
Guidelines for a Ride Leader - Swansea and West Wales CTC Member Group

Contents

- The Ride Leader Role What does it take to be a Ride Leader? p1
- How to have peace of mind when leading a ride p2
- Cover for Member Groups p2
- Safeguarding Code of Conduct p3
- Planning a Group Ride p4
- When to carry out a risk assessment p4
- Ride Etiquette Pre-ride Checks p5
- Leading the Group p5
- Positioning p6
- Communicating p7
- Stopping points p7
- What to do if things go wrong p7
- What to do if there's a major incident p8
- Ride Leader checklist p9

Being a Ride Leader is a rewarding activity, enabling more people to experience the joy of cycling, whether in a town or city, or out in glorious countryside. Volunteer Ride Leaders may come from all sections of the community, whether experienced group members or relatively new to the activity.

There are no particular qualities, training or knowledge required to lead a leisure ride, except perhaps common sense and an enthusiasm for cycling, alongside a desire to share that passion with others. Other attributes might come in useful that make the experience more enjoyable for all, including:

- Patience
- A friendly, welcoming attitude
- A sense of humour
- Empathy
- Punctuality
- Flexibility

In addition to the above, a few practical skills may come in handy. For example:

- Navigational skills - either using a Garmin-style device, paper maps or just good local knowledge
- Bike maintenance skills - sometimes you may be asked to help with small adjustments to riders' bikes but extensive mechanical knowledge is not expected
- First Aid skills - formal qualifications are not usually required (unless you are a professional ride leader/instructor or you are leading rides for a particular institution or organisation.) Note that Cycling UK recommends that only qualified first aiders carry out first aid.
- Knowledge of the Highway and Countryside Codes - it's important not to give cyclists a bad name by, for example, riding on the footway or on footpaths.
- Communication skills to help convey instructions and understand the needs of your riders
- An understanding of our Ride Leader checklist and our other guidance

Remember that different people can bring different things to rides, so don't worry if you can't meet all these expectations - perhaps you have other knowledge, skills or experience that are useful? For example, you might know all about local wildlife or a city's hidden landmarks to make a ride more interesting.

As Ride Leader, you usually get to choose the time, day and distance of the ride, as well as the stopping points along the way. So, whether you enjoy a gentle pootle and a leisurely catch-up over coffee, or you're more of a head down mile-eater, the pace and style of the ride is entirely up to you (taking into account any specific needs of your riders too, of course)!

As Ride Leader, you may also enjoy better fitness, due to having to commit to actually turning up for the scheduled ride - (try never to cancel a ride unless there are extenuating circumstances such as illness or extreme weather conditions). Some people struggle with motivation but being the Ride Leader means you have a cast iron incentive to get out of bed and go outdoors, even if you're not particularly feeling like it - and you'll feel the better for it.

Riding in a group is a social activity and you will automatically be extremely popular for taking on the role of Ride Leader, having the opportunity to make new friends, and possibly benefit from their experience and knowledge of cycling too.

However, occasionally you may find you are out front leading while everyone is busy chatting in the bunch behind you! This may be a little frustrating if you like a chat too but at least you have the satisfaction of knowing that your riders are enjoying the ride.

As Ride Leader, you have duty of care to the people you are leading to ensure that they have a good time and stay as safe as possible while out on their bikes so a little preparation beforehand will make this task easier.

How to have peace of mind when leading a ride

Many people are concerned about issues around liability when leading a ride. Ride leading is a voluntary role but, nevertheless, Ride Leaders do have a duty of care to ensure that the experience is as safe and enjoyable for participants as is reasonably possible. Claims against ride leaders are extremely rare. With the protection of Cycling UK's insurance, and our long history of organising cycling activities, you can relax and enjoy the experience.

Note: Cycling UK Member Groups and Affiliate groups must abide by our guidance for insurance purposes. Our cover Ride Leaders are covered by our master insurance policy, as long as they are registered with Cycling UK and lead rides for either a Cycling UK Member Group or a cycling group affiliated to Cycling UK. The main points of our Organisers' Liability guidance are:

Member Groups

- You are covered as a Ride Leader for damage caused to a third party during a ride which leads to a claim against you or your group as organisers.
- You must be a full member of Cycling UK and registered with us to lead rides.
- You are NOT covered for organising any form of competitive event, except as listed in the Guidance Notes.
- You are covered for social events run as part of the ride eg. tea stops, barbecues.
- You should have no more than ten non-members of Cycling UK on any one ride.

