

THE ARCC GUIDE TO FRICTION-FREE RIDING

... reducing friction between riders (and other road users).

We aren't an army camp, so please view these notes as requests, rather than instructions. And they certainly aren't perfect, so let us have any suggestions for improvement.

Please get the bike in good nick before you ride. Check you are carrying two spare tubes, a chain tool and spare links. Give the bike a quick MOT, and look for flints and tyre cuts. Chain and tyre wear varies of course, but if you're doing 100 miles a week buy yourself a new chain for your birthday, and tyres every six months. And if you're not a brilliant bike mechanic, have your velo serviced annually.

1. Ride in a group. Why?
 - Riding in a group saves energy. A group can travel faster and further with less fatigue than an individual cyclist.
 - A large group is much more visible than a single rider.
 - A group promotes team building, friendship, and more enjoyment for all.
2. Ride smoothly. Don't brake or swerve sharply.
3. Communicate within your group. Let people know your intentions. If you need to stop, shout 'Stopping'. Don't stop on the inside of a bend!
4. Avoid overtaking on the inside. If you want to fill a gap on someone's left, give a warning.
5. Don't ride more than two abreast except when overtaking. Don't look like a flock of sheep.
6. Ride in line with the rider in front. Don't overlap wheels - you'll be the one to fall off!
7. In heavy traffic, split into smaller groups with gaps of about 50m to allow cars to pass.
8. Front riders are the eyes of the group, and should point out hazards such as potholes and indicate when pulling out e.g. for parked cars. These signals should be repeated down the group.
9. Shout warnings for gravel, ice etc.
10. Horses. Front riders should give a clear call of 'cyclists!' from 50m back.
11. Unless the road is wide, change to single file when cars are passing.
12. When changing from pairs to single file, the inside rider should move forward. The outside rider should look left and indicate before moving in.
13. Rear riders should warn of overtaking vehicles - 'Car up!' Thank the car driver for their patience.

14. The tail end should keep an eye open for dropped riders, and get a message up to the front.
15. ... and generally try to be pleasant to other cyclists. Well, most of them anyway.

Bad weather - a cautionary note. Suppose the weather forecast looks iffy: freezing overnight, but may warm up a bit Sunday morning. The ride you planned to join is still there on the website. So it must be safe to ride, yes? Not necessarily so! The ride leader is no better at forecasting than you are. You must make your own decision. If the leader turns up and sets out, it just means he's prepared to risk it. Of course he may bounce better than you. The writer's view is that at temperatures less than 3C there can still be ice in frost hollows, and I won't ride till later. But that's just me - I bounce badly.

Leaders' responsibilities. (Everyone read please.)

Every sizeable ride needs a leader with the patience of Buddha, the wisdom of Solomon, the leadership of Churchill and the fitness of Eddie Merckx. Unfortunately these are in short supply.

1. Bad weather. Check the forecast as late as possible. Ask yourself if you would feel guilty if someone injured themselves because of the conditions. If so, call it off, or don't show up. They'll get the message.
2. OK, the ride is on. Take a map if you don't know the area well. Better still, make a list of villages that you will pass, and memorise them three at a time.
3. Give out your mobile number. Switch it on!
4. Before the start, look for new members in your ride and confirm it's the one they want. Check (diplomatically!) that they are up to it.
5. Count your riders as you leave, again when dropped riders are back on, and particularly after the café stop. You don't want to leave someone in the toilet!
6. When you get going, please remember that leading is not an opportunity to show how fit you are. Pick a pace that most of your ride can live with!
7. On the ride, you will need to play 'sheepdog' moving up and down the group, especially to check the back if you don't have someone who knows the route acting as back marker. If you are passed on a hill, ask them to wait at the first safe place after the top.
8. Give people directions clearly and *well before* turning, stopping etc.
9. If unsure of the route, stop *before* the junction to check.

10. If stopping, shout 'stopping' and choose a place away from bends and junctions. Don't let the group stop on the inside of a bend. If possible get the bikes off the road.
11. If dropped riders aren't too far back, go slowly until they are back on.
12. Call for single file when the road is narrow or traffic heavy.
13. Remember, people want someone to be in charge. Assert yourself!

Sam Eakin 11-May-09