared to vary ride routes as needed, depending on the time of year. For example, in autumn many shared paths have fallen leaves on them that may produce a slippery surface or hide a surface hazard underneath. In winter, moss growing on concrete or boardwalks paths is a slipping hazard. Some roads may be adversely affected by glare at sunrise or sunset at certain times of the year. Temporarily avoiding some roads at particular times may be prudent to lessen the risk of danger for your cyclists when visibility for motorists is compromised, or there are other seasonal hazards present.

Also, in spring, route choice may be affected by stronger winds that can provide an extra challenge for people. While hedging and hills provide shelter from the wind, when gaps in hedging appear these can create wind tunnels or turbulence and dangerously move people on the road. In instances such as these, the front riders signalling these terrain changes coming up to those behind will help prepare riders and avoid collisions. Some road cycling groups cancel a ride if wind speed is forecasted to be greater than 35kph, as this strength of wind can very quickly shift people on the road.

Some led-rides around New Zealand only operate during specific times of the year (e.g. throughout the summer months), or change their start time to accommodate light changes coming into effect with daylight savings to ensure there is enough light.

3.3 GROUP MEMBERS AND RATIOS

What is the ideal Ride Leader to group member ratio? The answer is: it depends on many variables. If you are leading a ride for beginners, you may want to keep the group very small. As the competency of the riders grows, allow the numbers of riders to increase, taking into account route choice and the group dynamics. Competency, in this case, refers to the riders' ability to ride close to each other, hold a straight riding line, communicate well, understand and use good road position, and have sufficient balance and control of their bike. On high density traffic roads lower ratios are helpful to prevent groups breaking up and limit disruptions to other road users.

Some suggestions of Ride Leader to group number ratios are typically one leader to six or up to 12 group members on community rides, and up to a maximum of one to twenty for road cycling rides. As the number of group members increases, it is recommended to divide riders

into smaller groups, simply to reduce the space the group occupies on shared pathways and roads. This improves safety for both riders and other road users.

As groups grow and frequently ride together, their fitness invariably will improve. For example, when a Cambridge-based social road cycling group began riding together, they called themselves a “beginner” group and rode at speeds of 20-22 kph. Over time, after consistently riding every week, the riders’ fitness within the group dramatically improved. It was not long before they were riding together at over 30 kph, yet they continued to identify as a beginner group. Subsequently, when new genuine beginner riders joined their rides, there was quite a gap between their abilities and the existing “beginner” members. Therefore, be mindful that when you have a core group of people who turn up regularly, they will inevitably improve. Many groups around New Zealand have accommodated this by dividing riders off into smaller sub-groups depending on their abilities. For example, Sulphur Point group in Tauranga, which started with six people, and now regularly have 60-70 people every week, has created multiple groups. Each group starts and finishes at the same location, but the groups are sorted into categories, such as complete beginners, advanced riders, and so on. Arranging riders into groups like this better meets the needs of riders and provides a more enjoyable ride for everyone.

3.4 EQUIPMENT AS A LEADER

As a Ride Leader, it is advisable to always carry a mobile phone, first aid kit, pump, spare tube, tyre-levers and tools. From autumn through to late spring, if your ride is in the morning or evening, it is recommended to carry a spare set of lights in case a group member turns up without their own. Most local councils give away bike lights for free, and these are available for Ride Leaders. If you are riding for more than two hours, it is advisable to take food for yourself and an emergency snack in case someone on your ride needs it.

You can set up the expectations of what equipment riders should bring on a ride as part of your group culture and groups often outline their expectations of what group members should carry in their ‘about’ section of their website, or Facebook group page. For example, the Te Awamutu Social Riders all wear high-viz vests. For that group, the vests are equipment riders must bring and wear each ride. The majority of Ride Leaders request riders adhere to at least the minimum legal requirements as outlined in the Cycling Road Code, such as always wearing a helmet and using lights when riding in the dark. In some regions, Ride Leaders have faced challenges with people turning up to ride without a helmet. It is up to you as a leader to determine your minimum requirements; however, we strongly recommend adhering to at least minimal legal requirements.

If you are leading in an environment that has no cell phone reception, it is advisable to know where the nearest landline phone is located or carry an E-PERB, which is a personal locator beacon. These devices can be readily hired from outdoor equipment stores.

3.5 PRE-RIDE COMMUNICATION

As mentioned, many organised ride groups use Facebook as a primary source of communicating ride information, while others may use email newsletters. Facebook has the benefit of potentially allowing for a message to be sent to all group members if a ride plan change becomes necessary. Plus the option to participate in photo postings by group members helps cement the social connection within the group.