- Riders who are NOT Cycling UK members are covered for claims made against them by another Cycling UK member on a Member Group ride ONLY.
- Non-members of Cycling UK should not ride any more than three times with a Cycling UK Member Group.
- These limitations do not apply to 'events' open to both members and the public, which should be registered with Cycling UK.
- Cycling UK must be informed of events/rides involving more than 200 riders by completion of an Event Registration form.
- You are covered for rides/events in collaboration with other bodies, provided your group is clearly the organiser and the ride/event is run in accordance with our guidance.
- You are covered for any ride/event which takes place anywhere except USA/Canada.
- Affiliate members may ride with Cycling UK Member Groups but may not lead rides for them.

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

All Ride Leaders, instructors and other volunteers have an obligation to avoid creating distressing situations. Therefore you are expected to follow the Code of Conduct below:

- respect everyone as an individual;
- provide a good example of acceptable behaviour;
- respect everyone's right to privacy;
- show understanding when dealing with sensitive issues;
- adhere to the organisation's policies;

As a Cycling UK Ride Leader you may not:

- permit abusive behaviour;
- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others;
- jump to conclusions or make assumptions about others without checking facts;
- make suggestive or inappropriate remarks or actions;
- deliberately place yourself or others in a compromising situation;

Other adults present

Ride Leaders, instructors and other volunteers should avoid situations where they are alone with a young person or vulnerable adult. This precaution protects all parties by removing the feeling of threat from an insecure participant and by providing a witness if an accusation of improper behaviour is made. However, there may be occasions where this is not possible and a judgment will have to be made as to what is in the best interests of the young person or vulnerable adult.

Physical contact

Physical contact between an individual and the Ride Leader or instructor or other volunteer should be avoided. There are instances when it is necessary, eg to demonstrate a skill, but such contact should remain impersonal so there is no risk of it being misinterpreted.

Appropriate language

Care should be taken about what is said, and the way it is said. Leaders, instructors and volunteers should avoid saying anything which could be interpreted as being aggressive, suggestive, or containing an innuendo.

Planning a Group Ride

Why do people go on a group ride?

There are many reasons why people choose to go on a group ride: for example, they may be nervous about riding on their own due to a lack of mechanical or geographic knowledge; they may like the companionship that riding in a group brings and enjoy the social interaction above all else, or they may simply prefer to leave the responsibility of deciding on a route and pace to other people. For many, riding with a cycling group or club is a chance to forget about everyday cares and responsibilities and let other people make the decisions.

Other people may have completely different motivations for going on group rides: they want to feel a sense of progression in their cycling by comparing themselves to others. Other riders not only provide competition, they can also give encouragement and advice, as well as being a reliable source of knowledge about local road and trail conditions, other cycling events and rides, equipment, holidays and tours and so much more.

Predominantly, however, people who go on group rides enjoy the social aspects of riding with other people so remember to allow for this when planning and leading the ride.

Route planning methods

The first thing to consider when organising a ride is obviously planning the route. Some people will use technical devices such as Garmins and programmes like Strava and Komoot; others prefer tried and trusted methods such as OS paper maps, local knowledge or routes they've previously ridden.

What to take into consideration

Whatever method you choose, take into account these factors:

- Is the proposed speed of the ride suitable for you and your riders - do they prefer a fast, slow or medium pace?
- The terrain - how hilly is it? What are the surfaces like? How busy is the traffic?
- The likely weather conditions - how will they affect the intended route or riding style? (see section on risk assessment below)
- The time of year - do you need to be back before dark or can you stay out longer? Will there be wet leaves and other potential hazards that might affect the plans?
- Stopping points - is there somewhere en route for riders to use the toilet, grab a hot drink or snack, have a rest and a chat and so on?
- Are there any particularly interesting sights, sounds and smells it would be good to include to make the ride more interesting?
- Are there any other events or large rides taking place at the same time?

How to increase participation

There may be other factors to consider too but if you tailor the ride to the participant level, ability and intention, that is a great start. Groups that offer a diverse range of activities at different times and dates often succeed in attracting new riders.

Completing a risk assessment

Some organisations may require certain activities to be more formally risk assessed than others. At Cycling UK, we believe that it may not be practicable to risk assess every ride in advance. Therefore, we

recommend that if you have an event open to the public ie aimed at riders who are not regular members of your group, you should carry out a risk assessment and keep it on file for your records.

