



## Dacorum Triathlon Club – Group Ride Guidance

Cycling on the public roads has some inherent danger attached, but as a club we want to support and encourage people to ride safely and enjoyably, respecting their fellow riders and other road users.

By following a few basic “rules of etiquette”, we can achieve this, so please read, and if you are unsure about anything then please email [david@davidrichards.run](mailto:david@davidrichards.run) in advance of the rides or ask your ride leader before the ride sets off.

These rules are based on best practice issued to us by British Cycling, and on the cycling experience of our ride leaders.

**SAFETY** This is the single most important consideration for our club rides, and we ask you to take this very seriously:

It is essential that your bike is in a safe and roadworthy condition, with for example, working brakes. If you are unsure, ask the ride leader for advice. Many local bike shops also offer a bike-check – have a look at our website to see who our cycle partners are. Please look at the M-Check on our website which covers the key parts of your bike to be checked before you turn up for a group ride.

The appropriate lighting and high-visibility clothing should also be worn. If you are not sure about what clothing to wear, contact the ride leader who may be able offer some advice about the weather conditions and how this might impact on the ride and your comfort on the bike. It is essential that helmets are worn when riding with the club.

The club will have undertaken a risk assessment for each group ride and will have an emergency action plan. Should there be an incident while on a group ride, please support the ride leader and offer any help you can, whether it be making a phone call to seek help, warning other road users (often the most critical thing to do), or assisting with any injured riders.

**RESPECT** We ask everyone, when riding on a club ride to have respect for their fellow riders and other road-users:

Ride leaders (or more likely their sweepers) will help with mechanical issues, but we would ask all riders to be able to fix basic problems such as punctures. Always carry some spare inner tubes that are the correct size for your wheels, as the ride leaders will be unlikely to

have a full set of spares. Ideally you will be carrying all the kit and spares required to get you back up and running in the event of a puncture or mechanical issue. If you need any advice about this, please contact the ride leader.

Please always follow the highway-code, including stopping at red-lights and riding no more than two-abreast. Please respect ALL other road users including drivers, pedestrians, runners, dog- walkers and horse-riders. Where appropriate and safe to do so, allow drivers to get past you on narrow roads – this may mean moving to single file to allow vehicles to pass safely.

When approaching a horse please be incredibly careful as cyclists may alarm horses. Slow your speed. Give horses as much space as possible. The lead rider should try and make the horse riders aware that there is a group of cyclists on-coming.

Please get to the rides on time, or ideally a few minutes early to allow you to unload your bike, undertake pre-ride checks, discuss route options with the ride leaders and start to warm up and stretch. We will have a short briefing before each ride and then look to get going. If you are late, we may go without you.

**FUN** Let us not forget that we do this because we love cycling, so let us do it with a smile on our faces. Do not take it too seriously. Chat to your fellow riders. A cheery “hello” to a passing cyclist helps spread the fun to everyone else.

## **GENERAL GROUP RIDING ETIQUETTE FOR BEGINNERS**

Group Selection – depending on the number of riders, we may split up into different groups. Based on average speeds per hour, these are likely to be slow (12-14 mph), medium (14-16 mph) or fast (above 16 mph). If you are not sure which group you should go in, speak to the ride leader a couple of days before the ride and they will be able to help you chose. If there are not enough riders to split into multiple groups, we will ride as one group and our pace will be as fast as the slowest rider. As a rule, it will be worth starting with a slower group than a faster one. If you are not used to riding in a group, then you might be surprised how much benefit you get from it (up to 20%). The lead rider will take more wind resistance and the following rider’s benefit – this is called drafting. During group rides different riders usually take it in turns to be the lead rider.

Routes – we will have planned routes and undertaken risk assessments. Before the ride sets off, the ride leader will inform the group about distance, elevation, things to look out for, café stops, toilets, etc.

