

## ***Group-Ride Etiquette***

### **Pick The Right Group Ride**

Group-ride levels and objectives vary. Determining the group's goal and pace will ensure that you join a ride that's right for you. Is the ride social or a speed fest? Is it considered a training ride or a training race? What's the distance/anticipated ride time? What is the route for the ride (flats/hilly/city/country)? Are there any rest stops or rendezvous points? Is it a no drop ride or be prepared to get dropped if you can't keep the pace or your equipment fails? Answer these questions before the ride so you don't jump into a blistering hammer-fest when all you wanted was a social "coffee/beer" ride and vice versa.

If you're not sure what a ride offers, ask us. Lactic Acid is primarily a Social group who would rather slow down a MPH or 2 to keep the group together than discourage rider from joining our group (especially on Thursday night road rides and Wednesday night mountain bike rides). Most importantly let the group know what your skills are and how you are feeling throughout the ride so we can keep you included in the ride.

### **Don't Be Late.....Or at least let the members of the group know you are running behind so that they can decide if they are able to wait or can tell you a point in the ride you can meet up.**

Many riders have a limited amount of time to ride. So group rides typically start within minutes of the official starting time. If you're late, you' may miss out. Plus, if you hold the group up, you'll make a bad first impression. And, don't forget to allow for donning your equipment, pumping up your tires and reassembling your bike if you drive to the start. It's a good idea to arrive at least ten minutes early. Arrive late and you may just have to start your ride with a sprint to catch up to the group and then play "sweeper" to keep anyone from falling off the back.

### **Ride Carefully And Considerately**

Bikes are considered vehicles, just like cars, and are required to obey the same traffic laws (See Idaho Bicycle Code). And, getting a traffic ticket or placing your fellow riders in danger is certain to make a bad impression. Make sure that any actions you take are possible for those behind you. Avoid darting in front of cars while making a left or crossing an intersection when only 2 or 3 riders can successfully get across. It's a natural tendency to follow the rider ahead of you and having to make a split-second decision whether to cross or not places the cyclists behind you in jeopardy.

### **Communicate**

Communication is the key to safe group rides. Because roads are full of traffic and hazards, and because visibility is limited when riding in a group, it's important to warn others about hazards and to remain alert at all times to the warnings shouted and pointed out.

Warnings you're likely to hear include:

Car back- there's a car approaching the group from the rear

Car up- car approaching from the front

Car right (or left)- a car's approaching on a cross street

Stopping- the group is stopping for a stop sign or light

Slowing- the groups speed is decreasing

Walker up- there's a pedestrian on the road ahead

Rider up- there's a slower rider on the road ahead being passed by the group

Gravel, Sand, Glass or Hole- there's a road hazard ahead people will likely point at the object or indicate from behind their back to move over to avoid the object (i.e. trash bin or parked car).

As borrowed by Ride Idaho <http://www.rideidaho.org/safety-02.asp>

## **Ride Smart To Stay Safe**

Group-ride dynamics are interesting and ever-changing. As the pace and terrain changes, the pack stretches and compresses. The latter can cause some very tight quarters and even an occasional crash. In order to ride safely it's important to ride smoothly and avoid hard braking as much as possible. In fact, even light braking or swerving by someone in front can have a ripple effect and cause problems at the rear of the pack. Inexperienced riders who panic and touch a wheel may crash. Never fear! You can avoid problems by practicing these simple rules:

Stay alert at all times. Never assume that it's safe. Keep "reading" the dynamics of the group and always leave yourself an out by keeping on opening to one side that you can escape through if there's a crash or obstacle you have to avoid.

Hold your line. This means swerving as little as possible. If you need to move left or right, do so gradually after checking the area for other riders and pointing out your move to make your fellow riders aware of your intentions. If you notice that someone is swerving, he's probably tired or inexperienced. Stay away from him!

Don't overlap wheels. Overlapping is putting your front wheel next to someone's rear wheel. This is asking for trouble, because if they move, they'll bump your front wheel knocking you down. Try to always be behind the bike(s) in front unless you're passing.

Don't look back! Looking back causes even skilled riders to swerve, which can cause a crash. If you must look back, ask the person next to you if you can put your hand on their shoulder. That will keep you riding straight so that when you look back, you won't swerve.

Relax! Use a relaxed grip on the handlebars, keep your shoulders down (not up against your neck) and bring your elbows down and in so that they're slightly bent. These steps will help you stay relaxed, which allows quicker reaction time and prevents tension in the neck and shoulders that can lead to fatigue and sloppy riding.

Focus on the rider(s) ahead. Don't make the common mistake of focusing on the back wheel in front of you. Look up at the shoulders of the riders ahead and occasionally look at the road ahead and the riders up front so you can see what's going on and be prepared for sudden changes.

Don't brake unless absolutely necessary. If you must brake, do so lightly to scrub off a little speed. You can also slow down by sitting upright and catching more wind in your chest.

Warn others of hazards. Keep on the lookout for things that could cause problems and shout out a warning or point out the hazard.

Pass carefully. Sometimes you'll see the riders ahead starting to accelerate and you'll want to jump up to them. Be careful! Make sure you're not going to get cut off or cut someone else off. Usually, a moment's hesitation is all it takes to make the move safely.

If you get tired, move to the rear. Fatigue causes dangerous riding, so it's safer to go to the back of the group than to be in the middle of the action. Don't just swerve and slow, though! Tell those around you that you're dropping back so it's a safe move.

## **Be Prepared**

Be prepared for the challenges of the ride. Learn the route ahead of time to ensure you don't get lost. Also, if you know the route, it's easier to shortcut the ride if you get into trouble.

Always bring a tube, a pump and any tools you need. Bringing a cell phone and cash is a good idea, too. In order to avoid the terrible "BONK", please be sure to bring plenty of water/sports drink (2 bottles is a good idea) and have something easy to snack on while riding. Sunglasses and sunscreen are also a good idea to protect your eyes and your skin.

As borrowed and modified from (<http://www.brberacing.com/groupride.html>)