In pre-ride communications, it is essential to specify ride length (in distance and/or time), who the ride is suitable for, and whether any stops will happen along the way. This is also an opportunity to reinforce advice of equipment choice, particularly at times of the year when environmental conditions are changing, perhaps requiring the use of lights, for example.

A number of groups stipulate a time to meet that is earlier than the time the ride will actually set off. For example, for a ride scheduled to leave at 9:30 am, riders would start gathering from 9 am. The Ride Leader would hold a pre-ride briefing at 9:20 am, and then everyone leaves at 9:30 am. Some road cycling groups, with a need to be very strict timewise before riders start their workday, use devices such as a Garmin GPS and will depart precisely on what is known as “Garmin time”. That is the time set by the device, via GPS, and therefore everyone has that same time.

A number of groups also encourage all group members to have an Emergency number with them, whether it is a Road User ID (www.roadid.com), I.C.E in their phone, or a name and phone number on their phone homescreen. Alternatively people can write their name and emergency contact details on a card and keep in their wallet or purse.





SECTION FOUR

THE RIDE

4.1 THE PRE-RIDE BRIEFING

As your group members gather for a ride, use this opportunity to not only meet and greet them but to also visually check they have their helmet, suitable clothing and other equipment needed for the ride. If there are people who are new to your group, introduce yourself and buddy them up for the ride with either yourself or another experienced rider. New riders in a group will often have a tendency to hold back at the start of a ride, waiting for everyone else to go and then watch what happens. This shyness makes it difficult to guide them through their first ride, increasing the time it takes for them to get to know groups rules, to learn the group culture and other group members. The buddy-system provides a fast and efficient way to familiarise new riders with how the group rides typically together, including what different hand or spoken signals mean.

Further points on a skillful pre-ride briefing include:

1. Introduce yourself. Even if you have met or seen most people before, it's easy to forget others' names, so reinforcing who each rider is at each ride is helpful.
2. Introduce any new people to established riders.
3. Give a brief recap of the culture of the group. This may include simple points such as "we always wait for each other" or "if you feel like turning off early, please tell another group member so they can let me know".
4. Outline expectations of your group members. For example "consider pedestrians first" and "always be courteous to other road users".
5. Give a quick reminder of helmet and bike check (tyres at the correct pressure, brakes working, wheel skewers tightened correctly etc.), encouraging more experienced riders to help new riders check their helmets and bikes.
6. Provide a brief overview of the course you will be riding. Include any programmed stops and, most crucially, expected ride duration. As an example "we expect to be finishing at Punnet Café for coffee in three hours, but there is also a café called Top of the Hill fifty kilometres into the ride where we will stop".
7. Nominate or ask for a volunteer Tail-end Charlie helper rider. The Tail-end Charlie's role is to literally always be the last rider in the group. This is extremely helpful for you when you are leading from the front of the group, or if you are floating around. All you need do is locate the Tail-end Charlie, and you will always know that everyone else is in the group. This prevents you from needing to count riders present.
8. If there were any unaddressed issues you may have had on the previous ride, this is an excellent opportunity to bring them to light.

The **bike check** you do will very much be relevant to the course you are riding and the expected duration. The most basic bike check includes:

- **A** - Air in the tyres, as prescribed by the recommended sidewall pressure (like in a car tyre).
- **B** - Brakes are working.
- **C** - is for control – chain, cranks and handlebars and in working order.
- **D** - is for drop your bike from a height of about 10cm and listen for any unusual rattles or creaks.
- **Q** - for quick releases on the wheels (and some bike seat pillars). Check they are done up correctly and tight.



More complex bike checks are called **M**-checks. This can be viewed via **Youtube** for more detail. Search for “**bike m check**”.



Wearing a helmet while riding is a legal requirement in New Zealand and one must be worn unless a person has a written dispensation they can provide or are Sheikh. The helmet must fit properly and be worn correctly, with straps firm against the head, helmet covering the forehead, no more than 2-3 fingers under the chin strap and rear buckle firm.

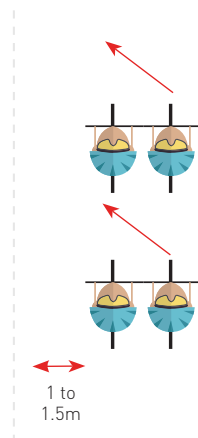
4.2 WHAT DOES A WELL-LED RIDE LOOK LIKE?

