

# Oxford Triathletes

## GROUP CYCLING GUIDELINES

The following points are standard practice for club rides across the globe. Please take note of them and act accordingly.

**Main priority:** YOU are responsible for safety: yours, your fellow riders and other road users. Everything below is a common sense response to this underlying principle.

- It is obligatory to wear a cycle helmet on all club rides – no exceptions. Make sure it fits, is properly secured and inspect its condition regularly
- Follow the Highway Code, any local byelaws and be considerate to other road users. Remember that on a club ride some will be wearing club kit and Oxford Tri will be judged by group behaviour and attitude – even when some of the less tolerant road users resent your presence on the road!

**Equipment** (do not rely on others!)

- “A bike is for life and not just for Christmas!” Check it before each ride: tyres properly inflated, brakes and gears working. Keep it maintained – it will make your riding more comfortable and safer
- All equipment used should be in roadworthy condition and legal
- Carry spares and be self-sufficient. Others will be there to help you but as a minimum you need to have a spare tyre, pump and tyre levers
- Bring enough food and drink with you for the ride – energy drink, water, snacks such as cereal/energy bars, gels, bananas, small sandwiches...
- Drink little and often and eat to keep up energy levels – it’s too late once you have ‘bonked’!
- Some money and a mobile phone are good for emergencies
- Wear and bring appropriate clothing for anticipated weather conditions
- Be seen! – consider high visibility clothing and use lights if it gets murky

**When riding**

- **Your ride leader is in charge at ALL times and determines the pace.** Listen to his/her instructions and respect his/her decisions. Let him/her know what is happening within the group
- Do not overtake the leader, except perhaps when climbing hills. You must then wait for him/her to resume the lead. There is safety in numbers and the leader is responsible for keeping the group together
- You **must** let the leader know if you decide to leave the group. If the pace is too fast or too slow for you, let people know you are leaving and that you know the way home
- Cycle with no more than two abreast. It is generally safer for cars to slow down and overtake a group rather than a ragged and strung out line of cyclists. On narrow or busy and fast main roads the leader might call for single file
- “Car up” tells the group a car is approaching from the front. The lead cyclists will call this if appropriate
- “Car back” tells the group a car is coming from behind. The tail-end riders will alert the group if appropriate
- “Stopping” or “Slowing” is called by the lead rider well before to inform the group. Watch also for arm/hand signals
- Alert others to hazards when possible – potholes, poor surfaces, walkers, horses... This can be verbal or more often is visually pointed out

- Stay **OFF** the aerobars when group riding – if you want to use them then breakaway a safe distance from the group, preferably behind
- When possible have an experienced **tail-end** rider who together with the leader are the eyes and ears of the group. The tail-end rider keeps the group together and makes sure no one is inadvertently ‘dropped’

### General

- If you are struggling let people know and move up within the group to c. 3<sup>rd</sup> row from front to benefit from group aerodynamics
- Check before leaving if the ride planned is appropriate for you in terms of projected pace/distance
- The closer you get to the cyclist in front, the more shelter you get from wind resistance. When ‘holding a wheel’, tucked in behind someone:
  - Stay **behind** and slightly to the right of their rear wheel – if they flick, you have somewhere to go. If you are on the left you will be forced in to verge, hedge or worse!
  - Have your hands positioned within a finger’s movement of the brakes
- Hold a steady line and do not make any sudden moves unless forced to
- If you need to slow down then ease back gradually. Do not stop pedalling and sit up and hit the brakes – the consequences can be devastating to yourself and others
- Learn to corner properly by spreading your weight evenly across the bike – push your rear back into the saddle and keep hands forward on the bars. Keep momentum going by pedalling if possible. If cornering too steeply to pedal safely then point your knee into the corner and keep your outside leg straight. Try not to brake while cornering
- **Chaingang!** – this is used sometimes on the more advanced rides. There are two lines of riders, the outside one moves towards the front, the other dropping back so that everyone rotates to the front for a few seconds. Key points:
  - Keep moving smoothly at a good speed
  - When moving to the front move steadily and smoothly, do not sprint past and open up gaps. The outer line gradually overhauls the inner
  - The inner line pace should stay fairly constant

### Ride leaders – you are the **BOSS** and you control the ride and the riders!

- Plan a safe route beforehand
- do a quick health and safety check before starting the ride:
  - is everyone fit to ride – if not, they should not ride with the group
  - does everyone have food and drink
  - are bikes and equipment roadworthy?
- Make sure riders know what the prospective route, pace and distance are
- Welcome newcomers and run through cycling etiquette with them. Introduce them to others in the group. Try to ‘buddy’ them up
- Be aware of the abilities of the riders in the group and ride appropriately
- Do your best to make sure no one is ‘dropped’ (it’s not pleasant and reflects badly on club rides)
- Give clear instructions and directions
- Indicate hazards whenever possible
- Try to stop only in safe places
- Remember ‘comfort’ stops!

Those who do not comply with these guidelines will not be welcome on club rides

**RIDE SAFE AND HAVE FUN!**

Phil Richards (Club Coach) 5/12/2007