

RIDE GUIDELINES

A core element of the Ottawa Bicycle Club's services to members is the offering of a variety of regularly-scheduled rides. Members will be notified of these rides via the club's on-line activity calendar and, occasionally, through other electronic means such as e-mail. Members will normally be asked to sign up for rides in advance, taking note of ride distance and pace options that may be available.

Participating in these rides is a benefit available only to club members. The types of rides vary, but all provide an opportunity to ride with like-minded people, offering a social opportunity in addition to the physical activity.

This guideline provides helpful information that will enable OBC members to maximize their enjoyment of the rides and to ensure that the rides are conducted efficiently and safely.

Based on the [Ontario Cycling Association's provincial ride guidelines](#), this guideline is comprised of several parts.

1. "General information": Information that is applicable to all OBC rides is provided, starting with how to choose the right ride for you, tips on what to bring on a ride and then general safety and courtesy guidelines.
2. "Group riding": Information that describes how the OBC group rides are managed, with some basic terminology followed by information on how to safely ride in a group.
3. "What kind of rides does OBC offer": Including OBC-led road rides, gravel rides, women's' rides and Member-led rides.
4. "Incident reporting": Information on the responsibilities of the ride leader(s) on OBC-led rides, and Member-led rides if an incident is to occur.

1.0 OBC Group Rides – General Information

1.1 My First Ride with the OBC

If you have limited experience riding in a group or are new to the OBC, we encourage you to take the OBC's free Group Riding Techniques training program before participating in the club's rides. That program will help to give you the knowledge and confidence to ride safely in an OBC group ride.

When you sign up for your first group ride, be careful to select the type of ride (see Section 3), distance, and pace that you will be comfortable with. It might be best for newer or less experienced cyclists to choose a shorter distance or slower group for their first ride. It is better to feel like you can do more next time than to have struggled through a ride and potentially not enjoyed yourself, or gotten injured!

The advertised start time for each ride is when we plan to start riding. Be sure to arrive early so that you have time to get ready to leave at the appointed time.

1.2 What do I Need to Bring?

Bicycle

Road, cyclocross, and hybrid bikes are best suited to club rides, although some members use mountain or gravel bikes. Mountain bikes, with wider and softer tires, offer more rolling resistance, and hence require more effort for the same distance. The best choice for a given ride will be dictated by the planned route – e.g., road vs. gravel. Although riding an appropriate bike is helpful, it is more important to select a group whose speed you can comfortably match for the duration of the ride.

Your bicycle should be in good working condition. If a mechanical failure occurs, the rest of the group will be affected and may be placed at risk. Be sure to check your tires and brakes before the ride!

It is your responsibility to ensure that your bicycle complies with provincial legal requirements. In Ontario, for example, all bicycles must have working brakes and a bell, gong or horn. Quebec has broader requirements, including reflectors and reflective tape. Consult the following sites for further details. Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h08> (see section VI-Equipment) Quebec: <https://saaq.gouv.qc.ca/en/road-safety/modes-transportation/bicycle/bicycles-and-accessories/>

Nutrition

Each rider is responsible for carrying sufficient food and fluids for their own needs. Some rides include planned stops where food or water can be purchased, which will be advertised in advance, but everyone should be prepared with nutrition options in case of unexpected closures or additional needs.

If your group opts to stop at a pub or a restaurant, remember that they are businesses and understandably don't take too kindly to a bunch of cyclists bringing in their own food and drink. That being said, businesses are usually understanding and happy to fill the water bottles of good customers.

Clothing

Ensure that you are adequately prepared for changes in the weather during a ride. Dressing in layers is a good strategy for handling cool weather at the start of a ride on days when it is expected to warm up. Carrying a nylon jacket is wise on days with a chance of rain. This is the responsibility of each rider. Please see the Extreme Weather Policy (#13) for OBC guidelines on modifying and cancelling rides in extreme weather.

Be Prepared

You are expected to be self-sufficient with respect to your equipment. This means carry a pump, a spare tube, and a basic tool kit for making repairs during a ride. Of course, an advantage of a group ride is that others will be with you and able to help if needed, but you still need to be personally prepared and responsible.

