

Cyclists need to possess basic bike-handling skills and safety knowledge to keep themselves and others around them safe, especially while participating in group cycling activities or charity rides. The following list of safety rules and tips is important for everyone to review and practice.

Before the Ride

- **Identification:** Please pack and always carry the following identification -
 - Emergency contact information
 - Insurance card
 - Any important health information
- **ABC Quick Check:**
 - **A is for Air.** Check your wheels for worn tires, loose spokes, warped rims and tires for proper inflation. Check your handlebar for looseness at the headset and stem.
 - **B is for Brakes.** Check brakes for function, cable tightness, worn pads, frayed cables, and alignment of the pads with the rims.
 - **C is for Cranks, Chain & Cassette.** Check your pedals and cranks for tightness. Check for chain looseness and bad links; clean and lubricate with bicycle chain lube.
 - **Quick is for Quick Releases.** Check to ensure that the wheels are clamped securely in the dropouts before each ride. Check the derailleur for worn cogs and needed adjustments. Check that your gears change smoothly.
 - **Check!** Check your helmet for cracks and make sure it fits properly. Check your shoes for tight cleats, and straps and buckles in good repair. Make sure your bicycle saddle is the right height and the bolt is tight.

All cyclists are responsible for keeping their riding equipment in good working order, so it's essential to check your equipment before every ride. "ABC Quick Check" is a brief overall bicycle safety checklist.





Cycling Safety

Erase the Trace

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Rules of the Road

- **Helmets must be worn at all times during the ride. No Exceptions!**
- **Cycling Gear:** Please ensure that you have appropriate clothing and shoes for your ride.
- **No Distractions While Riding:** Headphones, cell phones, radios and similar radio devices are not permitted to be used while riding. Do not carry any item that requires the use of one hand to be off of the handlebars.
- **Bicycle Laws:** All states consider cyclists vehicle operators and give them the same rights and duties as other drivers. **Know and obey all traffic laws.**
- **Stay Right:** Ride in the right portion of the rightmost lane in the direction you are traveling and leave at least four feet between your handlebars and parked cars or other hazards such as other users. You may move left when passing slower vehicles or preparing for a left turn.
- **Obey All Traffic Signs and Signals:** Avoid “following the leader” through traffic signs and signals; you are required to obey all traffic signs and signals, including stopping at red lights and stop signs.
- **Two at a Time:** Ride no more than two abreast and do not impede traffic.
- **Signal and Communicate:** Look and signal before you move. Always scan behind you before changing lanes or making turns. A continuous arm signal is required prior to a turn or lane change (unless the arm is needed to control the bike) and while stopped waiting to turn.
- **Pass With Care:** Do not pass at intersections. Passing others and being passed occurs continuously during the ride. Call out “passing on your left” and allow time for the cyclist being overtaken to move to the right – then pass safely.
- **Rest Stop Etiquette:** All cyclists who enter a rest area must pull over, dismount, and move completely away from the road and rest stop entrance. When exiting, move beyond the rest area and proceed with caution on the right side of the road before merging with faster cyclists.



Requesting Assistance On the Route

If you have an issue while riding, pull off of the road onto a safe location on the shoulder or area that does not impede other cyclists or vehicles. Support and Gear (SAG) vehicles will stop for you if you are off the road, off your bike, and giving a “thumbs down” sign or holding your helmet in the air. They may assist by transporting you to the nearest rest stop, arranging to transport you back to the start/finish line, offering fluids, or some minor bike repair. They can call for medical assistance if necessary.

Hydration

The rule of thumb is to drink one bottle per hour and supplement with sports drinks at least every third or fourth hour.

Medical Assistance

Seek medical assistance if:

- You experience extreme fatigue, the inability to recover your energy, or frequent muscle cramps, as you may have early signs of dehydration.
- You experience weight gain/bloating with progressive symptoms such as swollen hands and feet, confusion, throbbing headache, dizziness, or nausea.
- Know yourself – if while riding you experience any discomfort, feelings of uneasiness, racing heart, dizziness, chest pain, or pressure, please seek medical attention at once.

Mechanical Problems

Examine mechanical problems and change flats completely off the road in a safe location that does not impede other cyclists or traffic. If you have an issue you cannot fix yourself, flag down a SAG van and seek a mechanic at the next rest stop.





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The Basics of Riding in a Group

When riding with other cyclists, it's important to let others in the group know your skill and comfort level. Riding with other cyclists all around you may cause you to feel anxious or worried. Relax. It is most important to create your own safety zone. This may vary depending on the speed and ability level of the people you are with, so be flexible. Let others know of your anxiety – they may also be new at this.

When riding in a group, your responsibilities include:

- **Maintaining Control and the Speed of Your Bike - Know Your Limits.** Crashes can occur when inexperienced riders do not have bike-handling skills to make quick decisions in a pack. Safety starts with you. Group mentality is not always safe.
- **Knowing the Conditions.** Never overlap your wheels with another cyclist. Do not use aerobars in a pack. Be aware of how the weather will affect your bike. Riding in wet conditions requires slower speeds and greater braking distances.
- **Knowing the LAW.** Expect to stop at all red lights and stop signs – it is the law! Each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the intersection is clear. Adjust your safety zone to fit the conditions of the road, weather, and traffic.
- **Being Respectful of Other Riders.** Help others when needed.
- **Communicating.** Use gestures in combination with verbal commands. Communicate in advance with verbal or hand signals. Ride with your head up and be aware of what is happening around you. Look down the road not at the person in front of you.

Group Cycling Lingo

Cycling has its own form of communication. The presence of road hazards, directions, and need-to-know information are all relayed through the pack of riders by gestures and words. Remember to pass all communication on to the next cyclist behind you in the group. Speak loudly and clearly.

The following are the most common terms you may hear in group-sponsored rides:

- **On Your Left:** This means a rider is approaching your left side. Allow room to pass.
- **Car Back:** This means a car is approaching from the rear. All riders make an effort to move to the right of the road in a single file until the car passes. In most states, the law requires cyclists to ride no more than two abreast. This ensures that traffic will not be impeded and will make passing easier and safer for the cyclists.
- **Gravel, Pothole, Sand, or Tracks:** Each of these messages is to alert the riders behind you of hazardous road conditions. The words are combined with the gesture of pointing to the hazard well in advance.
- **Flat:** This indicates that a rider has suffered a flat tire. Allow enough room for the rider to slow down and move to the right side of the road for repair. Offer assistance if needed.
- **Slowing:** The cyclist in front of you is slowing down. Use caution and prepare to stop. Many cyclists use the palm of their hand toward riders behind them to indicate slowing and stopping.
- **Stopping:** This indicates that a rider ahead is stopping. Do not forget to unclip from your pedals.