

Ride Around the Lake

General Principles and Rules

~ by Scott Brown

Different groups have different expectations, rules, and customs. What follows are our principles and basic rules. All riders are expected to adhere to them. What matters is not that our rules are perfect (far from and not possible), but that all riders respect and follow them so we achieve consistency and safety within the ride. Risk increases when people do things unexpectedly. Consistency helps keep things safe.

Principle 1 - Ride Within Your Abilities

- The “drop and regroup” format enables everyone the opportunity to self-select out of a situation they do not feel comfortable with. Recognize your own physical and technical limits and stay within them. If you’re uncertain or uncomfortable with a situation, safely take yourself out of it then returned to the group at the next re-group point.
- If you do not know what your limits are, first watch and follow; then, when you feel ready, test yourself gradually and in small increments. Recognize that skill and experience take time (often years) to develop.
- Understand that what is scary or impossible for you today will become easy and possible tomorrow, with practice. Rely on your own skill level and experience to determine what’s safe for you; judge based upon your own capabilities, not the capabilities of others.

Principle 2 - Maintain Your Awareness

- Regardless of your skill, experience, or ability, maintaining a broad field of awareness is the most important safety skill. Understand that you can only ride safely by looking far ahead at all times. Fear comes from surprise. Surprise comes from the unexpected. When your field of awareness is too small, you invite surprise and increase risk, not just for you but for those nearby.
- Awareness is the foundation skill that all other skills are based upon. Riders are expected to learn awareness skills, including the ability to ride “eyes up” at all times. Everything else (conversations, tactics, etc.) must come second to riding “eyes up”. Riders must learn to analyze what’s ahead and plan for it, both for themselves and those following.
- When in a group, the most important awareness skill is the ability to “look through” obstacles (other riders, vehicles, etc.) to maintain awareness. This means not simply looking past the rider immediately in front of you. Always try to look past ALL riders in the group and into the space ahead. Look for at the horizon to develop this skill. Use only brief glances to keep tabs on the road and riders nearby.

Principle 3 - Expect the Unexpected

- Despite best efforts, we all make mistakes. Especially when pushed to our physical limits. Dangerous riding contrary to our rules will not be tolerated, yet perfection should not be expected. Adopt the mindset that every other rider is part of the course, themselves obstacles you must navigate, not just the course itself.
- Learn to read the riders around you; develop awareness by doing so constantly. Watch others for signs of fatigue or changes in behaviour; assess if they've lost awareness or are starting to struggle due to fatigue. Anticipate and adjust moment to moment. Leave more space than normal if the situation calls for it.

Type of Bike:

- Road bikes are recommended but not required. Cross or Tri/TT Bikes are allowed. You may have aerobars on your bike, but riding in your aero-bars is not permitted when leading or riding within the group.

When Leading:

- Those leading are responsible for ALL riders behind. Pointing out obstacles far in advance is expected but not sufficient. Leaders are expected to anticipate and guide all followers wide, and early around obstacles and hazards. Use hand-signals early and make direction adjustments in a slow and deliberate manner, giving those following – specifically those at the very back - lots of time to recognize, adjust, and follow safely.

When Following:

- Those following are responsible for themselves and for maintaining awareness of what is happening ahead. Riders should never follow blindly or trustingly. Always give riders in front enough space to move about unexpectedly (a wheel-width at minimum). Some obstacles cannot be seen or anticipated. Do not rely on those in front of you to be perfect 100% of the time.

No Sudden Moves:

- Attacks are acceptable only during sprints. It is the attacking rider's responsibility to attack only when safe for everyone; the road must also be clear in front and behind, especially if a lane change is required. Except for attacks, do not make any sudden moves when in the group. Make all adjustments slowly and early. Recognize the need for sudden moves – by you or those following you – is the result of an awareness problem; discuss and adjust accordingly.

Shouting Out Obstacles:

- Shout-outs are to be avoided. Shouting increases risk because most in the group will not be able to hear or understand what was said due to wind and traffic noise, creating confusion and panic. Recognize that shout-outs are a symptom of awareness problems and poor etiquette by those leading. Instead of shouting, lead safely. Use hand signals, adjust slowly, early, and ride wide of obstacles.
- If you find yourself riding into an obstacle (debris or a pothole) DO NOT attempt to hand signal. Keep both hands on the bars and ride through the obstacle, keeping a firm grip on the bar with knees and elbows bent to absorb shock, to the best of your ability.

In the Paceline:

- Always leave at least a wheel-width between you and the rider in front.
- It's not a race between sprints/intervals. The group rides together in a tightly organized paceline (typically double paceline) at a pace that is fast enough to be hard for those on the front but easy for those following (typically 30-40 km/h). Keep pulls short (10-45 seconds; shorter as the group gets bigger).
- Never half-wheel when in double paceline. When riding double, ride "handlebar to handlebar"; follow the person next to you, NOT in front of you. When riding on the front of a double paceline, the faster rider defers to the slower rider. If the pace cannot be maintained by the slower rider, both riders should hand-signal then pull off together. When following within a double paceline, the slower rider should signal early when they need to exit, then do so cautiously. Following riders should then fill the gap, splitting and reforming the line as necessary.