Specific roles and actions are required by riders to ensure the bunch functions safely and effectively. In organised bunches, coordinated riding patterns and formations facilitate people to ride faster and cover greater distances by working in an energy-efficient way. These formations also provide for predictable, visible forms for other road users, or shared-path users to interact with. Some recommendations for good bunch riding include:

- **WHERE TO LEAD FROM:** you may lead from the front, back, or “float” around your group. Leading from the front allows you to influence pace and direction, however, from there it is difficult to see what is happening behind in the group, and to do so you have to look behind you continuously. Floating leadership requires the assistance of another rider on the front to control the pace, and who knows the course directions. Enrolling the help of an experienced group rider in this position allows you to move around and see more easily what is happening in the group and the opportunity to chat with different people. Leading from the back of the bunch does allow you to see what is happening, however, it tends to only be manageable with very small groups because everyone needs to be within

ear-shot of you. For this, you will require a lead rider who knows where you are going and how to control the pace.

- **FORMATION:** If intending to ride in formation, set the bunch to ride in pairs, or two-abreast, while maintaining a distance behind the back wheel of the rider in front of no more than half a metre. Encourage riders to ride with handlebars in-line and hold a straight line of travel. Should two-abreast be unsafe or create a passing obstruction for other road users, the formation should drop back to single-file. In many instances, paired formation is easier for vehicles to pass, as the length and time to pass is shorter than riders riding in single file. For example, a group of 20 people in single file will take double the amount of time to pass, than 10 pairs. Moving from double to single file can be achieved by having alternating riders on the inside of the pairs dropping back, while the alternate riders on the outside move forward into the gap. Riding in pairs side-by-side allows for more relaxed conversation to take place. However, while in ordinary everyday social situations it is standard etiquette to look at the person you are talking to when on a bike this could prove dangerous. When you move your head, and line of vision, you are very likely to steer your bike in the direction you are looking, moving you off-line, and this could result in a collision. Bringing this to people's awareness promotes more steady riding and avoids accidents. Riding in pair-formation you can "sushi-train" off, meaning rotating anti-clockwise, to allow people to talk to different riders as they come alongside, and take a turn riding at the front. This is a common practice in road cycling and means there are only ever two riders abreast, as opposed to traditional lapping, where two people lap-off, one each to the left and right where they drift to the back, with pairs coming up through the centre.



- **ROAD POSITION:** The inside line of a pair of riders two-abreast should set a distance from the kerb that allows the bunch to hold a centre-left position in the lane, but one that avoids the inside riders fearing they are riding too closely to the gutter. The inside rider will generally be half a metre out from the kerb or edge of the road. When passing cars, maintain an inside-line position one to one and a half metres out. When there are multiple kerbside obstructions (parked cars separated by gaps of no vehicles for example), do not slalom the bunch in and out, but hold a straight line at one to one and a half metres out from the kerb side or parked cars as this means the group will be visible and predictable for other road users.



- **LEAD RIDERS:** The lead rider's role is to take overall control of the pace; call out all obstacles or hazards, such as potholes or glass; indicate ahead of time changes required in speed and/or direction; call "single-file"/"double-up" as appropriate, and make decisions on whether to ride through, or stop, at intersections, with awareness of bunch size and the aim of keeping the whole bunch together and safe.
- **TAIL-END CHARLIE:** This is the designated rider who maintains the last position in the bunch. This person enables the lead rider to know everyone is safely together, as they need only look for the Tail-end Charlie. This prevents the need to count everyone. Included in the last rider role is letting others know when it is safe for the bunch to move across/change lanes; warn of cars coming up from behind, and indicate to riders rolling from the front when they have reached the tail-end.
- **MID-RIDERS:** Riders in the middle of the bunch must ensure communications are relayed clearly up or down the bunch; they should maintain optimum wheel spacing and be ready to 'leap-frog' or 'come over' the rider in front who is unable to close up a gap that has opened up. All riders should become proficient and comfortable at relaying vocal and visual hand signals, so messages are relayed down through the group.
- **PACE:** Aim to keep the pace steady, smooth and predictable at all times. Any movements or initiated changes in speed should be made with an awareness of the size of the bunch and always, where possible, with appropriate and audible communication throughout. People that are fitter than other group members are encouraged to stay near the front and shelter less fit people from the wind. In road cycling, where the group will be moving and alternating who is on the front of the group, riders who are fitter can be encouraged to stay on the front longer (as opposed to ride faster), to help less fit riders.
- **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Encourage personal responsibility in your pre-ride briefing, as often people riding in groups may exhibit irresponsible behaviours they would not when riding alone.
- **HILLS:** When cycling up hills in a bunch, be aware of first-time or inexperienced riders, as, when they at first hit the climb their speed may drop off dramatically. It is advisable to move into single file and stay left when both climbing and descending. This will allow faster riders to pass on the right safely. Re-group at the top of the hill to avoid dropping the slower riders. If you have any E-bike riders in your group, encourage them to pass on the right, and for people on conventional bikes to stay left.