The risk assessment will involve riding the planned route as near to the event as possible and noting down any likely hazards your riders may encounter. For example, is there a particularly busy stretch or junction to negotiate? Are there trail features that might be difficult to tackle by the riders? It might also include the start/finish areas of the ride.

Once the hazard is noted, you should then write down any proposed actions that can be taken to mitigate any dangers they pose.

Be prepared to review your risk assessment if needs be to take into account, for example, planned or unplanned roadworks and so on. Remember, you may need to vary your route at short notice so it's a good idea to have a plan B up your sleeve.

Our Risk Assessment form in the Document Hub can be used as a template to record any potential hazards and how you made allowances for them.

Pre-ride Checks

The day of the ride finally dawns. You meet at the allotted time and place (preferably earlier than your participants!) and, hopefully, at least one other soul turns up. Once assembled, there are a few brief formalities to go through before you set off, such as finding out who is on your ride and their readiness for the activity, taking a note of their emergency contact details using the Signing In/Out sheet. Riders under 18 must have a signed Parental Consent form whether accompanied or not (under 13s MUST be accompanied by a parent or guardian).

Briefing the riders

A short briefing explaining the destination, route and any planned stops is advisable before the ride starts. It is a good idea to introduce new riders and also explain any hand signals or calls used by the group.

Don't forget to point out any known hazards in advance, and reassess the condition of the riders, the route and the weather conditions at regular intervals - be prepared to vary or even abandon the ride if any of them deteriorate.

Although riders are responsible for deciding on their own suitability for the advertised activity, Ride Leaders should greet each participant and assess their general health and wellbeing before starting the ride.

Leading the Group

Rider equipment

All riders should bring a suitable cycle in safe working order for the ride as well as appropriate tools and spares for the ride such as spare tubes. It may be appropriate to ask riders to have lifts at certain times of the year.

Points to note:

- Cycling UK advocates freedom of choice as regards the wearing of helmets and hi-viz clothing so it is not up to Ride Leaders to promote or otherwise the pros and cons of these.

- Bear in mind, however, that we may require riders to use certain items of clothing and equipment: It is the Ride Leader's prerogative to refuse anybody on their ride who they deem to be so ill-equipped they may pose a danger to themselves or others.
- Cycling UK advocates only making minor adjustments or repairs to a rider's bike if you are sure you are competent to do so by experience or qualification - our Organisers' Liability insurance may not cover you for this.

Group size

What is the optimal group size for road riding? Should you appoint a backmarker? What techniques could you employ to ensure the group stays together?

There are no hard and fast rules about the amount of people acceptable on a group ride as it depends on many variables, such as: the competence of the riders and Ride Leaders; the number of Assistant Ride Leaders available; the demands of the planned route and so on.

As Ride Leader, you should be confident you can handle the number of people who turn up for the ride. Cycling UK recommends considering dividing up groups of 12-15 or more into smaller groups of no more than six and/or appointing an Assistant Ride Leader (or backmarker) to help keep an eye on the riders.

Don't forget to take a headcount at the start and at regular intervals during the ride, especially if it is a larger group! If people leave the ride part-way through, they should let the Ride Leader know.

Positioning

Where should you position yourself during the ride? Is riding always at the front or back necessarily the best place to be? Consider where else you might be able to ride for maximum enjoyment and security.

Positioning of riders

It is important that each participant understands that they are responsible for their own safety. Encourage them to keep away from the gutter and to watch out for any potential hazards, which they should point out to other members of the group. They must also be careful not to ride too closely to each other or the Ride Leader.

Riding two abreast

The Highway Code in Rule 66 says: "You should never ride more than two abreast, and ride in single file on narrow or busy roads and when riding round bends." Cycling UK guidelines therefore are that riders should never ride more than two abreast, except when passing and should drop into single file on narrow or busy roads, unless it would be unsafe to do so. When riding two abreast, the less experienced cyclist should usually ride on the inside.

Note: Ride Leaders should be aware of the other rules for cyclists in the Highway Code and do their best to ensure that groups comply with them

When should groups single out?

It is very much up to Ride Leaders to decide how and when to move the group from two abreast to single file or vice versa. If cycling on busier roads, riding two abreast means the group might be more visible and take up less space so following vehicles can overtake more easily. If possible, it might be appropriate for the group to single out (riding in single file) or even pull in, for example on a longer stretch of narrow lane, and allow following drivers to pass safely.

