



# Ride Leader Guidelines

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## Why lead a ride?

- Riding is fun but leading offers special benefits: You choose the route, pace, and food stops. You share your favorite destinations and routes, and ride at your preferred pace.
- You can share your other interests, knowledge or talents by leading themed rides, e.g. photography rides, garden rides, yard sale rides, kid's rides, camping rides, moonlight rides, bakery rides and ice cream rides.
- You can inspire, motivate and excite people about bicycling. Riders who lead regularly can help convert novices into avid cyclists by the end of a season.
- Leading encourages you to ride.
- The club throws an annual party to thank our ride leaders, and provides volunteer points exchangeable for cycling merchandise.
- Other riders call you "Leader."

## What's in this booklet?

If you've led rides for the Westchester Cycle Club, some of the information in this booklet will already be familiar to you. Even so, you'll probably want to look through these guidelines for ideas on how to make your rides even safer or more fun, and to refresh your knowledge about the basics of ride leading.

If you have not led a ride, this booklet will tell you how. 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.

**See the checklists in the appendix:** We included day-of-ride checklists which give a summary of what to bring and do before and during the ride.

**Not all guidelines apply to every ride:** These guidelines are for all WCC rides, but the focus is on the most common rides — social rides at a moderate pace with regular rest stops. You may adapt the guidelines to your level's style, especially if you lead faster rides with few or no stops. Keep in mind that laws change, for example those regarding e-bikes and single-file riding, so watch for updates.

# If you've never led a ride

In addition to reviewing this booklet, you should attend the annual ride leader summit. In addition, prospective ride leaders are required to review the [leader information on our club's website](#) and to meet the specified criteria, including co-leading at least two rides. 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. Another way to get involved is to volunteer to sweep, which means that you ride at the back and help slower riders. You can also contact the Rides Chair (listed in the *Plain Spoke'n* or [on our website](#)) and ask for someone to help you get started.

## What kind of ride do you want to lead?

Before you select a route or make other preparations, you need to decide:

- Ride category – The club categories range from D to A+. Details are [here](#). These categories are important because they reflect pace and typical range but beyond that, they reflect a culture. The faster groups (B+ and above) tend to not to stop or regroup. The B, B- and C+ groups tend to stop, regroup and offer a more social element. The slower groups (C and below) tend to be even more social, going slowly up hills and perhaps stopping at the top for a view. Remember – once you pick a ride category, that will dictate a range of paces and distances that the group will expect, then be more specific in the Ride Description you post on the club's Website, in the Ride Schedule. E-bikes are not allowed on our rides but that may change based on law modifications pending as of June 2019.
- A pace within the range of the category (typically within a 2 mph spread). Maybe today is the day you hope to break a speed record or take it easy and treat it as a recovery ride. Be realistic about the pace you pick – make sure it's one that you, the leader, can comfortably maintain. Group pace is never the same as solo riding. And remember, if you push yourself to a faster-than-comfortable pace, you'll be riding at the upper edge of your abilities and may have trouble keeping up with the rest of your own group. Riding above your pace also raises the risk of injury to yourself and others. Factor in the distance and terrain. The hillier the ride, the slower the pace and the harder it is to ride a long distance.
- A distance within the range of the category. As with the pace, tailor the distance to the category of the ride and to what you are in the mood for.
- 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. but also factor in sunset. Consider, too, that a Saturday ride starting at 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. tends to draw a larger crowd than a ride starting earlier or much later. Weather can be another factor in ride start times. On really hot days it's best to head out early. On cold days, wait for temperatures to rise. Study the hourly forecast closely.

- Consider the season, particularly with respect to the weather and available daylight. Most folks don't like riding in a cold, dark rain.
- Be sure you're not conflicting with anything that could make your ride unpleasant, such as riding through crowded town events on the streets.

## Selecting a route

### General considerations

- Always make sure you are familiar with the route you pick. Ideally, you should pre-ride or pre-drive it so you know about the turns, road conditions, construction and can plan food 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, especially after winter months when many roads take a beating and there's lots of repaving.

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 beforehand, preferably on a bike. Many of us have painful memories of the hills on a route that the ride leader chose while driving a car.