- **CONSISTENT BEHAVIOUR:** A well-formed ride will include all riders doing more-or-less the same thing at the same time. For example, if there is a decision to ride on the road, even when there is a shared-path parallel to the road, all riders should ride on the road. If some ride on the shared-path and others ride on the road, this can create confusion for group members and/or other members of the community.
- **TRAFFIC ISLAND CROSSINGS:** many shared-pathways intersect with traffic islands designed to help in crossing the road. In this situation, a well-led ride will see riders crossing in pairs (side-by-side), and only the number of pairs that can safely stop on the island are to cross at any time. In the majority of situations, this will be only one or two pairs. Road conditions can change very quickly, thus creating the need to ensure any riders crossing can fit within the traffic island safely.
- **SHARED-PATHS:** New Zealand now has a high number of shared-paths where people on bikes and pedestrians can share and enjoy our communities. Riders should keep left and can ride in single or paired formation, depending on the width of the path, and/or density of other path users. Always use common sense and display courtesy to other users. When passing pedestrians, encourage group members to:
 - Ring their bell.
 - Always pass on the right, as you would when driving, and at such volume as you can be heard, say, "passing on the right" to inform that person you are passing. The only instance when it is permissible for riders to pass on the left is when the right-side passageway is blocked.
 - Offer a "good morning", or "good afternoon" when passing.
 - Communicate to the pedestrian how many riders are to follow you, so they can anticipate there are more riders. For example "five more to come".

Paths often start and finish with bollards or gates, which are generally metal barriers to prevent motor vehicles from entering the shared paths. These come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and are often the cause of groups splitting, and tempting riders to 'not follow the leader' and instead exit onto a road over grass, instead of using the correct exit.

If bollards are narrow, it may be easier for riders to dismount and roll their bike up on to its back wheel and lead the bike through in this upright position by the handlebars.



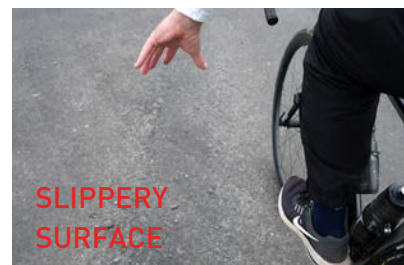
HAND SIGNALS AND COMMUNICATION

Good communication practice ensures the safety of the group at all times during the ride. It is better to over-communicate than under-communicate on group rides. All actions and hazards should be called and/or signalled to ensure everyone is aware of what is occurring and what action they need to take. It is essential that all riders, including those new to the bunch, are familiar with the words or signals used. Most words and signals are common across groups, but some groups may have their own particular signals and meanings. When signalling, hold the indication for at least three-seconds to ensure it can be seen by everyone through the group.

Even the last rider of a group must relay hand signals, as these indicate the intent of the group to other road users or pedestrians.

Commonly used hand signals:

- Right hand held up in the air, and at an angle to the wrist, signals an intention to stop
- Straight arm out towards the left or right, indicates turning into, or moving towards, that direction
- Pointing to the ground indicates a hazardous surface or object(s) on the ground
- Hand shaking toward the ground indicates a slippery surface caused by gravel, leaves, or other objects or broken glass
- Holding one finger up in the air signals to move into single file
- Holding two fingers up in the air signals to move into two-abreast formation
- Straight arm out moving up and down (in a “calming” movement) signals to the group speed will be slowing
- Hand moving behind to the lower back and pointing left or right. This indicates the need for the riders behind to move out from their line on the road, as they are about to pass something on the left or right, as indicated, such as a parked car, a slower rider or a pedestrian.