Each rider should be aware of the planned route for the ride. The routes are usually available for download to a GPS device in advance of the ride, and carrying a printed map and/or cue sheet is a good alternative.

Kickstands

You should not have a kickstand on your bike when participating in group rides. A kick-stand poses a risk to your fellow riders.

Aero Bars

The use of aerobars is not permitted in OBC group rides. It is not necessary to remove them from your bike; just do not use them. Aero bars increase your reaction time (e.g., to brake) and can inhibit your control and stability, both of which can compromise the safety of the group.

Helmets

Helmets must be worn at all times on OBC rides.

Mirrors

The use of mirrors is optional, but highly encouraged. By using a mirror, you can see both the riders and traffic behind you without turning your head and body. Using mirrors can go a long way to keeping a group together and riding smoothly as it permits you to see if riders are struggling, being dropped, or have stopped.

Lights

The OBC does not normally schedule rides that cannot be completed before dark. However, particularly for evening rides as the sun begins to set earlier late summer, it is possible that flat tires or mechanical issues could delay the completion of a ride. All riders should be equipped with head and tail lights for club rides where this is a possibility.

1.3 Safety and Courtesy Basics

Traffic Laws

Riders on OBC group rides are expected to obey all traffic laws and rules of the road. In particular,

- Never ride through red lights. If you are at the back of a group when the light changes to red, you must stop. The lead riders are expected to come to a stop off to the side of the road or soft pedal on the other side of the light and wait for everyone to rejoin the group.
- All riders should stop at stop signs. At four-way stops, the group should proceed through the intersection as a unit, while ensuring that any cross-traffic is waiting for the group to pass. At stops where cross-

traffic does not have to stop, each rider should determine for themselves when it is safe to proceed. Although calling “clear” to other group riders is helpful, each rider is ultimately responsible for their own safety.

- Use the appropriate lanes on the road as they are marked. Use left or right turn lanes when turning, but keep out of right turn lanes when going straight.
- Never pass stationary vehicles on the right side, whether at an intersection or elsewhere.

Safety

As a cyclist on a club ride, you are of course responsible for your own safety, but you are also responsible for contributing to the safety of the group as a whole. It is important to avoid injuries by riding in a safe manner and by encouraging others in the group to do the same. If you are concerned with the riding habits of another rider in your group, discuss the matter with the Group Leader, the Ride Leader, or raise your concerns with the Touring Director.

Signalling

One of the key necessities of group riding is that the cyclists involved act in a predictable way. One way of doing so is using hand signals to inform the cyclists behind you of:

- Upcoming turns;
- Slowing of the pace or preparation to stop; and
- Road hazards (e.g., potholes) when the group cannot take a line that enables all riders to see the hazard in advance.

Signals to other riders should generally be brief, so that the information is passed along while enabling everyone to maintain control of their bikes with two hands on the handlebars as much as possible.

Courtesy and Co-operation

Please be courteous to other road users. Our safety is enhanced if we can minimize motorist frustration. Co-operation with both motorists and other members of the cycling and pedestrian community is absolutely essential. In addition to staying safe, we want to present a positive image of OBC to the public at all times since we are all representing the club while out riding.

Bike Paths

Some of our rides include segments along multi-use pathways that are open to the public. Be courteous and cautious around other users of the pathway – particularly children and animals, whose moves can be unpredictable. Don't pass other path users unless

- You alert them in advance, e.g., by ringing your bell or announcing your presence;
- You can see sufficiently far ahead to know that the pathway is clear of oncoming traffic; and

- You can give at least 1 metre of clearance in passing the other path user.

2.0 Group Riding Basics

The OBC's group rides are a fun way to enjoy the countryside, in the company of like-minded people with a common objective for the day's ride. Groups are established according to factors such as the speed, distance, ability, and interest of the participants. These rides are a great way to meet and interact with other club members during the rides and during any breaks.

When you join a group ride it is your responsibility to stay with the group until the end of the ride, or until you advise the Group Leader that you are leaving. At the same time, most OBC rides have a "no drop" policy: the group is responsible for ensuring they don't drop members during a ride.