- Choose a starting point that is convenient, meaning that it's easy to find and has ample parking and, ideally, nearby restrooms.
- Consider food, water and restroom breaks for your route. Most rides break at the midway point. If you don't know where to make a rest stop, look at the Ride Description that a leader posted previously or ask a leader or rider who's done the ride previously.
- Wherever you go, respect private property and, park and ride only where bicycles are welcome. In addition, be respectful of neighbors and property when choosing a place to "go to the bathroom."

### Using an existing route

The best choice for a route is often one that you've enjoyed riding. Feel free to add your own variations to existing routes. Our [RideWithGPS club account](#) Ride Library has over 500 routes with a wealth of tried and true routes for every riding ability.

## Designing your own route

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

- Safety is the deciding factor for all route decisions. If you can't find a safe way to travel to a specific location on a bike, don't. Keep in mind that riding with a group is much different from riding by yourself, and rarely easier.
- 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.
- 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 with medians only have enough room for one lane of traffic in each direction. Some streets with traffic diverters only have enough room for one lane of traffic, period.
- Avoid crossing busy streets except at controlled intersections (with stop signs or traffic lights).
- Avoid heavily traveled, multi-lane roads whenever possible. If you find yourself with no good alternatives, try to avoid making left turns. Even with the best of riders, getting a group safely across two lanes of traffic so they can turn is dicey. With inexperienced riders, it's even harder.
- In general, avoid riding on sidewalks. We are required by law to stay on roads, and in many localities, we are required by law to ride only single file.
- Unless you're leading a mountain-bike or gravel/dirt ride, avoid uneven or difficult riding surfaces, for example, rough or rutted roads, cobblestones, bridges with metal decks, railroad tracks, dirt, gravel, grass and stairs. However, don't miss out on a stunning overlook or a ride along the water just because the route includes a short stretch of gravel. Simply suggest that people walk if they'd rather. And make sure to advertise this element in advance, in the ride description.
- Try to avoid surprises. Suppose, for example, that you choose a route on which there's a steep uphill just after a turn. If you don't remember to warn riders, they'll be so distracted trying to get into the correct gear that they won't watch out for one another or for vehicular traffic. With an inexperienced group, some riders will simply stop, with no thought to whether anyone might be behind them.

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**Note:** If you can't circumvent a problem that may stymie your riders, try to warn everyone, for example at a stop immediately beforehand.

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- Study maps in search of promising back roads. However, be sure you ride these roads beforehand, so you don't run into a washed-out bridge or 20 miles of rough gravel.

- Explore. The best way to find spectacular views, pedestrian over- and underpasses, wooden bridges, unusual houses, beautiful gardens, or anything else that won't show up on a map is by scouting out the route in person.
- If you know a ride leader who has led rides in the area where you want to go, ask for suggestions on roads to use or avoid, good places for mid-ride snacks, scenic overlooks, mean dogs, and other relevant details.

## Route Library

RideWithGPS ([www.RWGPS.com](http://www.RWGPS.com)) links are now “standard operating procedure” for virtually every ride listed on our website. WCC maintains a [Ride With GPS Club Account](#) with hundreds of routes in its “Route Library.” The library is public, accessible to everyone, with or without a RWGPS account. Ride leaders should start at the RWGPS library when looking for routes and links. From the WCC website, click on Club RWGPS Library, under Cue Sheets. That will bring you to this url: <https://ridewithgps.com/clubs/80-westchester-cycle-club>

Sort the routes by name, starting location, or mileage. Some of the routes are tagged with levels. You can also use filters to find routes by distance, elevation, etc. When you find what you are looking for, click view, and then copy that link into your ride description. Indicate that the link is coming from the club account.

Any WCC member can enroll in WCC's RWGPS account for free, and if the route is in our club's “Route Library,” members can access voice navigation via the phone app. Club administrators can copy your route into the club's library if it is not yet there, which will build our club library, and ensure everyone has access to voice navigation on your ride.

Other riders with bike computers can load the RWGPS routes onto their devices. And for riders who prefer paper cue sheets, they can be printed from the RWGPS site.

## Posting a ride

To post a ride, when logged in to the WCC Website, look at the left of the screen and click “Rides,” then “Add a Ride.” Complete all fields, then click “Add” at the bottom of the screen. We strongly encourage you, when posting to the Website's [Ride Schedule](#), to include detailed information, including a link to the RideWithGPS route file. Some fields are mandatory. We also suggest listing target pace, regrouping plans and estimated cumulative elevation gain, to give riders a better understanding of what to expect, more specific than the general ride category range.