Safety on the Road During the Event

Ride Around the Lake is social event that incorporates challenging cycling routes – it is not a race. If you have any issues while riding with your group (no matter how insignificant), please speak up so it can be addressed. If you are tired or simply can't hold the pace, let others know. If you are riding at a speed that is not in your comfort zone, feel free to change speed groups during the ride (dropping back) or at a rest stop if you would like to ride at a faster pace. This should be a challenging, but thoroughly enjoyable experience for everyone.

Your bike should be equipped with a rear-facing red light (mandatory) and a front-facing light to ensure that you are visible on the road at all times.

Safety While Riding in a Group

Hand Signals

- While riding in a group, you are responsible for the cyclists behind you and it is imperative that you point out hazards ahead of you. The best way to do this is through hand signals rather than calling them out. If you see a rider ahead of you displaying a particular hand signal, please share the same with the riders behind you so everyone is aware of upcoming hazards. Here is a great video from the folks at GCN with an overview: <https://youtu.be/prYMM7D2qF8>
- Here is a quick video that we created (during the pandemic) to highlight a few other hand signals you may see at Ride Around the Lake: <https://youtu.be/eX11u8Xz5c4>
- Your ride leaders: Gary C., Brian T., Karin M. and Miles P. will review the signals for each of the speed groups before the start of the ride

Flat tires

- It happens to the best of us and each speed group may handle things differently. If you do get a flat while riding in a peloton, it is very important to control your bike, notify the riders around you verbally “FLAT!” to clearly identify your issue and then slowly reduce your speed and move out of the peloton. Do not swerve or stop abruptly. If you can repair the tire on your own, please feel free to do so and join the next speed group as they approach (if your group left). If the tire is not repairable, or there is a significant mechanical failure please wait for a SAG vehicle to assist – either way, you will not be stranded at the side of the road.

Situational awareness

- Look past the rider in front of you

Whether you are riding in a small group or a large peloton, it is important to look as far ahead as possible. It is quite easy to find yourself staring at the wheel, rear cassette or light on the back of the bike in-front of you. But doing so will impact your reaction time if there is a hazard to be avoided. Ride heads up.

- Stay close to the shoulder

Ride Around the Lake takes place on highly-trafficked roadways. Please be aware of the vehicles approaching from both directions and stay close to or on the shoulder if it is safe to do so. If you intend to pass a rider ahead of you, please check for traffic, signal your intention, notify the cyclist you are passing verbally “ON YOUR LEFT” and only venture into the lane as far as you need to. Do not cross the yellow line in the middle of the highway under any circumstances. Please also be aware that some of the highways have rumble-strips on the shoulders that can negatively impact your cycling experience.

- Avoid wheel overlap

A wheel overlap occurs when the distance closes between two riders in a peloton and the front wheel of the rear cyclist slightly passes the back wheel of the front cyclist. The danger in this situation is when the front cyclist moves suddenly - they can easily wipe out the rider behind them. If you find yourself closing in on the rider in front of you, gently apply the brakes, notify those around you verbally “SLOWING” or safely move away from their back wheel. Here is an example of how quickly it can happen, but in this case it was an incredible save: <https://youtu.be/CHlitpYb8I>

- Do not surge or unexpectedly brake

Quick accelerating or braking in a group can cause an accordion effect in the peloton and make the ride much harder and/or more dangerous than it needs to be. Be consistent and predictable and maintain your speed / cadence without causing undue stress to those around you.

- Downhills

It doesn't matter if you are an experienced cyclist or if you are new to road riding, downhills can be exhilarating and also intimidating. As your speed increases, so should the gap between you and the cyclist in front of you. Please leave yourself lots of room to maneuver if a situation presents (debris on the road, wildlife encounter, flat tire, etc.). A downhill is not the time to be drafting the rider in front of you.

- Standing while riding

It is a good idea to get out of the saddle from time to time while riding long distances. However, when you get out of the saddle, your bike will generally move backwards as you get up, so please let those around you know if you will be standing. This can be done verbally "STANDING" or by showing a thumbs up hand signal with an upwards motion. Either way, please communicate your intentions before making the transition

- Eating / drinking while riding

This is essential on long rides, but can be hazardous in a group setting if you are riding one-handed as you get your water bottle or snack. To avoid any incidents during Ride Around the Lake, please eat or drink ONLY when you are at the back of the peloton.

Ride Around the Lake

Speed Groups

ESPRESSO

Avg. Speed: 30+ km/h

DOUG POLLARD

CAPPUCCINO

Avg. Speed: 25 to 30 km/h

BRIAN THIESSEN

MACCHIATO

Avg. Speed: 20 to 25 km/h

KARIN MCSHERRY
HEATHER MARTIN

LATTE

Avg. Speed: 15 to 20 km/h

MILES PURDY