

Ride Leader Guidelines



Princeton Free Wheelers, Inc.

• Princeton, New Jersey •

609-883-4PFW (4739)

www.princetonfreewheelers.com

Preface / Prologue

We: *Who are “we”?*

The riders whose names are credited at the end of this document assembled and edited this booklet are confident and competent cyclists. While much of the material has been written elsewhere, these veterans of not only many rides, but of many ride leads felt strongly about documenting just what they see as important and valuable traits about what makes a ride good. They've seen it all – the good, the bad, the ugly. They are unlikely, however, to have been the leader for the bad or the ugly. If you know them, you most likely respect them as leaders for just that reason.

Why a booklet like this?

There's lots of questions bicyclists might [and do] ask about leading rides. Sort of like all the questions you had when you first started riding. Or when you first decided to get serious about getting fitter. One way or another, sooner or later most of us figure out the basics – at least enough of them to make us want to keep riding. But where were they written down? Perhaps a good magazine, a website with tips and tricks, a brochure from a fitness company or even at an online forum. Our own website offers links to as many of those kinds of resources as we can find. So there ought to be resources for leading rides too.

But what about leading rides?

What's the mystique in leading a ride?

There really is no mystique in leading rides. Oh sure, you've got this great memory of your first venture into an area only one member of the club seemed to know well enough to get to via some really great roads. And how there was this great little place to refuel just when you thought your legs wouldn't let you pedal even one mile more. Well, the truth of the matter is that we all pretty much know of a place or two that's kind of special in its own way.

So maybe that addresses the next question:

If I lead a ride, where should I go?

Anywhere you enjoy going! There are probably no bad places to go, well, at least none that have good roads to ride that lead to them. Sure, the idea of a really neat destination is alluring and nicer destinations suggest nicer rides but when bicycling, it's really all about the journey.

And how is it certain leaders seem to attract a really nice group?

Who will show up?

People choose rides for lots of reasons. Maybe the ride starts from close to home, or perhaps it's the only ride at that pace that day. If not, perhaps it's a ride that's going to a neat place or maybe the riders just know the leader and like riding with him or her. Whatever the reason, how you plan *the* ride and how you plan *to* ride are really all that matters. That's what this booklet is all about.

So OK, the following material can help do that, but when?

When will I be ready?

Hey, there is no time like the present! The material here is a quick read. Much of it you'll most likely find yourself saying: "I knew that!" The actual time to plan can be pretty minimal if the ride you intend to plan isn't totally unique in one or more ways.

If you've been riding, you don't need to do anything special to get yourself ready. If you haven't, then you'll have to think about how fit you'll need to be for the ride you intend to plan. Got great fitness? Go for it! Not that fit? Just adjust pace and distance accordingly.

OK, so what else is there?

How do I get started?

Turn the page!! . . . But wait, ride leaders seem to be special.

Will the following information help *me* be special like *them*?

THEM: What makes a Ride Leader lead rides? What really is it that a Ride Leader knows that makes the rides special? How do I know if I'm that kind of rider?

ME: Why me? Why should I lead a ride? Why not?

Hey, this is just the first edition. Perhaps in time, and with your help as a newly minted veteran and expert, together we can figure out even more of this stuff. In the mean time, there really is only one thing more you need to know:

YOU: *You too can do it!*

John Powers

Contents

Why lead a ride?	1
What's in this booklet?.....	1
If you've never led a ride before	2
What kind of ride do you want to lead?	2
Selecting a route	2
General considerations	2
Using an existing route.....	3
Choosing a published route	3
Designing your own route	3
Making maps and cue sheets	4
Making a map.....	4
Making a cue sheet.....	4
Submitting a ride description form	6
Princeton Freewheelers non-discrimination policy	7
Fielding phone calls from prospective riders	7
Before the ride.....	8
Ride Roster sign-in sheet.....	8
Remember to bring everything.....	8
Get signatures, make sure everyone has a helmet, and get a count.....	8
Make a pre-ride announcement.....	9
Leading the ride	11
Leading from the front or the back of the group	13
The benefits of having a sweep	13
Controlling pace lines.....	14
After the ride.....	14
Handling injuries	15
Handling severe accidents	15
What to do if one of your riders has an accident and is injured	15
Other concerns in the event of a severe accident	16
Who to notify in the event of an accident	16
Hypothermia.....	17
Heat exhaustion and heat stroke.....	17
Road rash.....	17
What to carry in a first-aid kit	18
Handling other problems	18
Riding in the rain.....	18
Avoiding lightning	18
Dangerous drivers	19
Dangerous riders in your group.....	19
Mechanical problems	19
Making a ride more fun.....	20

Tips for safe riding.....	21
Day-of-ride checklist.....	22

Why lead a ride?

We wanted to start with some words of inspiration, some explanation of why you'd want to lead a ride.

- You get to choose the route, the pace, and the food stops. This means that you get to share *your* favorite destinations and routes, ride at *your* preferred pace, and bring a lot of people to *your* favorite eateries.
- You meet new people who share at least one of your interests. This expands your pool of potential riding partners (and friends), particularly folks who like to ride the same way you do.
- You can inspire people, motivate them, and get them excited about bicycling. Ride leaders who lead regularly have countless tales of novices who can barely shift gears on their first ride but who grow into avid cyclists by the end of a season.
- You can exercise your creativity in finding a route, writing the ride description, and designing the map or cue sheet.
- You get to contribute something to the community.
- Leading a ride makes you go riding yourself.
- The club offers rewards to regular ride leaders such as ride leader jerseys and trophies.

What's in this booklet?

What's in this booklet?

If you've led rides for the Princeton Free Wheelers (PFW) in the past, some of the information in this booklet will already be familiar to you. However, you'll probably want to look through these guidelines for ideas on how to make your rides even safer or more fun, and as a refresher on the basics of ride leading.

If you haven't led rides before, this booklet will give you a good introduction to how you go about leading a safe, enjoyable ride. You'll find information on how to select a route; what to do before, during, and after the ride; how to handle problems and accidents; and how to make a ride more fun. At the end, you'll also find tips on safe cycling.

Don't be daunted! We don't expect you to read the entire booklet cover to cover and memorize it as if for a test. More likely, you'll want to use it as a reference for detailed information on specific topics.

See the checklist at the back: We included a ride checklist at the back, which gives a quick summary of the items you may want to bring to a ride and what to do before and during the ride.

Not all guidelines apply to every ride: These guidelines are written for all PFW rides, but the focus is on the most common types of rides - social rides at a moderate pace with regular rest stops. You may need to adapt the guidelines to fit your ride, especially if you lead faster rides with few or no stops.

If you've never led a ride before

If you've ridden on a lot of club rides, you already know much of what you need to know to lead a ride of your own. Not everything about leading rides is intuitively obvious, though. Thankfully, there are several resources available for learning more about becoming a ride leader. This booklet is intended to give you a good introduction.