As a courtesy to all riders, try not to change the key details of your ride (e.g. start time, pace, location, terrain) after you post it. If you do make a change, riders are automatically emailed.



During the process of posting a ride, you can add a co-leader, which the system calls “Assistant Leader.” As the ride date approaches, keep track of who’s signed up to determine if you have enough riders to carry through with the ride, if you have too many riders and should break into groups, whether the people signing up are truly at the level you intend and whether a rider on an initial WCC ride should be contacted in advance to explain how everything works.

In your ride description, include any cautions, quirks or special requirements. Here are some examples of items:

- If the ride begins or ends after dark, note that riders should bring headlights and taillights. (Be conservative. If there’s a chance you won’t finish riding until after dark, include that in the ride description.)
- We consider 50 feet or less of climbing per mile to be a “flat” ride. If the ride is significantly hillier, warn people in the ride description.
- If you’re planning to stop for an extended period mid-ride, mention this in the ride description.
- If you’re taking a route that’s shy of amenities such as food/water stops and restrooms, caution people so they can plan accordingly.
- If you’re leading a ride that starts in a remote location, encourage carpooling.
- Request that riders arrive at the start at least 15 minutes beforehand, to ensure you start riding at the advertised time.

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**Important!** If you want to include any non-cycling activities, either make them clearly part of the ride or optional at the end of the ride. Riders must be able to conclude the ride without being forced to choose between participating in the extra activities and waiting for the ride to resume. This applies to all non-cycling activities, but it especially applies to anything hazardous, including activities that involve alcohol (winery and brewery stops) and activities that require special training or skills (hiking swimming, kayaking, and so on).

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## WCC’s No-Discrimination policy

All WCC rides are open to everyone who is able and willing to participate safely and cooperatively. In your ride description, you can specify whom a ride is primarily intended for, but you can’t specify who the ride isn’t for.

This no-discrimination policy does not prevent a leader from asking a rider to leave because the rider’s abilities don’t match what’s required, issues with equipment or inappropriate actions on that or previous rides.

## Fielding inquiries from prospective riders

When posting a ride, your phone number and email are made available so riders can contact you with questions. A common question is whether their abilities are suited for your ride. How you answer depends on the difficulty of the ride and your preferences as a ride leader. E-bikes are not allowed on our rides but that may change based on law modifications pending as of June 2019.

A parent who wants to bring a child may contact you. The club doesn't forbid children on rides, but a parent must sign the [liability waiver](#) for anyone under age 18. In addition, unless you're just riding around the SUNY parking lot or the bike trail, be cautious about encouraging parents to bring children. Parents don't always have a realistic perception of how far or fast their children are able to ride, or how safely they are able to ride in a group. The ride leader makes the final decision about whether to allow a child to ride.

## What to bring to the ride

Arrive at the start at least 15 minutes early with:

- Your bike and helmet.
- A bike computer or cellphone bearing a riding app, with the route loaded on it.
- Copies of the cue sheet if you advertised that you'd provide one.
- Food and full water bottles.
- Basic tools: a pump, an extra tube and tire levers.
- A cell phone that is charged, with ringer on.
- Smartphone with access to the WCC website so you can digitally and remotely check in riders.
- Money.
- Your identification and emergency contact information. This serves as a backup to the WCC Website's [Membership directory](#), which contains this information.

# At the beginning of the ride

## Confirm riders, check on helmets, and get a headcount

- Record attendance through the website’s “Confirm” feature (accessible in your Ride Description, Sign Up section). If you don’t use this digital feature, obtain physical signatures on a printed sign-in sheet.

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**Important!** A parent or legal guardian must sign the sign-in sheet 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.

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- If you didn’t use the website “Confirm” feature or cannot access the club’s Website and its [Membership directory](#) remotely, carry the sign-in sheet with you on the ride in case of an emergency because it contains each rider’s cell phone and emergency contact information. If you have a sign-in sheet, it should be submitted promptly after the ride.
- Don’t let anyone ride without a helmet. The club requires all riders to wear helmets on all rides. If someone arrives without a helmet, you can ask if any of the other riders has a spare or suggest trying the nearest bike shop; many shops rent helmets.

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**Important!** If someone refuses to sign in for a ride or insists on riding without a helmet, make it clear to other riders that the uncooperative rider is not part of the group. E-bikes are not allowed on our rides but that may change based on law modifications pending as of June 2019.