The following subsections provide some basic terminology and techniques of group riding. Familiarity with this information will enable you to be an effective member of the "team," know what to do, and know what the other riders are, or should be, doing.

2.1 Terminology

Group

In this guideline, "group" is the generic term used for cyclists who ride together, usually in formation and at about the same speed. Often, multiple groups will be established for a given OBC ride, therefore ensuring groups of six to twelve riders per group riding at paces that are comfortable for each group.

Ride Host

The ride host organizes a given ride and is responsible for ensuring that each group has a leader. The ride host greets members as they arrive for the start of a ride, makes pre-ride announcements, and is available to answer questions on the ride.

Group Leader

The Group Leader is responsible for leading a group on a particular ride. The Group Leader provides overall organization, safety, enjoyment for the group. This includes knowing the route and enforcing the group's speed. The leader also mingles throughout the group to ensure cohesiveness, points out and enforces riding guidelines and etiquette, and acts as the first point of contact for troubleshooting issues and/or concerns.

Lead Rider(s)

These are the two riders in front in a double pace line, or the one lead rider in a single file formation. The lead riders are responsible for calling out turns and stops,

and warning of bad road conditions. The inside rider, the rider closest to the curb or shoulder, is responsible for maintaining the speed of the group. The outside rider is responsible for alerting the group to oncoming traffic. The lead riders decide together when the group is to rotate.

Group (or Pack) Rider(s)

These are the riders behind the lead rider(s) and ahead of the rear rider(s). Each group rider is responsible for passing on information from the lead rider(s) to the riders behind.

Rear (or Tail) Rider

The tail rider is the last rider on the outside in a double formation, or simply the last rider in single file. The tail rider is responsible for alerting the group to vehicles approaching from the rear, signalling changes in direction to following traffic, and initiating turns and lane changes. The tail rider is also responsible for ensuring that nobody is left behind. Meaning, if riders are at risk of being dropped, the group leader should be advised so that the speed may be adjusted.

Rotation

Rotation is the process of changing the lead rider so that all riders share the work. It's about 30% harder to "pull" in front than to draft behind another rider. Riders change positions in the group so that each rider takes a short turn at the front, followed by a longer opportunity to draft behind others.

Soft Pedal

This is a cycling technique where the rider continues to spin the pedals, but with very little force being applied. This technique is often used when a group needs to reduce speed. For example, when one or more riders is "off the back"; slightly reducing the pace by soft pedalling usually enables all riders to rejoin the group.

2.2 Group Riding Manoeuvres

Starting

The ride leader will announce that the group is starting and moves off slowly. Riders soft pedal until the entire group is in formation, at which point the speed is increased.

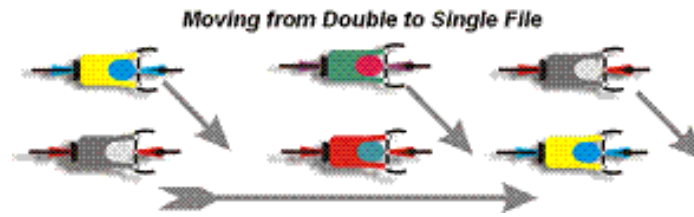
Riding Formation

The traditional format for road cycling groups, where permitted by provincial traffic laws, is a double file line and changes to a single file line if traffic and road conditions dictate. Riding double file makes the group more visible and encourages motor vehicles to pass with more clearance.

Changing to Single file

The Group Leader will decide whether traffic or road conditions merit changing to single file. Riding single file may not benefit either cyclists or motorists, as it doubles the length of the group therefore potentially make passing more

hazardous. When single file is called, the inside riders put a bike length between them and the bike in front. The outside riders then move in ahead of the rider on their right. As soon as conditions permit, the group should revert to double file.