You can co-lead a ride with an experienced ride leader. Just ask any of the club's ride leaders if you can help with their next ride, or ask if they'll help you plan a ride of your own. If you'd like to get to know a ride leader better, volunteer to *sweep*, which means that you ride at the back and help the slower riders.

What kind of ride do you want to lead?

Before you can select a route or make any of the other preparations necessary for a successful ride, you need to decide what kind of ride you want to lead. Here are some issues to consider:

- Decide who you want to ride with - Strong cyclists, who never stop for anything; or riders who slow down when riding up hills and stop for a great view or a snack.
- Choose a pace that you can *very* comfortably maintain for the duration of the ride. If you're already at the outside edge of your abilities and you drop back into the pack to check on one of your riders, you may have trouble catching the front of the group.
- Decide on a distance. The typical club ride is between 30 and 40 miles. An easy paced ride will range 15 to 25 miles, a moderate paced ride 25 to 35 miles, and faster paced ride range 50 miles or more.
- Think about what time the ride should start. If it's an after-work ride, keep in mind that most folks won't be able to make a start earlier than 6 p.m. Consider too, that a Saturday or Sunday ride starting between 8 to 9 a.m. tends to draw a larger crowd than a ride starting earlier. The time listed in the PFW *Freewheel* for a ride is the departure time.
- Consider the season, particularly with respect to the probable weather and the amount of available daylight.

Selecting a route

General considerations

- Regardless of the means you use to choose a route, you should pre-drive or ideally pre-ride it so you know everything you need to about road conditions, mileage, and water, lunch, and restroom stops.

If you've been on the route, but not recently, you may want to go over it again to ensure that nothing has changed significantly - no closed bridges or long detours over gravel roads, for example.

If you're using a route that you've never ridden or that you're designing on your own, it's even more important that you travel it before the ride, preferably on a bicycle. Many of us have painful memories of the hills on a route that the ride leader chose from behind the wheel of a car.

- Choose a starting point that people can find easily and that has ample parking. If at all possible, the starting point should also have nearby restrooms.
- Consider food, water, and restroom breaks. If you're planning a rest, there's a psychological advantage to stopping after the midpoint rather than before. The riders who are feeling a bit tired can take solace in the knowledge that you're over half way.
- Wherever you go, remember to respect private property, and ride only in places where bicycles are welcome.

Using an existing route

The best choice for a route is often one that you've ridden and enjoyed. Ride leaders rarely mind if someone repeats one of their rides, so you needn't worry about plagiarism. Feel free to add your own variations. Just because you're borrowing someone else's route doesn't mean that you can't give it your own touch.

Choosing a published route

Your neighborhood bike shop, book store, or map store very likely carries several books of bike routes in the area, as well as individual cycling maps for specific areas. You need to include the total distance and a brief description of the terrain, for example, "hilly," "rolling," or "flat."

Designing your own route

If you decide to design your own route, here are a few suggestions. These suggestions apply most of all to slow rides with inexperienced riders. If you're leading faster, more experienced riders, adjust accordingly.

- Safety is the deciding factor for all route-related decisions. If you can't find a safe way to get somewhere, don't go there. Keep in mind that riding with a group is much different from riding by yourself.
- Whenever possible, avoid intersections that are too close to a hill or a curve if the opposing traffic isn't required to stop. You want your riders to have an ample view of oncoming traffic and vice versa.
- Whenever possible, avoid streets that are too narrow for cars to pass unless you'll only be traveling there for a short distance. For example, some streets only have enough room for one lane of traffic in each direction.
- Whenever possible, avoid crossing busy streets except at controlled intersections (those with stop signs or stop lights).
- Avoid heavily traveled, multi-lane roads whenever possible. If you find yourself with no good alternatives, it's best to avoid making left turns. Even with the best of riders, getting a group safely across two lanes of traffic so they can make a left turn is hazardous. An alternative is to cross one street, stop at the corner and then cross the other street.
- Unless you're leading a mountain-bike ride, avoid difficult riding surfaces whenever possible, for example, rough or rutted roads, cobblestones, bridges with metal decks, railroad tracks, dirt, gravel, grass, etc. However, you can still enjoy a stunning overlook or a ride along the water just because the path is a short stretch of gravel. Simply suggest a short rest stop and that people walk their bikes.

Avoid surprises. A potential problem is a stop sign or light at the bottom of a steep hill. If you want to include the hill in the route, try reversing the route. Another example is:

suppose, that you choose a route on which there's a steep uphill just after a turn. If you don't remember to warn riders in advance, they'll all be so distracted trying to get into the correct gear that they won't watch out for one another or for traffic. With an inexperienced group, some riders may simply stop, with no thought to whether anyone might be behind them.

Note: Warn everyone during the ride, possibly at a stop before you get to a trouble spot.

- Study maps in search of promising back roads. NJBikeMap.com, hosted by club member, Dustin Farnum, is an excellent source for maps of bike-friendly roads. However, it's best if you pre-drive or preferably ride these roads before the day of the ride, so you don't run into a closed bridge or very rough road.
- If you know of a ride leader that leads rides in the area you want to ride, go on one of their rides, or call them for suggestions on roads to use or avoid, good places for mid-ride snacks, scenic overlooks, mean dogs, and other relevant details.

Making maps and cue sheets

Choosing between maps and cue sheets is primarily a matter of personal preference. With a map, ride leaders who somehow miss a turn can find their way back to the route (or back to the starting point), assuming they haven't ridden off the map. On the other hand, the details of a map are more difficult to grasp while you're moving; it may be easier to glance at a cue sheet and see the next turn. With a cue sheet, you can also describe quirks of the route that won't be obvious from a map. However, it's best to not try to read a map or cue sheet while moving.

Making a map

The simplest and most common way to make a map of your route is to get a map of the area, photocopy the relevant portion and mark your route on the copy. If you choose this method, here are a few suggestions:

- Do not run the route right up to the edge of the map. If your photocopied map includes some of the neighborhood outside the route, you are less likely to ride off the map if you happen to miss a turn.
- Highlight your route and include directional arrows, so you know which direction you are supposed to be riding. This is even more important if the route crosses itself at some point, as rides sometimes will.
- If you know the total distance, mark it on the map somewhere. You also might want to include a brief description of the terrain, for example, "hilly" or "flat."

Making a cue sheet

A cue sheet is a set of written instructions on how to follow a route. In its simplest form, a cue sheet includes the distance from one place to the next ("1.8 miles"), where the next instruction is ("Windsor Road"), what you do when you get there ("turn left") and the total distance up to that point in the ride. Following is a short (fictional) example.