Commonly used calls:

- ‘Stopping’ – group about to stop at traffic lights intersection or re-grouping
- ‘Car back’ – vehicle approaching from the rear
- ‘Car up’ – vehicle approaching from the front
- ‘Slowing’ – bunch speed reducing

4.3 SPECIFIC SITUATIONS YOU MAY NEED TO DEAL WITH

LOST RIDERS

It is surprisingly easy to lose a rider, especially when there is a large diversity of abilities in a group. Prevent losing riders by stopping to re-group often, making use of a Tail-end Charlie, and ensure you have the phone number of the Tail-end Charlie, to call when re-grouping. If you do not have a Tail-end Charlie, and a rider is lost, stop the group with the instruction to stay where they are and wait. Take one group member with you, and backtrack to find the lost rider. Once the lost rider is found, you can all ride together back to the group. However, if the rider has experienced a mechanical or another problem has occurred, the rider who accompanied you can ride up and tell the group what is happening, or what needs to happen.

The buddy system helps to prevent the lost rider scenario, especially if you do not have a Tail-end Charlie, as every person in the group has the responsibility to look out for their buddy.

Riders becoming lost commonly occurs at certain points during a ride. For instance, where there are multiple turning options at corners, especially when large gaps open up between riders, and those far behind cannot see the direction the front riders have taken. Slowing the pace when travelling through such parts of a route helps to eliminate these problems.

You may also think you have lost a rider when, for whatever reason, someone turns off to leave a ride early. As part of your ride briefing, ensure that everyone knows to communicate to you if they are intending to turn off early, to prevent you from having to search for them.

When stopping the group for any reason, be it for a lost rider, riders to re-group, or for a mechanical, ensure everyone is off the road, or if on shared paths, that there is a clear space for other users to pass by. Often re-grouping happens at intersections, or turning points of a route, which are made more dangerous by the presence of moving cars.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

In some cases, if the ride does not meet the expectations of an individual, they may become disruptive or difficult. As an example, if a rider appears to be continually riding well ahead of the group, this usually indicates the group is too slow for them. In this situation, we recommend that you suggest they seek a group more suitable for their riding capability. Alternatively, you may give them specific physical challenges. For example, riding in a harder gear than they usually would up hills, or using three gears smaller than comfortable on the flats in order to over-spin their pedalling cadence.

Other difficulties come with riders who do not obey road traffic rules. In so doing they risk tarnishing the entire group (and people on bikes in general) in the eyes of the public. More seriously, this behaviour could lead to confusing situations where other riders, especially those less experienced, are put at risk. It is especially crucial in this circumstance to clearly reinforce expectations of rider conduct while out on a group ride.

MECHANICALS

As a ride leader, unless you are willing and able to do so, you are not expected to deal with mechanicals as they transpire with other people's bikes. The most common mechanical that occurs is generally a puncture, and this can be dealt with quickly if you or others know what to do. You may choose to take advantage of the opportunity to give a useful lesson on changing a tube, or repairing a puncture, to other group members who are unsure of what to do.

If it is a mechanical that cannot be fixed on the road, and a rider must be rescued, ensure they have made telephone contact with someone available to collect them as promptly as possible. Before leaving them, check that they are comfortable to wait by themselves. If they are not, you will need to organise for one or two riders to remain with them. Also, especially if leaving them on their own to wait, ensure you have exchanged phone numbers so they can advise you should their rescue plan change. In the case where you are in a very remote location, do not leave someone by themselves. Arrange for one or two volunteers to stay with them until they are collected.

Remind group members to check their tyre pressure, and checking for worn out or damaged tyres, and replacing them with new ones can help prevent punctures. Sensible route planning can help prevent mechanical problems as well, such as avoiding areas where you are aware broken glass or other debris is commonly seen on the roads.

INCIDENTS

Other incidents the group may encounter are accidents or adverse interactions with other road users. We highly recommend that as a ride leader, you undertake first aid training. When an accident situation happens, and first aid is required, the most critical first response is to secure the scene, especially with a large group of people. Practically speaking, this means ensuring there is no risk of further incidents occurring. This may simply involve ensuring everyone is safely off the road. You may also designate duties to others to assist you, the most important being phoning for emergency medical or police assistance if required. Other examples could be providing support in performing first aid; ensuring people continue to stay out of the way of traffic; keeping a crowd away from an injured person, or even directing traffic around an incident if there is a problem clearing the road.

If an adverse interaction happens with another road user, such as an abusive driver, be sure to remain calm and polite, and continue on with the group activities. If at any time you do feel unsafe, don't hesitate to call the police, and record the driver's registration and car make and model detail.



