

Autobus | Cycling Club Ride Guide.

Group riding by definition is just that, riding with a group. It requires that all ride participants understand what is expected and work together to achieve group ride harmony. You could say that group riding is all about finesse. It is not the strongest, nor the youngest, nor the fastest cyclist that succeeds. It is the one who navigates the group safely with a delicate foot and keen sense of his/her surroundings. We at the Autobus | Cycling Club (ACC) would like to define how we ride so everyone is on the same page. In addition to this piece, we have many ride resources for you to review posted [here](#). To view our Risk Management Plan, click [here](#).

First some prerequisites:

1. As per OCA rules all participants must be a ACC club member or a declared guest of an OCA/UCI affiliated club.
2. You are required to wear the Autobus | Cycling Club branded club kit. Safety and insurance reasons: Wearing the kit helps ride leaders and other cyclists to identify you out on the road, rest stops, and in the parking lot at the start of the ride. This minimizes the risk of getting left behind, risk of non-members joining in and potentially causing an accident due to not being familiar with our ride policy and etiquette.
3. You need a road bike in good working order.
4. Be self-sufficient. - flat repairs, water, food etc. Bring a charged cell phone, ID, emergency information and the proper clothing for the day.
5. You need to have a minimal level of fitness for the group ride you are choosing. You can review each ride's fitness requirement [here](#).
6. You need to have a basic understanding of group riding skills. If you don't, we have ample resources on our [website](#), and ride leaders are happy to discuss/demonstrate during the season, just ask.
7. You need to be familiar with and willing to abide by our ride guidelines, be courteous and respectful of other cyclists and road users.
8. You need to be aware and familiar with the route for the group ride you choose and opt-in on [STRAVA](#) to let the ride leader know that you are attending.
9. If the Ride Leader determines that a rider is not prepared for a ride, as per above, the ride leader has the discretion to refuse to allow participation in that day's ride.
10. Review our [STRAVA](#) page as your first source of information for group rides.

RIDE CANCELLATION POLICY

We will cancel rides for one of two reasons:

1. WEATHER RELATED:

Ride cancellations due to weather will be communicated up to 1 hr before the start of the ride either via email or STRAVA. It is your responsibility to check. Please be aware that club rides will be cancelled due to weather if:

- *It is raining at the start of the ride.*
- *There is a forecast of 70% POP or more of rain or lightening or extremely high winds (50kph+) on the day of the ride. Remember we try our best to keep you safe and that we are only as good as the forecasts.*
- *Temperature with windchill up to 1 hr after start of the ride is below 5C – this is at the ride leader's discretion.*

2. Member Turnout RELATED:

If a ride has 0 members opted in on STRAVA by 5pm the night before, that ride will be cancelled at 5pm the night before. Ride leaders are volunteers and their commitment to help with our club's programming should be met with active and positive participation by the club's members.

If a ride has less than 5 riders total including the ride leader, it will be at the ride leader's discretion to disband the ride at the start and join other groups on the day.

NOTE ON GROUP STRUCTURE AND SIZES

1. Our Groups meet Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. Check [STRAVA](#) for start times and the route of the day.
2. Notwithstanding how many riders show up, no group shall be larger than 16 riders, ideally we try to have groups of 8-10 and you may be asked to shuffle into a different group or sub-group.
3. Groups are defined by group riding skill and fitness. There are 5 groups to choose from. You can get full details on our [website](#). Please be aware that fitness does not trump skill/finesse. As you move up through groups the expectation is that you have accumulated adequate group riding skills/experience along with cycling fitness. If either requires improvement, you may be asked by the ride leader to try a different group next time.
4. All groups are led by a designated club Ride Leader. These volunteers know the route, carry a cell phone and have been instructed on how we ride. Most importantly the Ride Leader explains all this information to the group before they depart. Repetition of our ride practices week after week is key to members absorbing the information but also necessary to identify new riders and inform them of our ride practices. Nothing ruins a group ride quicker than a new rider not knowing the rotation and being out of sync. It's all about everyone being on the same page.