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- Count the riders so you can ensure you don’t lose anyone along the way. Recount frequently.

## Make a pre-ride announcement, especially about safety

Here’s a long list of topics to try to cover in a pre -ride talk. Keep in mind, though, that if you talk too long, people will stop listening. Particularly for slower and less experienced riders, these points bear repeating. Experienced and repeat riders do not need as long a pre-ride talk. Use your judgment.

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**Note:** The items on this list also appear on the “Ride leader’s day-of-ride checklist,” in the Appendix of this booklet.

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- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself, and have other riders introduce themselves, to the group. Identify your sweeps, co-leaders and other helpers. If the ride will be breaking into two or more groups, explain who will be leading each group and whether the paces, regroupings and rest stops will differ.

- **Welcome new riders:** Encourage regular riders to check in with newcomers during the ride. 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.
- **Contacts:** Ensure every rider has identification and emergency contact information on their bike (saddle bag) or wrist/ankle band. This serves as a backup to the club Website's [Membership directory](#), which contains this information. Also ensure everyone has the rider's cellphone number and that each of them has a charged, working cellphone, with the ringer and vibrate mode enabled.
- **Sign-ins, maps/cue sheets:** If not using the Website's "Confirm" feature, ask if everyone has signed in and has either a hard copy of the route or the digital file on a smartphone or bike computer.
- **Pace and Regrouping:** Announce the pace and explain what it means. Indicate whether the ride will stick together, regroup at the top of hills, at major intersections or in other situations.
- **The route:** Briefly describe the route, including food and rest stops, difficult hills, unusual or dangerous conditions, weather issues, regrouping points and tricky turns.
- **Safety:** Remind riders that each person is responsible for his or her own safety and for helping each other. You might emphasize that just because the rider ahead of you made it through an intersection without being run over doesn't mean you can, too.

You can't teach safe cycling in the three minutes you have before people stop listening, so vary your safety announcement to fit the experience of the riders and the specific circumstances.

- **Traffic regulations:** Remind riders that a bicycle is a vehicle and that bicycle riders are, therefore, expected to obey traffic regulations, including riding single file.
- **Courtesy:** Ask riders to be courteous. Drivers impressed with our courtesy will be more inclined to treat us with respect.
- **Rider's health:** Remind each rider to be aware of their own health, before, during and after the ride. If a rider isn't feeling well beforehand, he/she should not do the ride.
- **Group riding techniques:** If there are new or inexperienced riders, review group riding techniques, including:
  - **Riding single-file in traffic:** Make it clear that riders are *not* to block traffic by riding two or more abreast. This is now law in some localities.
  - **Riding on trails:** Remind riders to stay on the right half of the trail and to be considerate of other trail users.
  - **Hand signals:** Remind riders to use hand signals for turning or stopping and pointing out road hazards.

- **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 ride single file, as far as possible to the side of the road.

Discourage riders from calling out “Clear” at intersections to indicate that no cars are coming. “Clear” is subjective and temporary, so each rider should look for herself.

- **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.
- **Traffic lights and stop signs:** Caution riders not to run stop lights or stop signs out of fear of being left behind.
- **Special equipment:** Remind riders about any special equipment that’s required for the ride (for example, lights or lunches).
- **Keep the leader informed:** Ask riders to pass the word if someone leaves or breaks down, and to notify you if they’re planning to leave the ride before the end. In all cases, require them to inform you of their completion of the ride.
- **After-ride refreshments:** If you’re going somewhere after the ride for a meal or a snack, invite others, if you wish.
- **Questions?** Ask if there are questions or other comments on the route.

## 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.

- **Set a good example:** Ride safely, be welcoming and pleasant. Remember that you represent the Westchester Cycle Club.
- **Courtesy:** Anticipate situations where your group may inconvenience others. For example, when you stop to regroup, be sure your riders aren’t blocking the road or the sidewalk. When you re-enter the roadway, wait for a break in traffic, so drivers aren’t forced to slow down for your group.

If you’re taking the group on a trail, ask everyone to stay on the right half, regardless of the trail’s width. This may mean that everyone must ride single -file, which will make socializing more difficult. **Unsafe riders:** Unsafe riders endanger themselves and everyone around them, ruin the experience for others, and give cyclists a bad reputation overall. 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.