Half-wheeling



Alignment

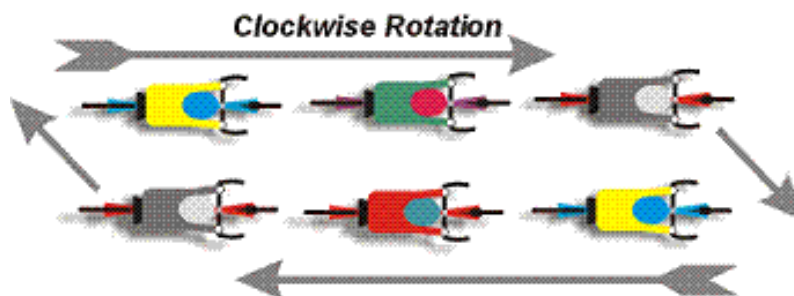
When riding in double file, ride side-by-side with your wheels level to your neighbour's. Try not to pull ahead or slip behind (known as "half-wheeling"). Follow the rider in front, but with a slight offset to provide extra braking distance in an emergency. Similarly, when riding in single file, maintain your front wheel behind the rear wheel of the rider ahead of you with a slight offset, but do not half-wheel.

Rotating – General

The lead rider(s) should rotate frequently to avoid fatigue. If you are tired, rotate through the front quickly. If you feel comfortable in front then spend a little more time there, but don't "hog" the front as members remain best engaged when rotating regularly.

Rotating – Double File

The group usually rotates clockwise when the outside lead rider calls "ROTATE". However, in cases where there are strong crosswinds moving from right to left, the Group Leader can direct that anti-clockwise rotation be used. With the default, clockwise rotation, the lead rider accelerates *slightly* to move up and across in front of the inside rider. Inside lead rider calls "CLEAR" when the outside rider is clear to come across to the inside position. Outside riders move up one place and inside riders back one place. The inside rear rider moves over to become the tail rider.



Rotating – Single File

The lead rider initiates a rotation by calling “ROTATE”, pulling out to the left and slowing slightly, so that the group can move ahead without accelerating. It is the lead rider’s responsibility to determine when it is safe to rotate. In some circumstances, a clockwise rotation may be preferable – for instance on roads with a wide shoulder and heavy traffic. In such cases, the lead rider would call “ROTATE” and shift to the right side of the lane, allowing the group to pass on the left without needing to leave the bike lane.

Hazards

The lead rider(s) calls out hazards such as bumps, gravel, and roadkill, when they are unable to take a line that enables the group to spot the hazard. Point out the position of the hazard so that following riders know on which side to pass. The group riders relay this information to the riders behind.

Right turn

The lead rider(s) call for the turn and the group riders relay this through the pack through hand signals. The tail rider should signal the turn for any trailing traffic. Stop if required, and then proceed as traffic permits. If it is not necessary to stop, coast through the turn with right pedal up.

Left turn

The lead rider(s) call for the turn and the group riders relay this through the pack through hand signals. The tail rider determines when it is safe to take or cross the lane, signals the turn to following traffic, and instructs the rest of the group to move across the lane. Riders move across the lane from rear to front. This manoeuvre is repeated as necessary for multilane roads. Stop if required, and then proceed as traffic permits. If it is not necessary to stop, coast through the turn with left pedal up.

Uphill

Gear down and proceed uphill, maintaining formation if possible. However, if the formation breaks up (e.g., on long or steep hills), riders should stop or soft pedal at the top of the hill to regroup. Do not leave slower riders behind as they may have difficulty catching up.

Downhill

The lead rider(s) must continue to pedal. The group riders will tend to catch up because of the benefits of drafting. The group can regroup at the base of the hill once speeds stabilize, when is safe to do so.

Following Vehicles

The tail rider indicates when a vehicle is overtaking or slowing down to follow the group (call out “CAR PASSING” or “CAR BACK”). As a general rule, the tail rider

should *not* signal to the motorist when it is safe to pass; it is best left to the judgement of the motorist.

Separation Between Groups

To assist motorists to pass safely, we must ensure that there is enough distance between groups to allow a motor vehicle to pass and return to the lane. This both optimizes the safety of the groups and acknowledges the rights of other road users. To avoid the formation of a large unmanageable group, two groups should not join up.