HOW WE RIDE

The Basic Ride Formation: **"Tight and to the Right"**

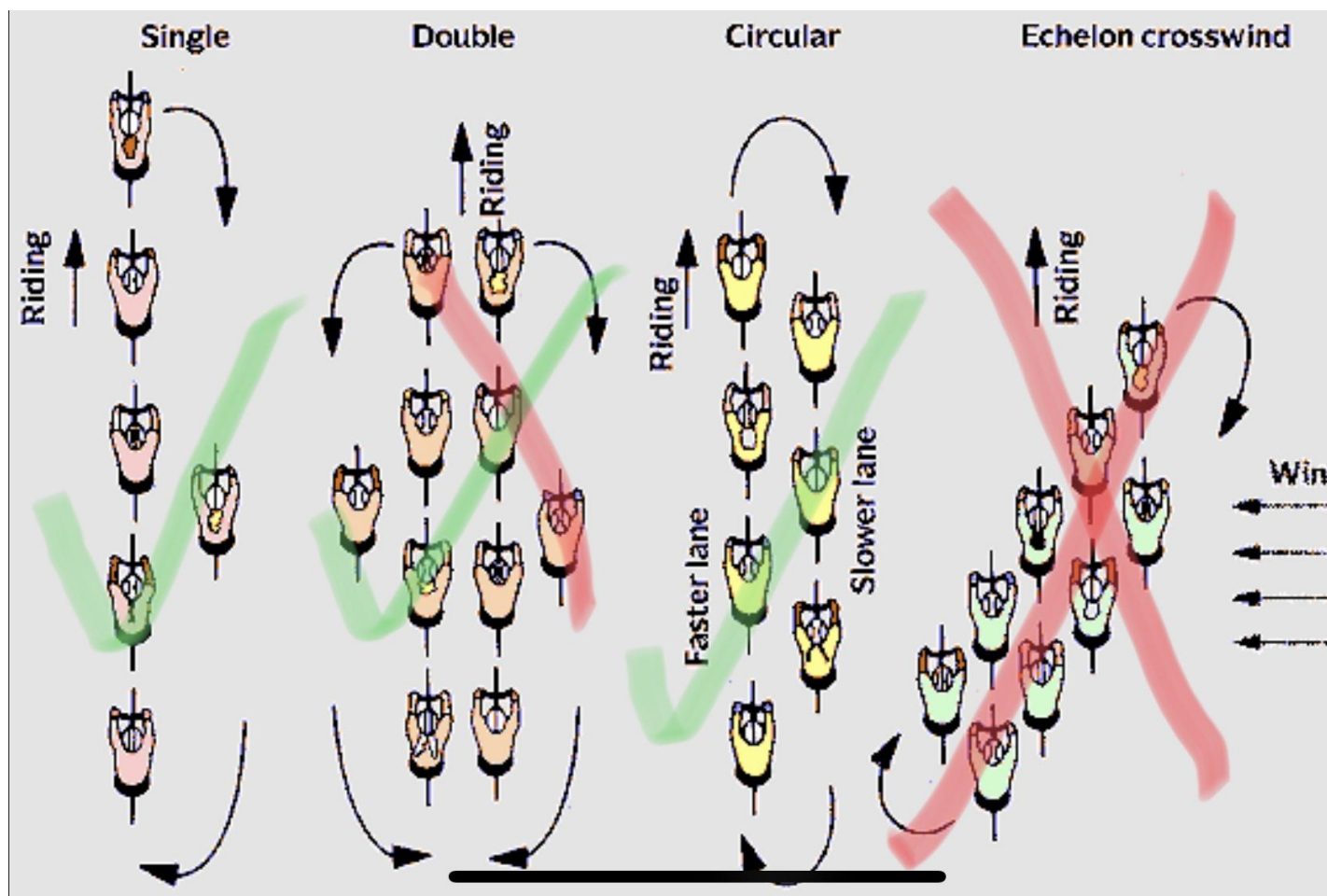
Our goal as a disciplined and well organized club is to share the enjoyment of the road with our club members as well as the general public. We are well aware that we have to share the road with motorized vehicles. In order to protect ourselves we travel 2x2 shoulder to shoulder in a double paceline. This is an internationally recognized cycling formation used by professionals and amateurs around the world. The main objective of the double paceline is to reduce the length of the line of cyclists in order to allow vehicles to pass with greater ease and increased safety. It encourages drivers to make full lane changes when passing which provides a safer gap between the passing vehicle and the cyclists.. ***Our goal is to accommodate the approaching driver with a clear view forward so that they make a clean and safe pass as soon as possible.***

In order for us to accomplish this, we as a club, are required to ride in a formation that is 'tight' and well disciplined. The group's primary goal is to maintain the cohesion of this formation. It is the individual discipline of each rider to hold their position in a smooth predictable manner and not create gaps or overlaps which jeopardize the ride quality.