- ***New riders:*** Check in with each of the new riders periodically to ensure 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 or work with other experienced riders to do so. Your responsibility is to lead the ride you've advertised and to keep track of the people who are doing the same.
- ***Too-fast and too-slow riders:*** At the first regrouping point, if some riders are clearly too fast or too slow, consider splitting up. You can also ask slow riders if they'd prefer to break off and return to the starting point. If they choose to leave the group, try to ensure that they can find their way back. If faster riders do not agree to respect the targeted pace, suggest they form their own group and ride ahead without regrouping with the main group. The ride leader should inform this group that he/she no longer has responsibility for them – they are on their own. If they wish to designate a leader of their fast group, that leader assumes responsibility for navigation, safety, confirming safe completion of the ride, reporting accidents, etc. The ride leader should keep track of who is riding with whom and ensure that no-one is riding alone.
- ***Lost riders:*** Do your best to keep track of all riders. Assess how the riders at the back are doing and adjust the ride, as appropriate. Try not to leave anyone behind. However, you're not obligated to go back and look for anyone. If a rider or group of riders disappears, they probably either took a wrong turn or decided to go faster than the targeted pace and leave the group. Call them and try to coordinate where to meet, if they want to rejoin the group. If you are unable to reconnect, check at the end of the ride to make sure they returned safely. If you are part of the group that is lost, try to reconnect with the others. You may want to have someone ride at the back as a "sweep" to encourage and keep track of slower riders. For more information, see "The benefits of having a sweep."
- ***Regroup frequency:*** How often you stop to count heads and make sure everyone is fine depends on a plethora of factors. If you have some slower riders who are consistently falling behind but you don't want to ask them to leave or if you're leading an in-city ride on which you turn frequently, you'll need to regroup frequently. If you're riding on one road for 20 miles with self-sufficient, fast and experienced riders, you may not need to regroup at all. Base your decision on the comfort of the slowest riders, not on that of the fastest. Consider regrouping after major climbs.
- ***Traffic 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 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 in the rear. Don't pass cars on the right and make your way up to the intersection. The cars will just have to pass you again after the intersection, and this angers some drivers.

- ***Unforeseen problems:*** If you run into unforeseen problems (e.g. new construction, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic, a closed bakery), be creative. Change the route, take shelter, choose a different rest stop. Consider safety above all else, and ask for suggestions from your riders. They may know the area better than you. However, you're in charge, so don't let yourself be railroaded into something you think is unwise.
- ***Mid-ride announcements:*** At each regrouping point, announce the next regrouping point. Re-emphasize safety, especially related to upcoming conditions. For example, if you'll need to move into the left lane to turn, remind riders to look before they change lanes. If there's a steep uphill immediately after a turn, try to warn riders. If you're getting onto a trail, remind riders to stay on the right half and to be considerate of other trail users.
- ***Food/water and restroom stops:*** Whenever you stop with your group, encourage your riders to be considerate of the non-riders around you. If you inconvenience someone, apologize and do your best to rectify the situation.

When it's time to start riding again, announce your departure enough in advance that everyone has time to prepare. 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. Don't make your mark on the world with banana peels, energy bar wrappers and dead inner tubes.
- ***Helpers:*** Ask for volunteers to fix flat tires, pump air into tires, give shifting lessons, or serve as "corner people," riders who wait at corners and point riders in the right direction until everyone has passed. (See "Using corner people to keep riders from getting lost")
- ***Goodwill:*** Smile, wave, and call out thanks whenever anyone (especially a driver) is helpful to your group.
- ***Riding after dark:*** If you're riding after dark, slow down and keep the group together. A group of cyclists, each one properly lit with a headlight and taillight, is more visible after dark than an individual rider.
- ***Injuries and other problems:*** If one of your riders is injured, follow the guidelines under "Handling injuries." For information on handling other problems, see "Handling other problems."
- ***Have a good time yourself:*** Some rides are a joy to lead, while others are unadulterated drudgery. If you aren't having a good time yourself, think about what you could do differently right away or 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 from the front of the group. As long as everyone knows the route, you may be able to serve your riders as well by leading from the back. Some ride leaders make their way back and forth between the front and the back of the group, checking to see that everyone is doing all right. Other ride leaders choose to spend the entire ride at the back. This ensures that they'll eventually come upon anyone who has stopped for any reason.

