

Advice for new riders

Introduction

It can be very daunting coming out for the first time with a group of cyclists. You are more than likely going to experience some of the following thoughts:

- How many people will be there?
- Will I be welcome?
- How fast are they going to go and do they stop for drinks/food?
- How far will they go?
- Will there be any hills? Do they stop to regroup?
- Will they wait for me if I'm tired – will I be a burden?
- Will I be able to bail out halfway through?
- What do I need to bring?
- What if I get a puncture – will they help me replace my tube? Will they expect me to be able to do all my own repairs?

If you worry about any of these, you won't be alone. This advice has been compiled to help allay your fears and also to give advice about how we ride and what you need to know.

Answering your fears

How many people will be there?

The number of riders out on a ride varies. It can be between about 4 and about 24, but the average is probably about 10-15.

Will I be welcome?

New riders are always welcome. The cycling community are always very happy to have new riders and they take care of one another.

How fast are they going to go and do they stop for drinks/food?

We ride an average of about 10mph. We are much slower up hills and generally faster down hills and on the flat. So it averages out at about 10mph. There is always a café stop on a short ride, and usually two or three on a club ride. The Saturday 2 hour ride may have one, depending on the leader. The Thursday evening rides end up in a pub.

How far will they go?

Thursday evening rides are normally between 15 and 20 miles.

Sunday rides vary in length – short rides are 20-30 miles, club rides are about 50 miles, long rides are typically 70 miles but can be anything up to about 100 miles. Even on a 20 mile ride there will be a café stop. We like to think CTC stands for “café to café”. On club rides and long rides there are more café stops. Don’t be fooled into thinking all the riders you meet on your first ride will be capable of or want to do long rides – different people come to different rides – some folk would never come on a long ride.

Will there be any hills?

It’s Calderdale, there will be hills. We do regroup though at the top of each climb and rides which are particularly hilly will be billed as such so you know what to expect! You will not be berated for getting off to walk – some folk regularly do this.

Always remember, what goes up must come down – there are rewarding views and a rest on the descent of most hills!

Will they wait for me if I’m tired – will I be a burden?

You will never be considered a burden. There will always be backmarkers on rides; it is their job to make sure the group stays together. If we have to wait at a top of a hill because you’re tired and need to walk, we’ll all be glad of the rest and the chat. The group will support anyone struggling and just be glad that you are giving it a go. We’ve all been there.

Will I be able to bail out halfway through?

If you are really struggling and want to abandon the ride one of the group will offer to cycle you home or to somewhere where someone can pick you up.

What do I need to bring?

We almost always have a café stop so it is advisable to bring money for drink, cakes etc. You should also have with you at least one full water bottle, some emergency

food if you think you'll need it (most of us do), lights if it is expected to be dark, a spare tube, tyre levers, a pump and hex keys to adjust your seat and or brakes etc. Basically a small, basic tool kit. Also bring medicines if you need them – and if you do – make sure the leader is aware of any medical conditions.

You also need to be wearing suitable clothing and bring a waterproof jacket if it might rain.

It is a good idea to bring your mobile phone and have the ride leader's number. They will ask you for your number and your ICE (in case of emergency) number.

What if I get a puncture – will they help me replace my tube? Will they expect me to be able to do all my own repairs?

There are some very experienced riders in the group – some with a lot of mechanical knowledge. When punctures happen we all wait, and typically one or two other riders will help you deal with your replacement. Everyone wants to pass on their tips and a lot of folk enjoy helping with repairs and passing on their knowledge!

Ride Behaviour

It is important to pay attention to briefing at the start of the ride. The leader will outline the ride and any hazards here and let you know who is back-marking. Some leaders prefer to assign a front-marker too – a leader may not always lead from the front. You should then aim to stay behind the leader or front-marker where applicable, and in front of the backmarker, and the group stays together apart from on hills where they will regroup at the top.

You then need to maintain road discipline - if you have a basic grasp of the Highway Code, you will be fine!

We tend not to ride more than two abreast, and on busy stretches of road we will go single file.

There are some strange things you may notice when riding in a group for the first time. Left and right turn hand signals will be familiar to you, however you may not be aware of certain other signalling conventions. Signals are intended to be helpful but you should always take responsibility for your own actions on the road. The most common are outlined below:

- **Left or right arm waving up and down but staying roughly at hip level** means slowing down to stop. It should be accompanied by a shout of "stopping".

- **Pointing or waving to something on the floor** means there is an obstacle – for example a pot hole, or glass
- **Putting your left arm behind your back** means you are pulling out to get past something on your left– for example, a parked car – note that some people prefer to shout “out”
- **Putting your right arm behind your back** means you are pulling in to get out of the way of something on your right like a pedestrian on a towpath or a traffic cone.
- **Shouting “car up”** means there is a car behind
- **Shouting “car down”** means there is a car ahead (think up-your-bum, down-your-neck to remember which is up and which is down)! Some folks will say car ahead or car behind
- **Shouting “clear”** when you cross a junction that you can see to be clear, or shouting that it is not safe if there is a car approaching
- **Shouting "outside" or "on your right"** is a warning to a rider that you're overtaking them

It is up to you whether you adopt these things, it can be useful when riding close together and you will find that many riders follow this code. Don't fear though – we are not a chain gang – we don't ride wheel to wheel!