We try to plan for all abilities and for every eventuality but will are only human and may get things wrong. Please feedback (politely) if we need to change something – what want our rides to be fun and inclusive and if you do not tell us, we won’t know what to change.

Ride Leader – this is the club member nominated to lead the group ride. The ride leader will not necessarily have to ride at the front but will be familiar with the route and have some cycling experience. Please respect the leader's decision, if for example they decide to shorten a route due to weather/light/safety concerns.

Depending on number, we may also have a "sweeper" who will ride at the back of the group and make sure riders do not become detached from the main group.

Ride two-abreast when it is safe to do so – this way the group is a compact unit which can ride efficiently, but easily move to single-file when needed to (for example to get past an oncoming car when the road is narrow, or to allow a car to pass your cycling group safely).

On the roads, NEVER go three or more abreast, irrespective of how good the conversation is! Be warned – often drivers will be irritable if cycling groups do not allow them to pass or are inconsiderate. If you can, bunch up into groups of riders that are easy to pass (e.g. by leaving a gap between you and a group of riders slightly ahead of you) and try and make sure that cars can pass your group safely.

Communication is key to a safe group ride. Roads are full of traffic, rocks, twigs, signs, potholes, parked cars, animals, pedestrians, etc. and visibility is limited for the cyclist in a pack. It is important to communicate to the riders in the group of potential hazards by shouting and pointing out hazards.

Hand-Signals: Please see our links on the website to videos about basic signals.

It is not imperative that all the cyclists in the group point out the same hazards or signals. If a few are then this is normally sufficient (and the leading two always should). If you are a beginner or un-steady, then it is far safer for the group to keep both hands on the handlebars than it is to point things out.

The purpose of these signals is that the riders can continue to ride at a steady pace and can ride round the smaller obstacles without constantly having to brake (and sudden braking causes most incidents).

- The thing you are most likely to see is where riders point down in the direction of an oncoming rock/pothole. If the two riders both point to the ground between them, this signifies there is small obstacle (such as a pothole) that they are going to ride one either side of.
- If the rider on the left points to their left, it means there is something to their left that they might have to ride slightly to the right of to pass – and if you are behind them then you will have to take the same line if you also want to avoid it! Similarly, the rider on the right might indicate a similar obstacle to their right.
- These signals allow the group to ride at a constant pace.
- You will also see a ride pointing or waving behind their lower back. If they are pointing right (the most common) then it indicates that the whole group will have to move to the right to overtake a large obstacle such as a parked car.
- Shouts – Warnings you are likely to hear include:

- Car Back: there is a car approaching from the rear of the group ride.
- Car Up: there is a car approaching from the front of the group ride.
- Car right or left car is approaching on the left or right of the group ride.
- Rock or Hole: there is a hazard in the road.
- Walker/runner up: there is a pedestrian on the road ahead.
- Biker up: there is a slower cyclist ahead that we are likely to overtake.
- Clear: perhaps at a junction this is called when there is nothing coming, and you know you can pedal through
- Slow – potential hazard ahead, control speed (but do not brake sharply to a standstill)
- Stop – we are going to have to stop – there is a hazard we cannot ride round.
- Line-out or single-file – asking that we move (whilst keeping same speed) to single-file to for example let a vehicle past.

To be safe it is important to ride smooth. Do not overreact, avoid hard braking, be alert as to what is going on up the road in the front of the pack, and anticipate what traffic will do. Inexperienced riders who panic and touch a wheel may crash or cause a crash. You can avoid problems by practicing these simple rules:

- Always stay alert.
- Hold your line.
- Do not overlap wheels.
- Do not look back!
- Relax!
- Focus on the rider(s) ahead.
- Beware of potholes in the road.
- Do not brake unless necessary.

All of this may sound complicated at first, but you will soon get into it. It gives a whole new dimension to cycling as it makes it a team event – you must communicate, support and trust each other, and everyone's safety is in each other's hands. But you will find it one of the most enjoyable elements to riding in a club.

Enjoy!