Miles.	Total	Turn	At	Direction	Notes
--------	-------	------	----	-----------	-------

					Starting point - parking lot at Mercer County Park
0	0	L	Stop		Onto Old Trenton Road

0.1	0.1	R	Light	Onto Windsor Road
0.3	0.4			Warning! Big pothole at Rt 130
1.6	2.0	L	Stop	Onto Sharon Road Busy road. Ride single file.
0.3	2.3	R		At the pedestrian crosswalk, cross the wooden pedestrian bridge. Ride slowly and yield to pedestrians.
0.1	2.4	QL		At the far end of the wooden bridge
0.2	2.6	L		At the next intersection (no street sign)
0.4	3.0	Stop		Clarksburg Deli. Rest stop, restrooms.

Here are some suggestions on what to include on a cue sheet.

- **The starting point.** Be specific.
- **Clear instructions:** Be sure there's no mistaking the route that you have planned. For example, at a five-way intersection, there may be two left turns. Make it clear whether you should make a hard left or a soft left.
- **Mileage:** Include the distance between landmarks and the total distance as of each landmark. If you forgot to note a distance as you were pre-riding the route, you can always estimate from a map.
- **The important things in life:** Include restrooms, water, rest stops, and so on. You also might want to include bike shops close to the route.
- **Road hazards:** Point out blind curves, dangerous intersections, narrow roads, and similar potential problems. Make recommendations for safe riding as appropriate ("ride single-file").
- **Points of interest:** Mention scenic overlooks, landmarks, noteworthy architecture or a bakery where you can get a really great muffin.
- **Unchanging landmarks:** If you plan to use the same cue sheet again some day, try to use landmarks that are unlikely to change. For example, don't only specify house colors, business names, a number of traffic lights or stop signs, and alterable natural features. "Left at the third light" has a new meaning if another light is added. Big trees can be cut down.

Here are some suggestions on how to make a cue sheet:

- **Make the text big:** If you're using a computer to produce the cue sheet, so you're able to change the size of the font, make the text **BIG**. Even if all your riders can read 8 text at 22 mph on a rough road, you should prefer the task to be as easy as possible rather than the sheet be as small as possible.
- **Make the important stuff stand out.**
- **Use standard abbreviations:** Instead of spelling everything out, use "L" (left), "R" (right), and "S" (straight) to indicate directions. Also use "BL" and "BR" (bear left and bear right). QL QR ML MR X (quick left, right, merge left, right, and cross)
- **Include a key for all abbreviations:** Especially when unusual ones are needed.

- **Lay out the cue sheet for easy folding:** Divide the cue sheet in half or in quarters, label the parts, and try to avoid putting instructions on the folds, for example:

August 12, 2006									
Cranbury									
20 Miles									
					Obey the Motor Vehicle and Bicycle Laws of New Jersey and be a good guest of the communities through which you ride.				
Mi.	Total	Dir	At	Description 20 miles	Mi.	Total	Dir	At	Description 20 miles
0.0	0.0	X		Maplewood Av	0.1	9.3	BR		Main St becomes High Bridge Rd
0.1	0.1	L	Stop	Main St	0.6	9.9	R	Stop	Iron Ore Rd
0.5	0.6	L		Station Rd	2.5	12.4	R		Indian Path Rd
0.6	0.4	X	Light	Rt 130	0.7	13.1	R	Stop	Bergen Mills - Gravel Hill Rd
1.1	1.5	LL	Stop	Across tracks					
0.9	2.4	X	Stop	Applegarth Rd	0.7	13.8	L	Stop	Gravel Hill Rd
0.5	2.9	R		Old Church Rd	0.9	14.7	L	Stop	Federal Rd
0.7	3.6	L		Federal Rd	1.3	16.0	X	Stop	Perrineville Rd
1.2	4.8	X	Stop	Perrineville Rd	1.2	17.2	R	Stop	Old Church Rd
3.4	8.2	BR		Tracy Sta. Rd	0.7	17.9	L	Stop	Cranbury Sta - Union Valley Rd
0.8	9.0	BL		Lasatta Av becomes Water St	0.5	18.4	X	Stop	Applegarth Rd
0.1	9.1	R	Light	Main St	0.9	19.3	RR	Stop	Across tracks
0.1	9.2	L	Light	Rt 522	1.1	20.4	X	Light	Rt 130
0.0	9.2	L	Light	Main St	0.6	21.0	R	Stop	Main St
					0.5	21.5	R		Westminster Rd
					0.1	21.6	X	Stop	Maplewood into park

Submitting a ride description

To have a ride listed in *The Freewheel*, submit a ride description to the appropriate ride coordinator *by the deadline*, currently the 10th of the month for the following month's newsletter. The ride coordinator contact information is in *The Freewheel* at the beginning of the ride schedule. You can submit a ride description by email or regular mail.

As you write the description, err on the side of conservatism. If you don't know the exact mileage, it's better to overestimate than underestimate, so no one is unpleasantly surprised. Also, a ride that you may think of as only a little hilly may be *very* hilly to some riders. Finally, be realistic about the pace that you intend to ride. If you're very comfortable riding at 18 to 20 miles an hour when you ride on your own, you'll really need to rein yourself in to lead a group at 12 to 14 miles an hour.

In your ride description, remember to include any cautions or special requirements for your ride. Don't identify anything as "required" unless you intend to enforce the requirement; instead, make "requests" or "recommendations." Here are some examples of items worth including:

- If you're planning a lunch stop, indicate whether people should bring a lunch or bring money for lunch.
- If you're leading a ride with serious hills, warn people in the ride description so you don't get riders who aren't up to it.

- If you're planning to spend extra time sightseeing or socializing in the middle of a ride, mention this so potential riders know that the ride isn't just a quick loop.
- If you're taking a route that's shy of amenities like food stops or restrooms, caution people so they can plan ahead.
- If you're leading a ride that starts in a new or remote location, provide detailed directions to the start location. You may want to offer sending an internet based map reference via return mail.

PFW Non-Discrimination Policy

The PFW non-discrimination policy is as follows:

The Princeton Free Wheelers, Inc., a New Jersey not-for-profit corporation, does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, gender or sexual preference.

This non-discrimination policy does not prevent you from asking a rider to leave a ride based on the rider's abilities, equipment, or actions on that ride or previous rides.

Fielding phone calls from prospective riders

The ride description has a phone number and perhaps an email address, so riders can ask questions before the ride. Typically, callers will want to know whether they can handle your ride. How you answer this question depends on the difficulty of the ride and on your preference as a ride leader.

If the ride is difficult, you'll obviously want to be clear with callers about the distance, the speed, the number and size of hills, and so on.

If the ride is less strenuous, you have more discretion. After all, everyone needs to start somewhere. If you take this approach, you should be prepared to wait patiently at the top of every hill. Your reward is the chance to meet delightful people who don't happen to be great cyclists and to make occasional riders into better, stronger, more enthusiastic cyclists.