HOW WE ROTATE

We use only 2 methods of rotation - rotate and hold, or continuous rotation. We only rotate clockwise and rarely* through a "social turn" where two leading cyclists peel away from the group. This ensures that we are never more than 2 abreast.

It is at the ride leader's discretion which method is used and when. *group will only be ride leader approved for a social turn in situations where we are on extremely quiet rural roads.



ROTATE AND HOLD

This is our standard rotation used while warming up or just cruising along. The two leading cyclists are breaking the wind and setting the pace. The lead cyclist on the right, after a reasonable period of time asks the cyclist on their left to "Cover Me". That means the leading left cyclist will gently ride forward and fade right to shelter the right side of the group once the rider who requested a "cover me" indicates that wheels are clear by saying "clear". This lets the rotating rider know that his or her rear wheel will not clip the front wheel of the rider that is on the inside right. In turn the left side of the group will gently advance forward to the front of the group beside the right line. Those two riders will now lead the group for whatever time they feel comfortable with, again it's negotiable. All passes are to be done smoothly and gently and make sure that your rear wheel is clear before you fade right. The inside rider will state "clear" once that is the case. Coincidentally, the rider at the back of the group that is moving from the inside to the outside lane must say "last" to the rider on his/her right once the lane change has occurred.

A very important point to rotating a group with finesse : While you are in front of the group, the group is at your mercy. Anything you do, good or bad, will affect the entire group. If your pass is smooth and steady, then the group will remain smooth and steady. If you accelerate aggressively it will start to shatter the group and create gaps and confusion. If you half-wheel the lead rider beside you it will offset the whole group or create gaps. We all have a responsibility to the riders behind us to move in a smooth and predictable way and watch the road surface ahead. Also, lane jumping is not allowed unless authorized by a designated ride leader for that particular ride. Only lane changes that are to occur are at the very front or rear of the group.

CONTINUOUSLY ROTATING

This rotation is different from the Rotate and Hold in one fundamental way: The act of rotating is constant. There are no static moments. When the left lead rider moves smoothly and gradually forward and clears the right line of riders, he/she then gently

fades to the right. The transitioning lead rider must be careful not to touch wheels with the passed rider's by checking under their arm for the rider's wheel as well listening for the "clear" from the rider that is being passed. The inside right rider must be calling out 'clear' when the passing cyclist is safely ahead. As soon as that first rotation is complete the next one begins as if all the cyclists in the group are part of the same chain. In the Rotating Paceline all the cyclists should be moving through the rotation at the same speed.

Here are some important points to remember when executing the Rotating Paceline properly:

1. Do not attack or surge off the front when it is your turn to pull. You are supposed to go slightly faster than the receding line. Surging or attacking will cause gaps and jerk the speed of the line around. Pull smoothly and gently to the front and be there to shelter the riders behind you, not gap them.
2. Do not leave gaps within the line when you are in the back of the rotation. All riders need to focus on maintaining the same gaps all the way around the rotation.
3. Riders wishing to miss a rotation can do so by sitting a bikes length back of the group and allowing the group to rotate through. It's best to call out to the rider ahead that you are not pulling through to avoid their hesitation.
4. It's also helpful for the last rider on the advancing side to call out to the last rider to remind the last receding rider that they need to transition next. Gaps often happen when the last rider misses the transition.
5. The rotation can go from left to right or vice versa. Experienced cyclists will tailor the rotation so that the advancing line is sheltered from a crosswind. **We generally opt for clockwise rotation because the HTA specifies passing on the left.**
6. A useful technique for keeping the lane changes and rotations smooth is to either modulate cadence by 5-10rpm or to shift one gear up/down. So when transitioning out to the left side go 1 gear harder or spin 5-10 rpm faster. When returning to the right lane, go one gear easier or slow down your cadence by 5-10 rpm. No sudden breaking, no surging.

