

LCC Group Riding Best Practices

It's always more fun to ride a bike with others. When in a group, you have the advantage of working with a pack, people to chat with, stronger riders to push you, more experienced riders to teach you things and just someone to with whom to share the experience.

However, when riding in large or small groups there are some rules and techniques that become important for everyone's safety and enjoyment. In order to help new riders get started on group riding or remind veteran riders of good practices, here are 10 rules that will ensure you and your riding comrades will be safe and efficient on the road.

1. **Never cross the yellow line.** This seems obvious to most, but people do it more than you might think. Don't play chicken with oncoming traffic. You won't win.
2. **Always signal when turning.** This helps other riders and cars know what you are doing, keeping everyone safe.
3. **Stay off the sidewalks and always ride with traffic, never against it.** If we want motorists to respect our rights to be on the road, we too must respect the rules of the road. A good rule of thumb when navigating traffic, whether alone or in a group: if you wouldn't do it with your car, you probably shouldn't do it with your bike.
4. **Yell, "Car back!" when a car is approaching the group.**
5. **When you hear a rider yell, "Car back!", repeat it, and get out of the middle of the road.** Yes, we have a right to be on the road, and yes, we can ride two abreast between the yellow and white lines in New York State legally, but that doesn't mean we have to. Blocking traffic, even if you have the right to, just upsets motorists. When a car is attempting to pass, you should go to single file and ride either just inside the white line, or if there is a large, safe shoulder, move outside of the white line. This courtesy will keep you safe and show good will towards motorists.
6. **Never half-wheel the rider in front of you.** When drafting another rider, your front wheel should not go past the back of his or her back wheel. Breaking this rule is probably the leading cause of accidents in group rides.
7. **Hold a straight line.** This isn't always easy, but if you weave you will cause a wreck. If you're not good at holding a line, practice riding on the white line alone while focusing your attention 10-15 feet ahead of you, not on your front tire. This should give you the skills and the confidence to learn to hold your line in your next group ride.
8. **Keep gaps between riders closed.** Riding in a group is always faster and more efficient than riding alone, but if you allow big gaps to form between you and the rider ahead of you, you will then have to sprint to close them, which will cause the

riders behind you to do the same. This will create a rubber-band effect that can cause crashes or just cause other riders to not want to ride with you. If you are new to drafting, try to stay within two feet of the rider in front of you. If you are a more experienced rider you should be one foot to 6-inches off the back of the next wheel.

9. **Do not surge when it's your turn to pull.** If you are taking turns on front with a group, do not increase the speed when it's your turn. Oftentimes riders take the front feeling fresh and when they get there they push the pace, thinking that the rest of the group will be impressed with their strength. This never works out. Either, that rider is not as strong as he thinks and only wears himself out, or that rider drops others off the back who can't keep up and/or just weren't prepared for an unexpected acceleration. If the point of the ride is to be in a group, keep a consistent pace on front and keep the group together. In the long run everyone will be happier and the group will be more efficient.

10. **When riding with a group that is stronger and more experienced, ride near the front, not the back.** Many new riders join a group thinking that they will stay on the back and out of the way of the more experienced riders. However, riding off the back of a group is much harder than being in the middle or near the front. If you are the last rider and you are having trouble keeping up, you are going to yo-yo off the back until you get dropped. However, if you can place yourself in the middle or even the upper third of the group you will be able to stay with a group of faster riders.