If you choose not to lead from the front, consider:

- If it's a stick-together ride, remind everyone what the pace is and ask them to maintain it.
- If you want riders to stop in a particular location, be sure everyone knows where.
- Remind riders to follow the route carefully and stop if they have any doubts.

## The benefits of a sweep

If you lead from the front, you may want to have someone ride *sweep*, a helper who 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 unusually slow riders, mechanical problems, or an accident, a good sweep can serve as cheerleader, mechanic or co-navigator.

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 change a tire, and who will slow down and encourage the riders who are having a tough time on the hills.

## Using corner people to keep riders safe and from getting lost

You may want to use "corner people" at dangerous and easy-to-miss turns. Find a volunteer to stay at the corner and point riders in the proper direction (or to direct car traffic) until the sweep or last rider comes by. (Be sure everyone knows who they're watching for.) Make sure the corner person has time to catch up with the group.

## After the ride

Immediately after the ride, thank riders for coming and make sure they feel OK. If things didn't seem to go smoothly, ask for comments and suggestions. If it's a new route, ask for feedback: Did they like the route? What could you have done differently?

When you return home, you should contact any rider who was injured or lost.

If you are still not using the Website's "Confirm" feature to check in riders and instead are using paper forms, within a day or two, submit the Sign-In Sheet. Complete the final ride statistics on the Website, in your ride description.



# Handling injuries

## Severe accidents

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**Important!** If a rider suffers an accident and lands on his or her head, neck, or shoulders, you must consider the possibility of a neck or back injury. **Never take the rider's helmet off. If the neck is injured, moving it can lacerate the spine and cause paralysis.** Until proven otherwise, assume that such an injury is possible, and **call 911 immediately.**

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- ***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 suffered a neck or back injury, you should ***almost 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.

In the ***rare case*** where you must move the injured rider, get help from as many people as possible. Make every effort to maintain the ***current*** position of the person's back and neck. ***Do not try to straighten someone out.***

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

### Teamwork is critical

When you're on a ride and an accident occurs, teamwork is critical. One person should take charge of the injured rider.

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 suffered a possible neck or back injury. Get all other riders and their bicycles off the road.

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

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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.
  - If you don't know much about first aid yourself, ask if anyone in your group does.
  - If the person has suffered no obvious injuries, you should still pay careful attention to determine if the person is confused or disoriented, which could also indicate a head injury.

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***If necessary, send someone for help:*** If there is *any* question about whether professional medical attention is necessary, **call 911 immediately**. If there is no cellphone coverage and you need to send someone to call, make sure the person 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.

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**Important!** If you have an emergency and there is no cellphone coverage, bus and cab drivers, utility crews, and construction crews usually have radios that they can use to call for help. You can also go to a nearby house or store and ask to use the landline.

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***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.

***Communicate with the injured rider until help arrives:*** Ask the rider questions to determine their mental status, to see if it's been altered by the injury. *Tell them not to nod their head but to respond in words or with their hands.*

- Does your neck or head hurt? (If yes, don't do anything more.)
- Did you black out?
- Do you hurt anywhere?
- Do you know what happened?
- What day is it?

You should note the rider's responses and tell the emergency personnel. You should state whether the victim:

- Shows change in mental status—loss of consciousness, confusion, irritability, amnesia.
- Throws up.
- Exhibits any other reactions.

4. ***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 and emergency 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.

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**Important!** Be sure you know the rider's name and contact information, as well as that of their emergency contact, 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 Club Treasurer. To receive an Accident Report form, respond to the automatic system-generated email from the Rides Chair after the ride. That email asks for statistics about your rides and includes a check box as to whether an accident occurred. Completing that information automatically triggers the sending of an Accident Report form to you. You are required to file the report within 24 hours. Each rider should be carrying identification but you can also find their contact details, including their emergency contact, in the club's [Membership directory](#) on the website.

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## **Other concerns in the event of a severe accident**

In addition to taking care of the injured rider, 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, place it in a secure location and take all of the removable gear with you (bike computer, bike bags, headlights, and so on). Return in a vehicle for the bike as soon as possible (preferably before nightfall), and let the rider know that you have it. Alternatively, you may be able to leave the bike at a nearby fire station, bike shop or house.

## **Whom to notify in the event of an accident**

The Website [Membership directory](#), paper Sign-In Sheet and digital Signed Up section of your ride include an emergency contact name and phone number. Many riders also wear wrist or ankle-bands or keep a card in their saddle bag containing contact information. If an injured rider is taken to the hospital unconscious, call the emergency contact immediately and calmly explain what happened. If the rider is conscious, he or she can decide whom to contact and when.