Passing

When approaching a single rider or slower group from the rear, check that the way is clear, call out "PASSING", and then pass, allowing plenty of room. If there is oncoming traffic or the lane is not wide enough for both groups side by side, the group should wait until it is safe to pass. If there is following traffic, the tail rider should indicate that the group is going to pass (left turn signal). The leader of the front group should assist the group behind to pass, if necessary, by slowing the pace a little.

Stopping

The lead riders will call "STOPPING". Gear down, stop pedalling, and brake gently. Move completely off the road when stopping.

Slowing

The lead riders or a group rider call "SLOWING". Stop pedalling and prepare to brake. Riders slow down in order from rear to front to avoid catching the rider ahead.

Echelons

This is a riding formation used by professional cyclists to optimise performance in cross-winds. In an echelon, all riders draft by offsetting to the left (or right) of the rider ahead of them. Echelons are not to be used for OBC group rides; they are only suited for the closed roads used in professional races.

3.0 What Kinds of Rides does the OBC Offer?

3.1 OBC-Led Road Rides

The OBC's group road rides are organized in groups of six to twelve cyclists, led by knowledgeable OBC group leaders. The groups are established according to factors such as the speed, ability, and interest of the participants. These rides enable riders to draft behind one another, saving energy (particularly when riding into the wind), while facilitating social interaction during the rides and any breaks. The group additionally offers support for bike mechanical problems along the ride if and when necessary.

The OBC road rides follow the group riding practices outlined in section 2 of this guideline. Unless indicated otherwise, OBC road rides follow a “no drop” policy.

Bicycles

Road, cyclocross and hybrid bikes are best suited to club road rides. While riding a suitable bike is helpful, it is more important that you select a group whose speed you can comfortably match for the duration of the ride.

Group Speeds

For the OBC’s regularly scheduled road rides, riders register in advance for a specific group, according to their expected speed. The fastest groups tend to be performance-oriented, so the riders are expected to be fit, experienced, and self-sufficient. The other groups are more social or recreational in nature, so that any rider experiencing difficulty will get support from other riders. The OBC road rides offer groups from among the following:

Sportif	35 + kmph
A-Ride	31-34 kmph
B-Ride	27-30 kmph
C-Ride	23-26 kmph
D-Ride	19-22 kmph

Note that when the health protocols call for increased on-bike physical distancing, the anticipated group speeds will be at the lower end of the above ranges.

3.2 OBC-led Gravel Rides

"Gravel" can mean a wide range of road surfaces and conditions, from easy-to-ride "hardpack" surfaces to unmaintained single-track in remote areas with no vehicle access.

The OBC offers a wide range of gravel rides, while leaning towards rides that are accessible for those new to gravel. Each ride description will contain information on the style of the ride, including a minimum tire size recommendation, and noting any particularly remote areas or unmaintained roads. While the style of the ride will vary, OBC gravel rides tend to encourage "stopping to see the sights, take photos, and enjoy the scenery".

On more advanced rides, you may need to walk your bike in places, and possibly get wet crossing streams or riding muddy roads, even when the weather is dry.

Given the remote nature of gravel riding, it's even more important to be self-sufficient. Carrying a pump, two tubes, a patch kit, and "tire boots" to repair tears in a tire is prudent. The availability of food and water tends to be more limited on these rides, and it is therefore particularly important to be well-provisioned.

The OBC's "no drop" policy is strictly followed for its gravel rides. For everyone's safety and wellbeing, it is important that you do not leave a group without telling the group leader.

Bicycles

A gravel bike is ideal, but "endurance" road bikes, cyclocross bikes, and "old-style" touring bikes are acceptable too. Though a tire width of 38-40mm is ideal, 28mm tires with good tread are acceptable on some rides. Generally, tire width should be at least 32mm. Gravel roads tend to have steeper hills than paved, so smaller gears are very useful.

Mountain bike cleats (i.e., Shimano SPD cleats) or no cleats at all are good choices when riding rougher unmaintained roads, so you have the ability to easily unclip where you may need to frequently put a foot down, and to walk on rough surfaces if needed.