If you're not prepared to wait for everyone who needs to be waited for, by all means make that clear to callers. B+ rides, or above, are not required to wait for stragglers. Convincing folks that they can handle your ride and then leaving them in the dust is a great way to discourage them from ever joining a PFW ride again.

From time to time, you may get a phone call from a parent who wants to bring one or more children along. The club permits children (under 18) on rides, but an adult on the ride, who signs the liability waiver for themselves and the minor, must agree to be responsible for the minor. Parents don't always have a realistic perception of how far or how fast their children are able to ride, or how safely the children are able to ride in a group.

Before the ride

If you don't already have copies, download a Ride Roster from the PFW web sight. It is available at www.princetonfreewheelers.com. From the Home Page, click on the Club Rides button. At the top of the page is a link to download the Ride Roster form. If

internet access is not available, call or write the Ride Captain, who will be glad to mail you some Ride Roster sheets.

If you are printing the form from the internet, remember that it is a two page form. While it is not important that it be printed on both sides of a single sheet, it is important to have both sides printed and available.

If you cancel a ride: If you cancel a ride, if at all possible show up at the starting point or have someone else go and announce that the ride has been canceled, unless it's obvious from the weather conditions that the ride is canceled.

If you can't lead a ride: If, for some reason, you can't lead a ride yourself, try to find a replacement. The Ride Coordinator or Ride Captain may be able to help you find someone, but it is your responsibility to find a replacement.

Remember to bring everything

The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this booklet.

Show up at least 15-20 minutes early with the necessary stuff:

- Your bike and helmet.
- Princeton Freewheelers Ride Roster (Both side-Sign-in sheet & Accident Report Form)
- A couple of pens.
- Full water bottles
- A pump, extra tube or patch kit, and tire levers.
- ID information; license, insurance and emergency contact

You may also want to bring:

- Food.
- Basic tools.
- A bike lock. If you bring a cable lock, you can lock several bikes together.
- A cellular phone.
- Rags, WetWipes®, or something of the sort for cleaning up after road-side repairs.
- Money.

Get signatures, make sure everyone has a helmet, and get a count

- Have everyone sign the liability waiver (Ride Roster) for the ride even if they're not a member of the club. Make sure that each rider provides an emergency phone number, not 911!

Important! A parent or legal guardian must sign the liability waiver for any rider under 18 years old. If you have doubts about whether the child will be able to safely complete the ride without holding up the group, you should discuss it with the parent. You may refuse to allow a child on the ride if you believe the child's participation would be unsafe or disruptive. **If the parent is not present and you allow the minor on the ride, then you are accepting full responsibility for the minor.**

Carry the Ride Roster with you on the ride in case of an emergency. Carrying the roster in a plastic zip lock bag, i.e. sandwich bag, is an easy way to keep the sheet in legible

condition. Mail the Ride Roster promptly after the ride. The name and address is listed in the PFW *Freewheel*.

- Don't let anyone ride without a helmet. The club requires all riders to wear helmets on all rides.

Important! If someone refuses to sign the Ride Roster or insists on riding without a helmet, make it clear to that rider and to other riders on the ride that the uncooperative rider is not part of the group.

- Count the riders in your group so you can determine if you have everyone at regrouping points and when leaving rest stops.

Make a pre-ride announcement

Here's a pretty long list of topics to try to cover in a short pre-ride announcement. If you chatter on for too long, people will stop listening, so try not to turn it into a lecture. However, particularly for slow rides that attract a lot of beginners, these are topics that bear repeating time and again. It doesn't hurt to offer a few reminders to fast, experienced riders, either.

Note: The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this booklet. It's easy to copy and keep with you.

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself, and identify your sweeps if any.
If you want someone to ride sweep, you can ask if anyone wants to volunteer. For more information on sweeps, see "The benefits of having a sweep" in the next section, "Leading the ride."

You can also ask the riders to introduce themselves.

- **Welcome to new riders:** Ask if there are any riders who have never been on a Free Wheeler ride and, if so, welcome them to the group. In addition, encourage the regular riders to check in with the newcomers during the ride and ensure that they're doing all right. In a group that rides together regularly, a new rider, shy or not, may not feel welcome if the regulars spend the entire ride talking among themselves.
- **Waiver:** Ask if everyone has signed the liability waiver.
- **Ride Practices:** Cover PFW Ride Practices, shown below with additional explanations. They are also listed in bold on the top portion of the Ride Roster.
 - **Be Alert:** Enjoy the company and scenery but ALWAYS maintain an awareness of the riders around you, traffic and anything else in or along the road which might be a cause for concern. Be prepared to stop, slow or avoid hazards at any time.
 - **Call Out Hazards:** Cars and trucks pose the greatest danger to cyclists out on the road. Therefore, a call of "CAR BACK!" means: (1) The approach of a vehicle. (2) All riders must stay to the right and ride in SINGLE FILE (this is required by NJ law!). "CAR UP!," "CAR LEFT!," or "CAR RIGHT!" cautions riders of oncoming vehicular traffic and warns them to move to the right or stop if necessary. See a pot hole in the road? Don't just ride around it! CALL IT OUT AND POINT IT OUT to riders behind you so that they too can avoid it. The same goes for gravel, rocks, road kill, parked cars, branches, rough pavement, grates, dogs, bumps or anything else that could potentially cause a problem for a bicycle rider.

- **Signal My Intentions:** There are certain words and signals that need to be a part of every rider's (not just the ride leader's!) vocabulary. "SLOWING!" (which should be accompanied by the universal signal of arm straight down, palm facing rear) announces a change in speed and allows the other riders to do likewise. "STOPPING!" warns of an imminent total stop and enables all riders to come to a stop safely. "RIGHT!" and "LEFT!" should be hand signaled by all (not just by the leader). If the group is large, calling out the turn as well as using hand signals may be the safest means of communicating a turn to everyone on the ride.
 - **Will Not Ride Too Close:** Keep a safe distance between your bicycle and the bike in front of you. Remember, it is a rider's responsibility to avoid the rider in front of him or her. Be careful not to overlap your front wheel with another rider's rear wheel. This is very dangerous. If the rider in front swerves across your path, and hits your front wheel, you are almost certain to take a spill. For faster paced rides, refer to pace line etiquette described on page 14.
 - **Know Your Limits:** Remind riders to be honest with themselves about their biking abilities. "Biking off" more than they are ready for can be an unpleasant experience.
 - **If Someone Rides Ahead, They're On Their Own:** This is self explanatory. If anyone zooms ahead of the group, they may very well miss a turn. As ride leader, you are under no obligation to send out a search party, and they are then truly *on their own*. Are they really prepared to try to find their way back to the start location? Stay with the group and enjoy the ride.
- **Pace:** Announce the pace and explain what it means. On a B+, or above, ride, you are not required to wait for slow riders, although some leader will wait if the rider is riding at a reasonable pace.
 - **The route:** Briefly describe the ride, including food and rest stops, difficult hills, unusual or dangerous conditions, and hazards and tricky turns before that point.
 - **Safety:** Talk about safe riding, and remind riders that each person is responsible for his or her own safety. They may have heard it all before, so say it some amusing or vivid way that they can't forget. Just because the rider ahead of you made it through an intersection without being run over doesn't mean you can too. Each rider needs to be responsible and look out for themselves.