If someone was seriously injured, call the Club President and Rides Chair as soon as possible.

After each ride, you'll automatically receive an email asking you to complete information on the club Website about your ride. When reporting your ride statistics, check the box indicating an accident occurred. You will then receive email with an [Accident Report](#) form, which must be completed and submitted within 24 hours to the Club Treasurer, even if the incident didn't require a trip to the hospital.

# APPENDIX

## Hypothermia

If you're riding in cold or wet weather, 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. If there's nowhere to get out of the cold, try sharing body heat. More severe cases involve 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 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 offer coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

*Heat stroke* is far more dangerous. The body's temperature control system has stopped working, so the person doesn't sweat. Body temperature may rise so high 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 skin on the pavement, 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, use water from water bottles. 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.

## Lacerations

If a wound is gushing blood, apply direct pressure with a jersey or glove. It takes around 10 to 15 minutes for a blood clot to form, so don't keep peeking to see if it has done so.

## 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:

- 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.
- Non-Latex gloves.

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**Note:** If you have first-aid training, you may want to add other items to your first-aid kit, for example, Epinephrine®, which is good for severe asthma, as well as for bee stings or any other anaphylactic reaction. This depends on your level of knowledge and your willingness to carry the extra weight.

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# Handling other problems

Here are some problems that you may encounter, along with suggestions on how to handle them.

## Riding in the rain

In a light rain, you can probably keep riding, but be especially careful on downhills, wet leaves, railroad tracks and metal bridge decks.

In a rain that's heavy enough to affect visibility, consider stopping *off the road* until the rain slows. However, standing wet and cold threatens hypothermia, so you weigh the risks.

In a heavy rain, you're probably best off finding a nice, warm bakery where you can glut on chocolate until the weather improves. However, be sure you have the permission of the proprietor, be careful not to inconvenience other customers and be sure you and your riders all buy something. Also, recognize that the weather may not improve before sunset, and that you may have to set off in the rain again.

## Avoiding lightning

If you 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. 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, and tent poles.
- Don't stop beneath small open-sided rain shelters or isolated trees.
- Avoid hilltops, open spaces, ditches, and depressions.

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**Important!** If you need to take shelter, keep your riders calm. You don't want folks crashing into one another in a mad rush to get away from the lightning.

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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. 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. Take a picture with your phone.

## **Dangerous riders**

If you have a careless rider who continues to be troublesome after you've spoken with him or her, insist that the rider leave. 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 expertise to make the repair.
- If there's a nearby bike shop, car repair shop or hardware store, you might take the group there on a detour. You could also suggest that the rider go alone, and provide instructions on how to rejoin the group later, if possible.
- Suggest calling home or calling a taxi or other hired car service.
- 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 still 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 need to loosen the brakes. Emphasize that the rider should avoid potholes.
  - *Broken chains:* If someone has a chain tool, try to 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 by slipping something inside the tire to cover the hole. A dollar bill works, and a section cut from an old tire works better, but it's just temporary. Replace the tire as soon as you can. If the hole is in the sidewall, take extra care because this can cause the tire to fall off the rim; use this trick just long enough to *slowly* limp home or to a shop.



## **Pace Creep and Ride Hijacking**

Ride hijacking occurs when a segment of the group rides faster than advertised (often due to faster riders signing up for a ride below their usual riding level). These riders, without the ride leader's permission, pull the group to ride at a faster pace than the ride leader specified in advance in the Ride Description on the Website. This often results in a split of the group and causes a dilemma for the ride leader – try to go with the faster group or stay with the slower riders. We don't like this situation because it upsets both the ride leader and riders who feel pressured to ride at a faster pace than specified in advance, in the Ride Description. No-one likes to get dropped but it can happen. To try to avoid this:

- See who signed up, in advance, assess their capabilities and riding styles and determine the likelihood of ride hijacking
- In advance, separate faster riders and have them designate a co-leader
- The leader should ride at the advertised pace, along with riders who are able and willing to do likewise
- Revisit the situation during the first regroup and adjust accordingly
- Make sure that no-one is left to ride alone
- If the ride leader wishes to maintain responsibility, even with the group splitting up, request that people in each group inform the ride leader of their (safe) finish

## Making a ride more fun

Consider choosing a theme. If you live for sweets, lead a ride that takes in several bakeries or candy shops.