SINGLE FILE PACELINE

We make every effort to ride on the quietest roads at the quietest times. In the event that for some unusual reason we are forced to travel on an excessively busy road we will ride single file to get past the congested section. We also will ride challenging descents single file, more on that later. Otherwise all our group rides are two abreast.

ECHELONS

This is a formation where the cyclists are spread diagonally across the road to gain shelter from a crosswind. This formation is unacceptable for group riding in our community. It completely blocks the lane and is counter to our "Tight and to the Right" strategy where the driver is to be given a view up the left side of the lane.

HOT SPOTS

Every group ride has to have a degree of compromise. One person's hammerfest is another person's recovery ride. We try to accommodate everyone's wishes by offering as many different groups as possible. We also offer different opportunities along the route for some hard efforts. Almost all our routes involve sections where the option exists for the riders to break from the group and go as fast as they wish. We call these the Hot Spots. All long climbs are automatically Hot Spots and as such the groups are permitted to break formation and regroup at the pre-designated spots at the top. We do ask you to stay to the right and not scatter across the hill when the group breaks apart. Slower riders stay right and make room for the faster riders to get by without forcing them too far out. We still want to stay 'Tight and to the Right'.

We also offer Hot Spots on flatter terrain Your Ride Leader should inform you of the Hot Spot locations before and during each ride. There are three common denominators to a Hot Spot:

1. A very quiet section of road
2. No traffic lights or stop signs
3. A safe regrouping location at the end of the section

Some rules about Hot Spots:

1. Going hard is optional, not compulsory. Those that choose to cruise can rest assure that the group will wait for them at the regrouping point which is often a coffee stop.
2. All riders must wait at the regrouping spot. Under no circumstances can anybody soft pedal down the road. This causes confusion for the late arrivers. They think the group is leaving them behind. If you feel the need to keep moving come back toward the late arrivers and then ride back with them.

3. Never regroup in a manner that would obstruct traffic in any way. All of our regrouping spots offer plenty of space to pull over safely. No excuses for blocking traffic.

DESCENDING

There aren't many fast descents in GTA, so majority of descending is done maintaining a 2x2 shoulder to shoulder formation. It is the responsibility of all group members to control their speed using brakes and gearing to maintain their position inside the 2x2 peloton. Bombing of descents is not tolerated, nor is passing during those structured descents. We want a safe and predictable group ride. Riders are to maintain their overall position in the group, and work with the rider next to them to stay together by modulating their speed, and opening a reasonable gap between them and the pair in front of them.

However, there are instances where speeds will reach north of 60km/h. On those descents we recommend the group take the following actions:

1. The group should move into a single file formation.
2. Riders should move 1 to 2 m from the right edge of the road. It is not safe to ride close to the edge of the road at high speeds due to wind gusts.
3. Riders should open up gaps of at least 2 m plus between each rider front to back.
4. All passing if authorized must happen on the left. Never pass on the right.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is absolutely critical to the success of all group rides. It starts right from the beginning even before the group leaves:

- The rider needs to communicate with their group or Ride Leader to determine which group and pace of ride they want.
- On the road riders need to communicate the ride formation, rotation and pace.
- Riders at the front need to navigate road hazards and traffic situations.
- Riders at the back need to call out cars approaching from the back.

The bottom line is that the quality and safety of the ride is dependent on frequent and clear communications between all the riders. Never assume everyone in the group knows a car is approaching or that the group is turning. Everything that can affect the group needs to be called out.

One final but important point regarding communication. We have Ride Leaders who are there to try to maintain the quality of the ride but the best way to keep us all at our best is when we all communicate best ride practices. So if you see someone riding inappropriately ie overlapping wheels, surging off the front we all should say something. Be polite but make it known that that was not proper. We all own these rides and if someone does something dangerous it's in everyone's best interest to correct it. So don't let bad habits go unaddressed. Say something before it's too late. We all have a responsibility to the riders around us. When we are at the front we are responsible to the riders behind to provide a smooth and steady pull and to point out hazards. When we are at the back we are responsible to call out cars coming from the back and to maintain the integrity of the group by not allowing gaps. So don't wait for the Ride Leader to say something, we all own the ride equally.