You can't teach safe cycling in the three minutes you have before people stop listening, so vary your safety announcement to fit the hazards of the ride. If you lead rides regularly, rotate topics from time to time.
 - **Cell Phones:** Riders should not answer or make cell phone calls while riding. Explain that if anyone needs to answer or make a call, just let the ride leader know and the group can take a short rest stop. Better to take a short break than have an accident because a rider was not focused on their riding.
 - **Traffic regulations:** Remind riders that a bicycle is a vehicle and that bicycle riders are, therefore, expected to obey traffic regulations, including those regarding cell phones.
 - **Courtesy:** Ask riders to be courteous. Drivers who are impressed with the courtesy of a group of cyclists will be more inclined to treat other cyclists with respect.

- **Group riding techniques:** For the benefit of new riders, mention group riding techniques, including:
 - **Riding single-file in traffic:** Make it clear that in traffic, riders are *not* to block traffic by riding two or more abreast. This is also against New Jersey traffic laws.
 - **Riding on trails:** If you'll be riding on a tow path, remind riders to stay on the right side of the tow path and to be considerate of other tow path users.
 - **Hand signals:** Remind riders to use hand signals for turning or stopping. Point with index finger in the direction you intent to go; i.e. left hand horizontally left for left hand turn; right hand horizontally right for right turn; hand down, palm facing rear if slowing or stopping. Also, call it out if with a group. Road hazards should also be called out.
 - **Voice signals:** Give riders a quick overview of voice signals: "Car up/back/left/right," "On your left" to indicate that you're passing another rider or a pedestrian, "Glass/pothole/etc." to indicate road hazards (combined with hand signals as appropriate). Emphasize that "Car back" means a car is coming from behind, so riders should start riding single file.
 Discourage riders from calling out "Clear" at intersections to indicate that no cars are coming. "Clear" is a subjective and temporary condition, so riders should always look for themselves. Because of this, "clear" is NOT an approved call.
 - **Other cyclists:** Remind riders to watch out for one another. On a group ride, they're much more likely to have an accident with one another than they are with a car.
 Emphasize to riders to allow enough room between themselves and the rider in front of them so they can react or stop in an emergency. It can be deceiving how little time there is to react, even at slow or moderate speeds. For example, at just 12 mph, you will travel 17.6 feet in 1 second. If you are following within 2 feet of the rider in front of you, you have less than one tenth of a second to recognize the danger, move your hands to the brake levers, and stop or turn.
 Pace line riding would seem to be a violation of this advice. Reaction time is especially critical at the faster speeds pace lines typically travel. Therefore to be as safe as possible in a pace line, each rider in line needs to take extra care to be able to see what the riders ahead see. When a rider can see what the rider ahead sees, the riders can react at the same time.
 - **Stop lights and stop signs:** Caution riders not to run stop lights or stop signs out of fear of being left behind. Let them know that the group will reform after the stop sign or light, as necessary.
 - **No pets on rides:** Riders need to be able to focus on the ride. If they are distracted with a pet, they can't give their full attention to riding safely.
- **Special equipment:** Remind riders about any special equipment, etc. that's required for the ride (for example, locks or lunches).
- **Keep the leader informed:** Ask riders to pass the word quickly if someone leaves or breaks down, and to notify you if they're planning to leave the ride before the end.
- **After-ride refreshments:** If you're going somewhere after the ride for a meal or a snack, tell everyone where you're going now. You may not get a chance after the ride because everyone might scatter to the four winds.
- **Questions?** Ask if there are questions.

Leading the ride

Every ride is different, so it's impossible to anticipate everything you might encounter on a ride. Here's a quick list of some items to attend to.

Note: The items on this list also appear on the "Day-of-ride checklist," at the back of this booklet.

- ***Set a good example:*** Ride safely, be predictable so motorists and pedestrians can anticipate your actions. Remember that you represent the Princeton Free Wheelers bicycle club.
- ***Courtesy:*** Anticipate situations where your group may inconvenience others. For example, when you stop for a repair or to re-group, be sure your riders aren't blocking the road or the sidewalk. When you re-enter the roadway, wait until there's a break in traffic, so drivers aren't forced to slow down for your group.

If you're taking the group on a tow path, remind everyone to ride on the right side of the tow path when passing walkers or other riders. Calls of "Walker", "Runner up", "Dog", "Rider up", etc. will alert riders to move to the right and ride single-file. This may make socializing more difficult. However, having to shout to one another is better by far than forcing other tow path users off the path and leaving them with an indelible bad impression of group rides and riders.

- ***Unsafe riders:*** Unsafe riders endanger everyone around them, ruin the experience for others on the ride, and give cyclists a bad image. If you're uncomfortable with a rider's actions, quietly and politely explain your concern. If the situation doesn't improve, ask the rider to leave the group.
- ***New riders:*** Check in with each of the new riders periodically to ensure that they're getting along all right and that they feel welcome.
- ***Pace:*** Ride at or near the front to lead the way and ***set the pace at the advertised speed.*** (A bike computer can help.) Make sure riders know that, **if they ride ahead, they're on their own.** Your responsibility is to lead the ride you've advertised and to keep track of the people who are doing the same. Pushing the pace is a common problem on rides, but as ride leader, you are in the best position to control the pace.
- ***Stop lights, stop signs, and crosswalks:*** Stop for red lights, stop signs, and pedestrian crosswalks. Not stopping endangers your riders, opens you to liability in the event of an accident, and gives onlookers the impression that cyclists are a bunch of scofflaws.

Don't stop too close to the intersection to wait for the group to catch up. Drivers have enough to cope with at intersections without having to worry about a gaggle of cyclists.

At a stop sign or stop light, join the line of cars. Don't pass cars on the right unless there is ample room on the shoulder.

- ***Unforeseen problems:*** If you run into unforeseen problems (new construction, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic, or a closed rest stop), be creative. Change the route, take shelter, or choose a different rest stop. Consider safety above all else, and don't be afraid to ask for suggestions from your riders. They may know the area better than you do. However, you're in charge, so don't let yourself be railroaded into something that you think is unwise.
- ***Too-fast and too-slow riders:*** If some riders are clearly too fast or too slow for the group, consider splitting into more than one group. You can also ask the fast or slow riders if they'd prefer to take off on their own or return to the starting point.