- Join scheduled special events. For example, you might want to lead a ride to a scheduled street fair or community festival or other gathering -- or start the ride from that location. However, if you've never been to the event yourself, you probably should ask around to ensure that the crowds and traffic will not interfere with safe riding.
- 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. Ride through back alleys, cross wooden bridges, meander through parks, stop at yard sales and interesting houses, and visit trolls and viewpoints.
- Wave at *everyone*, talk with kids as you ride past, *stop* and talk with kids who seem unusually excited about what you're doing, and take photos.
- 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.
- Get name tags and pass them out before a ride. This makes it easier for riders to get to know one another, which is the main reason most people ride with groups.
- Take pictures and submit them to the *Plain Spoke'n* and WCC Facebook page. Be sure you include a caption that names the ride and the folks in the picture (if you know everyone's name and if the crowd isn't too big). If something interesting happened, you could also write an article for the newsletter.

# Tips for safe riding

## Helmets

- Wear a CPSC-, ANSI- or Snell-approved helmet. (Required on all WCC rides.)

## Traffic regulations

- Your bicycle is legally considered a vehicle, so you're subject to the same traffic laws as the drivers of motorized vehicles.
- 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 cycling. It's dangerous and, in some places, it's illegal.
- When riding at night, state law requires, at a minimum, a white front head lamp and a red rear reflector, each visible from 500 feet. Also recommended: a red taillight or blinker, reflective clothing and safety vests. Flashing lights are not legal headlights.

## Hazards

- Make eye contact with drivers so you know they've seen you.
- 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 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 turnout to allow them to pass.
- If you stop for any reason, move yourself and your bicycle *completely* off the road or trail.
- On multi-use trails and sidewalks, yield to pedestrians. Slow down when other people are present, and slow to a walking pace if safety dictates.
- Pass on the left, and use a bell or your voice to alert others that you're passing.

## Other good ideas

- Ride single-file so cars can pass. This is now required by law in some localities.
- Limit pace lines to eight or fewer.
- Before every ride, make sure your bike is in good condition.
- Bring a pump, spare tube, patch kit, tire irons, identification and a full water bottle.
- Eat before you're hungry; drink before you're thirsty.

# Rider Leader's Day-of-ride checklist

## Stuff to bring

### *Mandatory*

- Your own bike and helmet
- A bike computer or cellphone bearing a riding app, with the route loaded onto it, fully charged, with the ringer on and access to the WCC Website so you can digitally and remotely check in riders and access the Membership directory in the event of an emergency
- Copies of the cue sheet (if you said you'd provide one)
- Two copies of the Westchester Cycle Club Release Form (aka Sign Up Sheet) if you are not using the Website "Confirm" function
- Pens if you are still not paperless

### *Recommended*

- Food and full water bottles
- Basic tools, pump or CO2 cartridges with dispenser, tire gauge, extra tube, patch kit and tire levers
- First-aid kit
- Extra helmets (if you have spares)
- Rags for cleaning up after repairs
- Money
- Your identification and emergency contact, serving as a backup to the WCC Website's Membership directory.

## Stuff to check on

- Does everyone have a helmet?
- Has everyone checked in?
- How many riders do you have?
- Is everyone carrying identification and emergency contact information?

## Pre-ride announcements

- Introductions
- SMART** Pre Ride Safety Briefing
- Welcome to new riders
- Signatures on the Release Form, if not using the Website's "Confirm" feature in the Signup section

- \_\_\_ Cue sheets
- \_\_\_ Target pace
- \_\_\_ Whether the ride will stick together and, if not, where the first regroup spot (or lunch) will be
- \_\_\_ Ride safely
- \_\_\_ Warnings of special hazards, e.g. weather, road conditions, dangerous turns
- \_\_\_ Obey traffic regulations
- \_\_\_ Be courteous
- \_\_\_ Ride single-file
- \_\_\_ Ride on the right half of trails
- \_\_\_ Use hand and voice signals
- \_\_\_ Watch out for other cyclists
- \_\_\_ Special equipment required (lights?)
- \_\_\_ Keep the ride leader informed
- \_\_\_ Questions?

With special thanks to the Cascade Bicycle Club, Seattle, Washington. Some of the materials included herein are derived from the Cascade Bicycle Club Ride Leader Guidelines publication.