4.4 STOPS

Stopping for regular breaks during a ride allows you to gauge how everyone is going. Pre-planning possible toilet stops is helpful on rides that are over 1.5 hours duration and will likely be appreciated by the group. Stops may also include points of interest in your community, such as plaques describing some history of the area, beautiful flora or fauna, or even a beautiful view from the top of a hill. These stops give riders a chance to catch their breath and have a drink. Not everyone may be confident at drinking while riding, so if you have such people with you be sure to have a short stop every 20-30 minutes to allow them to maintain hydration.

4.5 ROAD ENVIRONMENTS

Basing your route planning on your group's abilities is helpful, especially to avoid dangerous situations. If your group members are very much beginners, you may start predominantly using shared-paths, and try to avoid traffic roundabouts and busy intersections. Gradually you could introduce them one challenge each ride, and increase the number per ride as their confidence and competence grow.

It is important to take into account the levels of confidence of the riders in your group. Typically, if someone is anxious and feels unsafe, they may exhibit risky cycling behaviours, putting themselves and others in danger. For example, people with a lack of confidence often ride in the gutter and do not position themselves effectively. This results in them being less visible to traffic and more at risk of an accident with the variability and possible obstacles found in that position in the roadside, e.g. rubbish bins, gravel, gutters changing.

TRAFFIC ROUNDABOUTS

Traffic roundabouts are commonly built by roading engineers in such a way as to force people on bikes to move from the cycle lane into the traffic lane. This happens when the previously designated cycle lane ends anywhere from 10-50 metres prior to the stopping point on the roundabout. Effectively the cycle lane "disappears". To safely negotiate these type of roundabouts, whether you are riding by yourself or with a group, prepare early to move out of the cycle lane and into the traffic lane. Well before the lane ends, look around, and signal that you are about to move, look again, and, when clear of traffic, move into the traffic lane. The busier the road, the earlier it pays to prepare for and start this manoeuvre.



The safest and most efficient way for a bunch of riders to move through a roundabout is to effectively “become a car” – that is, be in the line of traffic, not beside it. As a group, ride in pairs. Six people on bikes in pair formation in the traffic lane is about equivalent to one car. This is safer and more practical, compared with six riders all in single file. Whether you are riding alone or with your group, as you ride through the roundabout take up position as though in a car. Stay in the middle of the lane. This is known as “claiming the lane”, or “taking the lane”, and discourages drivers from attempting to overtake you. You must signal, as per New Zealand road rules, and when moving out of the roundabout move gradually back into the cycle lane, or to the left of the road.

When leading very new beginner riders, whose competency is minimal, you may want to encourage them to negotiate roundabouts as pedestrians would. That is exiting the road onto the footpath and walking their bikes across designated pedestrian crossing points around the roundabout. If your group has riders at this stage of cycling, we strongly encourage that they undertake skills training to increase competency and gain the confidence to ride on the road safely. You can get in touch with Cycling New Zealand, or your local Council, to enquire and help arrange for this training.



INTERSECTIONS

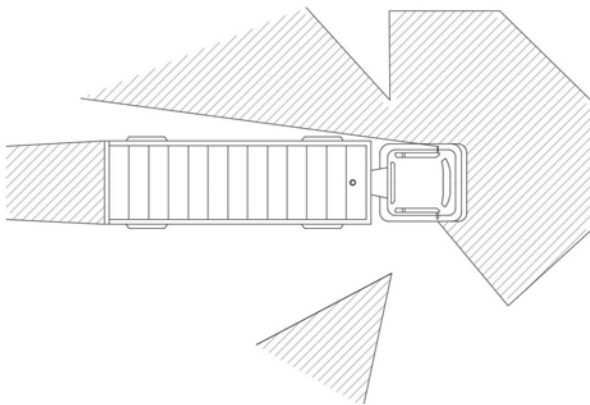
For intersections, be it a controlled (traffic lights), or uncontrolled (give way or stops signs), the same rules apply. Again, the safest and most efficient way for a group of riders to move through an intersection is in paired formation, taking up position in the traffic lane. Once through the intersection, the group may move into single file, depending on the road conditions and the competency of riders.

When taking your group on a multiple-lane road and intending to turn right at an intersection, always prepare and look very early. When safe to do so, start to move into the right-hand lane, well before the intersection, and take up position in pairs in the turning lane.

Some intersections have green cycle paint on the road, in the cycle lane and at the front of the intersection. This is known as a "stop box". If your entire group will fit in the stop box, (usually only 2-4 people), it is advisable to use it entering via the cycle lane. If, however, your group has too many riders to fit all at once, then either occupy the cycle lane, or space in the traffic lane, as a group.