EMERGENCY STOPS

When being approached by an emergency vehicle (fire truck, ambulance, or police) with its lights and siren activated, we are required under the HTA to pull over our group and stop. It doesn't matter if the emergency vehicle is approaching from the front or behind.

Act fast, but act safely and in control: when a siren is heard or lights are seen, immediately shout out to your group to pull over and stop. A siren or lights means stop now but not a panic stop, a controlled and safe stop.

How to stop a group: let's presume your group is riding 2 abreast.

1. The Ride Leader calls out to the group
 - "EMERGENCY STOP, GROUP STOPPING NOW"
 - "RIGHT LINE STOP FIRST"
 - "LEFT LINE PASS AND STOP"
2. The right line applies their brakes to reduce the speed in a controlled manner, eventually pulling over to a complete stop. Once stopped, cyclists must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersections.

3. The left line completely passes the right line and once safely clear, slows in a controlled manner. Once stopped, cyclists must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersections.

This can all happen within seconds. There is no need for panic. What is essential is that the decision to perform an “emergency stop” be made quickly, loudly and clearly so that the group has time to perform the stop safely.

SOME RANDOM , BUT IMPORTANT TIPS

1. Ride smooth and steady all the time. No sudden or abrupt movements or over reactions to potholes etc.
2. Don't be that person who surges when it's their turn to pull or leaves gaps in the rotation and finally never ever overlap.
3. When you are at the front of the group on a short descents pedal to keep the pace up. Remember there are riders drafting behind you who will have to brake if you don't keep the pace up.
4. To keep a group together on rolling terrain use a 'Rotate and Hold' and then as a group, climb slightly easier but descend harder. The group speed will be more consistent and the group will more likely remain intact.
5. When picking your group be realistic. It's better to be comfortable in your group then maxed out all the time.
6. Group rides are not races. We are there to support each other by taking turns in the wind. Only in Hot Spots is it ok to try to drop your friends.
7. When you see someone committing a ride foul politely say something. We are all responsible for the quality of our rides.
8. If you get a flat give a loud shout out right away or there is a good chance the pack will ride away without even noticing you. If the group knows they will stop and help you fix it quickly.
9. Do not yell obscenities to motorists or get into arguments with the police. It's never productive and will lead to more bad blood and possible retribution. We ask that cyclists not engage in any kind of confrontation with drivers or police officers. This includes hand gestures involving the center digit. We are working hard to improve the reputation of the ACC and all cyclists in general. If words have to be exchanged let the Group Ride Leader do the talking. (Feel free to video the exchange if you feel the individual is dangerous.) It's important to understand that when you ride with the club and when you wear our club jersey you become an **Ambassador** for both the club and all cyclists in general. Let's not do anything to fuel the flames of discontent. Nothing meaningful gets resolved on the road.

Keep Safe, have fun and thanks for riding with the Autobus | Cycling Club

COVID19 PROTOCOL (supercedes all rules/guidelines above):

Here is our plan:

Small groups of up to 10 individuals, maybe even fewer. (ie. 14 opt-in, we run two groups of 7)

Before each ride, we will clearly communicate and remind riders of social distancing protocols as per attached OCA guidelines.

Ride leaders will carry a mandatory PPE Kit: mask, gloves, and hand sanitizer.

Members are not expected to have a PPE kit: mask, hand sanitizer, gloves. However, if you think about it logically, those 3 items are light and do not take up much space. Gloves are great to keep your hands clean when changing a flat, mask you actually need now to go into any public indoor space (buying Gatorade), hand sanitizer is also great as you grab door handles, etc.

Rides will be posted shortly with additional information for your perusal.

In order to ride you will need to execute the following steps:

1. Read the OCA guideline linked above.
2. Get OCA insurance <https://www.ontariocycling.org/about-ontario-cycling/insurance/>
3. Send the PDF confirmation to avolek@jraautobus.ca
4. Review the ride that's posted on strava and opt-in to let us know you're coming.

What you should know:

1. We will do our best to accommodate more than 10 cyclists by adding extra groups as needed.
2. You signing up on strava helps us plan #1, so please opt-in if you're going to join.
3. If we don't have your waiver on-file you won't be allowed to ride.