- **Mid-ride announcements:** Re-emphasize safety, especially related to upcoming conditions. For example, if you'll need to move into the left lane to make a turn, remind riders to look before they change lanes. If there's a steep uphill immediately after a turn, warn riders in advance. If you're getting onto a tow path, remind riders to stay on the right side of the path and to be considerate of other tow path users. (A point to consider is that announcing the route or handing out a cue sheet ahead of time may facilitate participants to ride off the front end, thereby splitting up the group.)
- **Restaurant and restroom stops:** Whenever you stop somewhere with your group, encourage your riders to be considerate of the non-riders around you. Try not to leave folks with the impression that cyclists are a bunch of ill-mannered ne'er-do-wells. If you happen to inconvenience someone, apologize and do your best to rectify the situation immediately.

When it's time to start riding again, announce your departure enough in advance that everyone has time to stash their extra cookies, get their helmets and gloves on, and untangle their bikes from all of the other bikes leaning against the same tree. In addition, be alert for riders who have wandered off or are in the restroom.

- **Messes:** Wherever you stop, make sure you and your riders clean up after yourselves. Don't make your mark on the world with banana peels, PowerBar® wrappers, and dead inner tubes.
- **The slow and the lost:** Keep track of all riders. Assess how the riders at the back of the group are doing, and adjust the ride as appropriate. Try not to leave anyone behind or lose them. On a B+ or higher ride, it is good form to wait at least once to discern the condition of any trailing rider and offer directions back before proceeding.

You may want to have someone ride at the back of the group to encourage and keep track of the slower riders. For more information, see "The benefits of having a sweep," later in this section.

- **Good will:** Smile, wave, and call out thanks whenever anyone (especially a driver) is even unintentionally helpful to your group.
- **Riding after dark:** Plan your route to as not to return after dark. Include a time allowance for delays such as a flat tire.
- **Injuries and other problems:** If one of your riders is injured, follow the guidelines under "Handling injuries," later in this booklet. For information on handling a variety of other problems, see "Handling other problems," also later in this booklet.
- **Have a good time yourself:** Rides can be a joy to lead. If you aren't having a good time yourself, think about what you could do differently next time. Moreover, if you aren't having fun, some or all of your riders probably aren't either. Be bold and ask *them* how you could make the ride more enjoyable.

Leading from the front or the back of the group

You don't necessarily need to lead a ride only from the front of the group. Some ride leaders spend the ride making their way back and forth between the front and the back of the group, checking to see that everyone is doing all right.

If you choose not to lead from the front, here are a couple of things to watch out for:

- Remind everyone what the pace is and ask them to maintain that pace.
- If you want riders to stop in a particular location, be sure everyone understands where that location is.

The benefits of having a sweep

If you lead from the front, you may want to have someone ride *sweep*, meaning the rider stays at the back of the group. On most rides, the chief advantage of having a sweep is that the leader knows when everyone has arrived at a regrouping point (assuming no one in the middle of the group missed a turn). However, if you have a large group, unusually slow riders, mechanical problems, or an accident on your ride, a good sweep can be invaluable, serving as cheerleader, mechanic, etc., as required.

If you're leading a short, slow ride, which will attract a disproportionate number of inexperienced riders, having *any* sweep is better than having *no* sweep. Ideally, though, you should try to find someone who can successfully change a tire, and slow down and encourage novice riders.

Controlling pace lines

Pace lines are only for very experienced riders (on B+ and A/A+ rides). Because of the close proximity of the riders, it requires trust in the riding ability of all of the group members. If you're going to use pace lines on your ride, here are some suggestions for safe riding:

- Stop at stop signs. Even at high speeds, the last person in a pace line is a second or two behind the leader.
- Call out stops, hazards, and changes in direction loudly, clearly, and early.
- Don't allow riders to lead a pace line if they don't know the course, particularly on descents.
- Don't allow riders to ride in a pace line if they're using handlebars or aerobars that keep their hands far from the brake levers. In a pace line, the ability to stop quickly is paramount.
- Be extra careful if you have single bicycles and tandems in the same pace line. A tandem with two riders weighs a lot more than a single bike and rider, so it isn't as maneuverable in an emergency.
- Recommend that riders check the quick-release levers on their wheels to ensure that the levers aren't sticking out. If riders overlap wheels and one gets a quick-release lever in the spokes, at least two people will be stopping faster than they might like.
- Recommend that all riders maintain a view of the road ahead at all times so that they are not reliant solely on the warnings of danger from those ahead and can react without the associated delay. But at the same time remind riders that this is not an excuse to ride out into traffic and block the road. A positive alternative is for riders to allow more distance between them and the rider in front of them.
- Recommend that riders check the quick-release levers on their wheels to ensure that the levers aren't sticking out. If riders overlap wheels and one gets a quick-release lever in the spokes, at least two people will be stopping faster than they might like.

After the ride

Immediately after the ride, you should:

- Check to make sure that everyone has returned safely.
- Thank riders for coming along.

- Ask for comments or suggestions. Did riders enjoy the ride? Did they like the route? Is there anything you could have done differently?

When you get home, you should call any rider who was injured or did not finish the ride. If you get home too late in the evening to call, be sure you call the next day.

Within a day or two, mail the Ride Roster to the address listed in the *Freewheel*.

Using the information on the Ride Roster: The liability waiver exists to legally protect you and the bike club in the event of an accident. If a rider calls you to ask for the phone number of someone else on the ride, *do not* give out that information. Instead, take the name and number of the person making the inquiry, call the other rider, and pass on the inquirer's name and number.

Handling injuries

Handling severe accidents

- *Call 911 immediately.*

Important! If a rider has an accident and lands on his or her head, neck, or shoulders, you must consider the possibility of a neck or back injury.

- *If the person is conscious:* Ask if the person has neck or back pain, weakness, or loss of limb function or sensation. If so, you should suspect spinal cord injury and have the person stay very still.
- *If the person is unconscious:* You have no way to know what injury the person may have suffered, so *do not move an unconscious person.*
- *If an unconscious person regains consciousness before help arrives:* Keep the person as still and quiet as possible. You may need to be firm. Someone who is in shock or suffering a concussion isn't the best judge of what to do at the moment. Be sympathetic but firm.

If someone may have a neck or back injury, you should *never* move the person. You could cause irreparable damage to the spinal cord, possibly resulting in *permanent paralysis*.

If the injured person is in a roadway, divert or stop traffic rather than move the person, and wait for help to arrive.

What to do if one of your riders has an accident and is injured

1. *Stay calm:* You're no help to the others if you're frantic. Pause, take a deep breath, and survey the situation before you act.
 2. *Divert or stop traffic:* If the injured rider is in the roadway, have other riders divert or stop traffic until you can determine if the person has a possible neck or back injury. Get all other riders and their bicycles off the road.
-

Important! If you determine that the person has a possible neck or back injury, continue to divert or hold up traffic until help arrives. *Do not move the person.*

3. *Determine if the person is injured seriously enough to require medical attention:*
The injured rider should get medical attention if he or she:
 - Is bleeding heavily.