Particular situations dictate whether you would use the cycle lane or occupy the traffic lane at an intersection. Examples are:

1. If a bus or heavy vehicle (e.g. truck) is anywhere in the line of traffic at the intersection, do not use the cycle lane or the stop box. Heavy vehicles have incredibly large blind-spots [pictured], and drivers may not see cyclists around their vehicle, especially when turning. In this situation, stay well back in the traffic lane behind the heavy vehicle and in paired formation. Stay back in this position even if there is plenty of space in the cycle lane or stop box.
2. If your group is quite small and the cycle lane is for single file riding, it is perfectly acceptable to use the cycle lane at intersections.
3. If your group is quite large, it is more efficient for the group, and will less likely be split up, if you claim the traffic lane, instead of using the cycle lane in single file.
4. Some cycle lanes on wide roads afford room for groups to ride through in paired formation. However, these are uncommon.



The shaded areas are approximate blind spots of a truck, depending on the truck.



The driver of the truck cannot see the person on the bike.



RURAL ROADS

Some rural roads may provide distinct challenges when sharing them with vehicles and other groups of people on bikes. Patience is key, as is proper route planning. Plot your ride to avoid roads with high traffic volumes. Generally, lower density roads are narrower and may have no shoulder or cycle lane. No matter what the type of road, where possible ride 1-1.5 metres out from the roadside to ensure maximum visibility.

Where your group is skilled enough, ride in paired formation as often as possible. If your group cannot ride side by side safely, single file is acceptable. However, be mindful of and courteous to other traffic on the road. Whether in single file or paired up, a long line of people on bikes will take a long time for a vehicle to pass.

If your group is large, assign them into smaller groups, leaving four to five minutes apart. This will create sufficient distance between the groups to facilitate vehicles to safely pass. Even when riding in single file, encourage people to ride close behind each other (not more than half a bike away from the person in front). If a group of six people are riding each with 50 metres between them, this creates a long obstacle for a vehicle to negotiate when passing. It may create a temptation for a driver to “hop” in between riders as they pass, which is dangerous, and places riders at risk.

Your group may be required to ride through a “blind” corner, or a “vertical blind” (where the road is straight but rises up into a crest so you cannot see if cars are coming towards you over the top). If a vehicle comes up behind you, stay in formation. It is important to hold the space you have on the road, whether in pairs or single file and 1-1.5 metres from the edge. This will effectively force the driver to wait until it is safe for them to pass. If you surrender your position on the road and allow the vehicle just to squeeze past, this puts you, them, and any oncoming vehicles in danger.

4.6 WHEN PLANS CHANGE

It is not uncommon where you may have a plan for ride, and then something unexpected happens, such as road works, or a person may turn up whose competency is well below that of others in the group. In situations such as this, it is helpful to have other leaders or more experienced riders to help re-plan a route or help look after the more inexperienced riders.

4.7 E-BIKES TIPS AND TRICKS

The following tips are helpful to know when people in your group are riding E-Bikes:

1. E-bike riders will likely ride up hills faster, so encourage people on conventional bikes to stay left on hills, whether on a shared path or the road. This allows for easy passing on the right for the faster riders.
2. Encourage E-bikers to start the ride with their power switched off. When they are confident and comfortable at low speeds, they would can then switch on in a low power mode.
3. Some E-bikes can take off quickly, so encourage riders to be in an easy gear when stopped, or change to an easy gear when coming to a stop. When moving off again, promote the use of the “pedal ready” position (pictured).
4. If an E-biker is starting behind someone on a conventional bike, suggest they allow plenty of space in front, as they will move off more quickly than a person on a conventional bike and may need to avoid them.
5. As E-bikes are heavier (and faster) than conventional bikes, they tend to take longer to come to a stop. Encourage people to allow more braking and stopping distance, especially coming into corners.





SECTION FIVE AFTER THE RIDE

5.1 DEBRIEFING

Successful led-rides typically have a coffee stop along the way or, at very least, at the end of the ride. This enables people to get to know each other and allows for greater social connection – the glue of all rides.

You may also use this stop, as a ride leader, to informally debrief with other riders about any situations that may have occurred on the ride. For example, if a complex road environment confused people, you can talk through possible strategies for how the group might handle the situation next time it occurs, and also get feedback on your leading, or about the group in general. Post-ride is the most appropriate time to discuss issues privately one-on-one with any disruptive riders.

The wrap up over coffee also allows riders to contribute to group decisions and to make sure you are creating an inclusive environment where riders feel they can offer their opinions openly. You can finish off by setting the scene for the next ride.