Group Speeds

Given the nature of the road surfaces, average speeds are significantly slower than road riding. Groups always go at the speed of the slowest rider, or faster riders stop frequently to allow slower riders to catch up. Currently, the OBC does not have defined speed groups for gravel riding, however, the nature/speed of the ride will be in the ride's description. Regular OBC gravel rides will lean towards being accessible to newer and recreational gravel riders.

There are a few other significant differences from group road riding:

- Group sizes are smaller than for road rides, with a maximum of 6-8 riders;
- Riders generally do not ride in a pack (to allow for maneuvering on rough surfaces);
- Since many roads are very isolated and there is usually very little traffic, the group will often use the whole lane (or the whole road, on single-lane roads!). When sight lines are limited on curves and hills, stay to the right to avoid coming face-to-face with a tractor or 4x4!
- Groups tend to break up more frequently due to differences in bike handling skills and in hill-climbing, so groups make frequent stops to re-group; and
- Since many riders are nervous about drinking or eating while riding on gravel, more frequent short water stops are common. Often these are at an interesting sight or to chat with someone on the road.

3.3 OBC-led Womens' Rides

The OBC also offers a program of women's-only rides. These rides will follow the general guidelines specific to road rides or to gravel rides, as applicable.

However, these rides differ from the OBC's group rides that are open to both men and women in that the focus of the women's-only rides are for newer, less experienced and possibly less-confident OBC members. Accordingly, these rides:

- Tend to be more recreational in nature;
 - More relaxed speed options;
 - Shorter ride distances;
- Are led by friendly and welcoming Ride Hosts and Group Leaders;
- Will focus more on social interaction and less on athletic performance.

The OBC anticipates that by participating in these rides, our female members will develop the confidence and skills to take on greater cycling challenges, such as the longer group rides and / or the women's time trials.

3.4 Member-led Rides

In 2021, the OBC ran a trial of member-initiated rides involving a special collection of routes in the Rideau Lakes area. This trial program was known as the "50 for 50" event, as it celebrated the OBC's 50th anniversary with 50 specific routes.

Starting in 2022, the OBC is offering member-initiated rides which can be drawn from the club's entire route library. As with the 50-for-50 event, members can designate the date, start time and route for their planned ride, which will then be posted on-line to enable other members to join. As with all of the club's rides, these member-initiated rides are open to OBC members only so that they can be officially sanctioned and therefore covered by the member's Ontario Cycling insurance.

4.0 Incident reporting

The ride leader's role is to ensure that the ride is safe and enjoyable, for all riders, while following the club's risk management plan and ride guidelines. It is the leader's responsibility to stop the ride if, at any point, the safety of a rider is questioned.

If a cyclist is injured, the ride leader should

- Stay calm and delegate responsibilities
- Remind others to stay out of harm's way
- Check for danger and assign someone to direct traffic
- Identify mechanisms of injury and minimize further injury
- Don't move victim
- If in doubt, call 911

- Send incident information to the club executive after the ride for forwarding to the OCA. Use phone or paper to make notes and take papers to then be able to fill out the [incident report](#) properly later on.
 - Get personal information and medical history
- Administer first aid to the best of your ability or delegate
 - Look for signs of a concussion, any evidence of a head injury, and pay special attention to damage to the helmet. This would result in the removal from the rest of the ride.
 - Comfort the victim

After the ride, the ride leader must:

- Check in with group, provide feedback, and encouragement
- Follow up on any injuries (regardless of seriousness), as well as lost or abandoned riders, within the same or next day
- The following information must be sent to the club executive in the case of an incident immediately following a ride
 - Name
 - Date
 - Description of the incident
 - Location
 - Witnesses

4.1 OBC-led rides

In an OBC led group ride, the delegated ride leader is responsible for the others safety and wellbeing in the group. This person also assumes all responsibilities highlighted above. They are therefore responsible for the other rides in the group, of reporting any incidents should they occur, and looking after any dropped or abandoned riders on the OBC-led outing.

4.2 Member-led rides

For a member-led ride, the person who has coordinated the ride should assume the ride leader responsibilities that are highlighted above. These individuals, similarly, are responsible for reporting any incidents, should they occur, and for looking after any dropped or abandoned riders on the outing.