- Has a head injury and lost consciousness even briefly.
- Can't remember what happened.
- Has obvious pain when moving an injured limb.
- Has trouble opening his or her jaw.

Even if the person has no obvious injuries, you still should pay careful attention to whether the person seems confused or disoriented, which could also indicate a head injury.

4. ***If necessary, send someone for help:*** If there is *any* question about whether professional medical attention is necessary, call 911 immediately. If no one has a cellular phone and you need to send someone to call, make sure the person who is going has change for a pay phone and can accurately describe where you are. If possible, send two riders: one to direct the ambulance to your location (if necessary), and another who can return to the group when 911 has been reached, so you and the others know that help is on the way.

Important! If you have an emergency and you aren't near a phone, remember drivers most likely have a cell phone. In addition, utility crews, and construction crews all have radios that they can use to call for help.

5. ***Care for and reassure the injured rider until help arrives:*** Be as helpful as possible given the situation and the available materials. In particular, keep the person as warm and dry as possible.

Regardless of the rider's condition, act calmly, speak in reassuring tones, and be sure that everyone around you does the same. Ask everyone who isn't helping to stand well back, so the injured rider isn't looking up into a mob of worried or horrified faces. Also, caution the others not to discuss the rider's injuries; no one who is injured wants to hear the words "Wow! Look at all that *blood!*"

6. ***Make sure the person's contact information and helmet get into the ambulance:*** If an injured rider is taken away in an ambulance, be sure the rider's contact information and helmet go along. Someone at the hospital will probably want to examine the helmet to determine the likelihood of head injuries. Ideally, you'll get the ambulance crew to take the rider's bike, too, so you don't need to worry about it.

Important! Be sure *you* know the rider's name and contact information, so you can call later to check on his or her condition, send a get-well card, return the rider's bike, and file an Accident Report with the Ride Captain.

Other concerns in the event of a severe accident

In addition to taking care of the injured rider, you need to be concerned about the other riders and about the injured rider's bike and gear:

- ***Continuing the ride:*** In some cases, you may need to continue the ride before the injured rider has recovered enough to start riding again or before the ambulance has arrived. For example, if it's evening and you're running out of daylight, you'll need to get the other riders back to the starting point.

You shouldn't leave the injured rider alone unless he or she is clearly all right and has a way to get back to the starting point or back home. If the other riders can find their way back to the starting point, you and someone who knows first aid should stay with the injured rider. Otherwise, you should ask for volunteers to stay, again including someone who knows first aid.

- **What to do with the injured rider's bike and gear:** If you need to leave the rider's bike where it is, lock it up and take all of the removable gear with you (bike bags, etc). Return for the bike as soon as possible (preferably before nightfall), and let the rider know that you have it.

Who to notify in the event of an accident

Call 911. Also, the Ride Roster includes a line for an emergency contact phone number. If an injured rider is taken to the hospital unconscious, call the emergency contact phone number immediately and calmly explain what happened. If the rider is conscious, he or she can decide who to contact and when.

If someone was seriously injured, call the Ride Captain as soon as possible. The Ride Captain's phone number is listed in the *Freewheel*. This applies regardless of whether the person was one of the riders in your group or not.

Hypothermia

If you're riding in cold or wet weather, keep an eye on all of your riders to ensure that no one is suffering from hypothermia. Mild hypothermia is characterized by shivering, and can be treated by getting the person out of the cold and into dry clothes. More severe cases are characterized by confusion and lack of coordination; in this case you need to get the person to medical care.

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be caused by riding in hot weather or by dressing inappropriately when riding in cooler weather. As a cyclist, you need to dress so you can dissipate heat and perspiration. In addition, you need to drink plenty of fluids, so you don't become dehydrated.

Heat exhaustion is characterized by pale, clammy skin, profuse perspiration, and extreme tiredness or weakness. The person may have a headache and may vomit. With heat exhaustion, the person's body temperature is approximately normal.

The treatment for heat exhaustion is rest. If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

Heat stroke is far more dangerous. Call 911. The body's temperature control system has stopped working, so the person doesn't sweat anymore. Body temperature may rise so far that brain damage may result.

The symptoms of heat stroke include hot, red skin; no perspiration; extremely high body temperature; dizziness; nausea; headache; rapid pulse; and confusion, disorientation, or unconsciousness.

Get the person out of the heat immediately, and cool his or her body quickly. Soak the person in cool but not cold water, or pour water over the body. Stop and observe the person for 10 minutes, then cool some more if the person's body temperature is still above 102°.

If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

If heat stroke develops, the rider will need medical care, possibly including intravenous fluids.

Road rash

If one of your riders falls and leaves some skin on the pavement, the person should clean the wound thoroughly, apply some antiseptic cream or ointment, and cover it with clean gauze. If there isn't a nearby source of clean water, using water from water bottles is better than not cleaning the wound at all. If the edges of a deep cut won't fit back together or if the wound is in a place where motion will prevent it from healing, the rider should get medical attention as soon as possible. For open cuts or abrasions, the rider should seek medical care if he or she hasn't had a tetanus immunization in the last five years.

What to carry in a first-aid kit

If you decide to carry a first-aid kit for the occasional minor injury, here are some suggestions on what to include:

- Large gauze squares for cleaning road rash or as protection from further harm.
- A roll of gauze for covering larger areas of rash.
- Non-adherent sterile pads.
- Antiseptic cream or ointment.
- A roll of tape to secure bandages.
- Band-Aids® for small cuts and blisters.
- Second Skin for open blisters.
- Ibuprofen or Tylenol® to minimize swelling or general minor pain.
- A triangular bandage.
- Antihistamine, in case someone has an allergic reaction.
- Latex gloves.

Handling other problems

Here are some problems that you may encounter on your rides and some suggestions on how to handle them.

Riding in the rain, which should be avoided

This can be avoided, for the most part, by checking the Weather Channel or weather.com for forecasts before the ride. If rain looks imminent, cut the ride short and return to the start location as soon as possible.

In a light rain, you can probably keep riding, but you need to slow down and be especially careful on downhills, wet leaves, lane markings, railroad tracks, and metal bridge decks. Lane markings can be very slippery because the markings are increasingly an adhesive tape rather than just painted on the road. This tape has a slick finish which can be just as slippery as paint, especially when wet. Furthermore, both tape and paint often have glass beads imbedded for better reflectivity.

In a rain that's heavy enough to affect visibility, you should consider stopping *off the road* until the rain slows. However, standing around somewhere while you're wet and cold is a good way to get hypothermia. If possible, arrange a pickup.