If you have multiple leaders amongst your group, you may want to arrange, once a month or so, to stay later with them for another coffee to discuss how the leadership of the group is going. This shared leadership and shared learning environment will help everyone, and also help the long-term sustainability of the group.

5.2 MANAGING GROUP GROWTH

As the social connection is the stimulus for the growth of most groups, they can expand exponentially fast. When people love riding with others, they will enthusiastically invite friends and family to join in. As groups increase in number, it is recommended those more experienced riders of the group train as Ride Leaders, to help share leadership.

Increasing the number of ride leaders allows the group to break up into smaller groups, when required, to accommodate varied abilities better, thus enhancing ride experience and increasing safety for riders. For example, one group in the Bay of Plenty regularly has 60-70 people turn up of varied abilities and fitness (and 170+ people on their mailing list). By having 30+ trained leaders, this allows them to offer multiple smaller groups for a variety of different rides and abilities (e.g. beginners, mainly pathway riders etc.). And although riding off in these different groups, everyone meets at the same place, and finishes at the same time at the same café. This allows all riders to be a part of the larger group and culture.





SECTION SIX

DEVELOPING YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS

6.1 REFLECTION

In addition to discussing your ride with fellow leaders or group participants, you can also spend some time reflecting on your own. This will help develop your leadership skills. One of the best ways is by writing down your thoughts and responses to the following questions:

1. What went well today?
2. What didn't and why?
3. What would you change for the next ride?

This active process, primarily by documenting it, helps people learn faster and remember what they've learned.

6.2 MENTORING

Cycling New Zealand Ride Leader mentors, to whom you have access, are available in most regions. If you wish to receive mentoring, please contact ride@cyclingnewzealand.nz

Mentoring can come in many forms, but the general philosophy is to have someone to bounce ideas off and help develop your leadership skills. Some Ride Leader's will have mentors accompany them on their rides and provide them with feedback afterwards. While others have mentors meet them for coffee and discuss challenges they are facing with their group. Ride leaders may also receive specific training, where needed, from their mentor around specific cycle skills they feel they lack confidence with.

6.3 CYCLE SKILLS INSTRUCTOR

Some Ride Leaders, who particularly enjoy imparting skills to their riders and helping people love cycling as much as they, have themselves gone on to become qualified Cycle Skills Instructors. The New Zealand Transport Agency offer Cycle Skills Instructor training, through their education system Bike Ready (www.bikeready.govt.nz). Once your training is completed, you will undergo an assessment and, if successful, gain a National Certificate in Recreation and Sport (through Skills Active www.skillsactive.org.nz). This qualification enables people to acquire paid work through cycle skills delivery providers that work in schools and with adults.





SECTION SEVEN

FURTHER RESOURCES

7.1 RIDE LEADER WEBSITE

The Ride leader website has full contact details and downloadable resources, such as this handbook, as well as links to other helpful resources. It is also the place to find where and when there is adult training scheduled, and what other ride leader workshops are coming up. If no adult training is listed, but members of your group would benefit from additional skills training, please contact Cycling New Zealand's Ride Leader coordinator by email ride@cyclingtonzealand.nz to find out what training opportunities are available and how to organise them. You can also visit www.rideleader.nz

7.2 CYCLING NEW ZEALAND YOUTUBE

The Cycling New Zealand Youtube channel has several useful videos from which you can learn tips and tricks, and even share to your group's Facebook page; post on your website, or include in your newsletter, if you have one:

www.youtube.com/channel/Uct2_C-OmRnR63ejCP6XiezA/playlists

7.3 CYCLING NEW ZEALAND FIND A RIDE

On the Cycling New Zealand website, you can find out about other rides led by qualified Ride Leaders by searching the "Find A Ride" directory.

www.cyclingnewzealand.nz/find

This directory allows you when travelling to another region, the ability to link in with that region's local rides and an opportunity to learn how other leaders lead their rides.

If you would like your ride listed on this directory, please email ride@cyclingnewzealand.nz

7.4 RIDE LEADER FACEBOOK PAGE

On the Ride Leader Facebook page, you can find out what is happening in other regions and connect with other leaders.

www.facebook.com/cnzrideleader

7.5 COUNCIL

We encourage you as a ride leader, to report any cycling infrastructure issues to your local Council. As you will be riding a great deal of the cycling infrastructure in your region often, you will be in a unique position to give your Council great feedback on what is working, what isn't and suggestions of what could be done if making any changes in future.



FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO RIDELEADER.NZ