In a heavy rain, you're probably best off finding some sort of shelter until the weather improves. If your choice is a store, be sure you have the permission of the proprietor, be

careful not to inconvenience other customers. Both you and each of your riders would be well advised to *buy* something. Also, recognize that the weather may not improve before sunset, and that you may have to set off in the rain. Again, if possible, arrange a pick up.

Avoiding lightning

If at all possible check the weather forecast such as on the Weather Channel or weather.com to avoid this situation.

If you happen to encounter lightning, use the “Flash-To-Bang” method of measuring lightning distance. This is the amount of time that elapses between when you see the flash and when you hear the thunder. For each five-second count, lightning is one mile away, so at 25 seconds the lightning is five miles away. Begin planning an alternate route right away, if possible. At a count of 15 seconds (three miles) take immediate defensive action:

- Where possible, find shelter in a building or in a fully enclosed metal vehicle such as a car, truck, or van with the windows closed.
- Avoid water.
- Avoid metal objects such as bicycles, electric wires, fences, machinery, railroad tracks, tent poles, and so on.
- Don’t stop beneath small, isolated open-sided rain shelters or trees.
- Avoid hilltops, open spaces, ditches, and depressions.

Important! If you need to take shelter, make every effort to keep your riders calm.

If your hair is standing up, you have a tingling sensation, the count between flash and bang is less than five seconds, or lightning is striking nearby, you should:

- Remove all metal objects.
- Crouch down, and put your feet together and your hands on your knees.
- Avoid direct contact with other people.

Dangerous drivers

If you have trouble with a dangerous driver, get everyone off the road, and wait until the driver goes away. Don’t antagonize the driver in any way. In addition, get the vehicle license number and a description of the *driver*, and contact the police. If you can’t describe the driver, the owner of the car can simply claim not to have been driving the car at the time of the incident. If someone happens to be carrying a camera and there is time, this might be a good occasion to use it.

Dangerous riders in your group

If you have a careless rider in your group, and the person continues to be troublesome after you’ve spoken with him or her about being more careful, insist that the rider leave the group. If necessary, stop the group and wait until the rider leaves before you continue.

Mechanical problems

If someone has mechanical problems, you can:

- Check with your riders to see if anyone has the parts and the expertise to make the repair.

- If there's a nearby bike shop, you might take the group on a detour.
- Suggest calling home.
- Send someone back for a car.

Some problems are not as severe as they might seem:

- *Broken spokes:* Generally, if you don't have too far to travel, you can just ride with a broken spoke. If you can, remove the parts of the spoke, otherwise tie or tape the broken parts to adjacent spokes. If breaking the spoke also affected the true of the wheel, you may also need to open up the brakes. Emphasize that the rider should avoid potholes as much as possible.
- *Broken chains:* If someone has a chain tool along, you can simply remove the bad link and put the chain back together. Because the chain will then be shorter, the rider should avoid using the large chainring (in front) or the large gear (in back).
- *A hole in a tire:* If you have a small hole in a tire, you can keep the inner tube from bulging out through the hole by slipping something inside the tire to cover the hole. A dollar bill works fine, and a section cut from an old tire works even better, but it's just a temporary fix. You should replace the tire as soon as you can. If the hole is in the sidewall, take extra care because a sidewall cut can cause the tire to fall off the rim; use this trick just long enough to *slowly* limp home or to a bike shop.

Making a ride more fun

Consider choosing a theme. Have fun with the ride description. People will be more inclined to show up for a ride whose description captures their imagination.

Do something out of the ordinary. Meander through parks, stop at historic and interesting houses, and visit scenic viewpoints.

Take a break at some little out-of-the-way place where the food is especially good and the proprietors grateful to have the extra business. If you live for sweets, lead a ride that takes in a bakery.

Tips for safe riding

Traffic regulations

- Always wear an approved bicycle helmet.
- Observe all traffic laws. Your bicycle is legally considered a vehicle, so you're subject to the same traffic laws as the drivers of motorized vehicles.
- If there is traffic, ride single file on the right side of the road. If there is no traffic, you can ride up to two abreast.
- Use hand and voice signals when turning or stopping.
- Ride with traffic. Motorists don't look for bicycles going the "wrong way."
- Don't wear headphones while you're cycling. It's dangerous.

Hazards

- Make eye contact with drivers so you know that they've seen you. This even works for following drivers, letting them know you've seen them.
- Cross railroad tracks at a 90° angle.

- Look ahead for road hazards (glass, potholes, wide cracks, metal grates, gravel, and so on), and point them out to other riders. This is extra important when the road is wet.
- Check for traffic yourself. Scan the road in front of you, behind you, and around you.
- Watch for car doors opening in your path.
- Use voice and hand signals to communicate with other riders, especially when you're riding close together.

Courtesy

- Take a full lane when safety dictates. If you're delaying five or more vehicles, pull off the road at the next safe place to allow them to pass.
- If you stop for any reason, move yourself and your bicycle *completely* off the road or trail.
- Pass on the left, and use a bell or your voice to alert others that you're passing.

Other good ideas

- When there's traffic behind you, ride single-file so cars can pass.
- Before every ride, make sure your bike is in good condition.
- Bring a pump, spare tube, patch kit, tire irons, and a full water bottle.
- Eat before you're hungry, drink before you're thirsty.

Day-of-ride checklist

Stuff to bring

Mandatory

- Your own bike and helmet
- Ride Roster
- A couple of pens
- Full water bottles
- Extra tube, pump and tire levers

Optional

- Food
- Basic tools and tire gauge
- Rudimentary first-aid kit
- Bike lock
- Bike computer to monitor your pace
- Cellular phone
- Extra helmets (if you have spares)
- Rags for cleaning up after repairs
- Money, including change for phone calls

Stuff to check on

- Does everyone have a helmet?
- Has everyone signed the Ride Roster?
- How many riders do you have?

The pre-ride announcement

- Introductions
- Welcome to new riders
- PFW Ride Practices
 - Be alert
 - Know your limits
 - Will not ride too close
 - Signal your intentions
 - Call out hazardous
 - If you ride ahead, you're on your own
- Pace of the ride
- The route
- Obey traffic regulations
- Be courteous
- Ride single-file in traffic
- Ride on the right side of tow paths
- Use hand and voice signals
- Keep the ride leader informed
- After-ride refreshments
- Questions

Many thanks to those who helped to make these guidelines a reality.

**Joan Prins
Peter Perkuhn
John Danek
Bob Barish**

Also, it should be noted that a significant source of information for this booklet is the *Ride Leader Guidelines* , published by the Cascade Bicycle Club, Seattle, Washington.

We'd like to have your ideas on how to make this booklet more useful or complete. If you have any suggestions, please send a letter or email to:

**Princeton Free Wheelers Bicycle Club
P. O. Box 1204
Princeton, New Jersey, 08542-1204**

InfoGuy@PrincetonFreeWheelers.com

www.princetonfreewheelers.com