Cycling UK guidelines are that riders should show courtesy to other road and trail users and be a good ambassador for cycling. However, you should put the safety of your riders first and avoid singling out if it might lead to dangerous close passing, with drivers being tempted to overtake you where there is not enough room to do so. Riders are responsible for their own and others' safety so they must decide if singling out is appropriate at the time and how the manoeuvre should be accomplished, remembering to leave enough room between themselves and other cyclists.

How to communicate with the group

Many groups have their own jargon and gestures to communicate warnings and instructions to each other. We will shout 'car up!' if a car is approaching from behind and "car down" if approaching from the front. Point at the road gesture to signify potholes in the road surface, What terms could you use to communicate with your group? Don't assume everybody will know what they mean. Be wary of using terms such as 'Clear!' when at crossings and junctions - let each rider decide for themselves in case it isn't clear when they decide to cross.

Stopping Points

In mixed ability groups, some riders want continuity of riding and as few stops as possible, while others will welcome frequent rests. Be mindful of this but remember that you can't please all the people all the time so aim for the middle ground - however, try NOT to set off as soon as the slowest riders have caught up with the group. This can be dispiriting, especially if they need a breather and a drink. In any case, allow time for at least a couple of stops as most leisure riders appreciate a comfort stop and a chance to chat.

There might be times when you might need to stop or slow the group down, for example when turning right off a busy main road or before a particular trail feature, or simply to allow others to catch up. If you want to slow or stop the riders, clearly shout 'Slowing!' or 'Stopping!', otherwise there may be a pile-up behind you. Remember, stopping points must be identified for their appropriateness: do they allow the whole group to get off the carriageway or track, without inconveniencing other users? People can become sheep-like when in groups so may be prone to stopping wherever they feel like it, blocking the trail or road. It is your job as Ride Leader to prevent this!

What to Do If Things Go Wrong

How to deal with unexpected incidents ; Ride Leaders should aim to keep the ride flowing as smoothly as possible, allowing time for breaks where necessary, but there may be times when incidents occur. Some situations may arise out of the blue but some can be prevented with a little forethought - for example, carry some small snacks if riders 'get the bonk' (run out of energy); appoint a competent rider to backmark and wait at junctions for the tailenders, and so on.

However, occasionally, a major incident involving serious injury or even (very rarely) a fatality might occur. In these circumstances, an Accident/Incident Report form should be completed and submitted to Cycling UK. This is why it's important to have a note of people's emergency contact details, as well as knowing who to tell if something happens. The Emergency Operating Procedures on the next page set out what else you need to do should there be a serious incident of any kind.

NOTE: Full Cycling UK members are entitled to free legal advice and claims assistance from our lawyers Slater + Gordon on 0844 736 8452 – affiliate members and other riders may still phone for general advice in the event of an incident involving a third party.

What to do if there's a major incident - a step by step guide

1. Think of yourself first and make sure you are safe. Count to 10 before acting.
2. Get other people off the road or trail and away from danger.
3. Make the area safe. Ask for two (or more) people to stop any traffic or other riders if necessary.
4. Assess the casualty if qualified to do so or ask if anybody has a first aid qualification. Only move the casualty if absolutely necessary.
5. Call the emergency services if required by dialling 999 or 112. They will need to know your location and the details of the injured parties. Identify your location by either a grid reference or using apps such as what3words.com or OS Locate.
6. Send people to guide the emergency services if required.
7. Reassure the casualty and, if they are conscious, ask who they would like to be contacted.
8. If they are unconscious, try and locate their emergency contact details (ICE) on their phone or on the Signing in/out sheet.
9. Keep an eye on the rest of the group - look out for anybody suffering from shock, which can be dangerous.
10. When help arrives, ask where the casualty is being taken so you can inform the emergency contact. Try and get the job number as well in case the ambulance is redirected en route.
11. Do not go with the casualty.
12. Make a note of any witnesses and other parties and write down their details on the Accident/Incident Report form as soon as possible. Record briefly what happened and take photos of the scene.
13. Decide what to do with the casualty's bike and possessions - perhaps a local resident could look after it for the time being or you could lock it up somewhere and retrieve at a later date?
14. Decide whether or not to continue with the ride. People may appreciate the chance to sit down quietly and discuss what has happened over a hot drink. They may also feel able to carry on with the ride as planned.
15. 15. Send a copy of the Accident/Incident Report form (found in the Document Hub) to Cycling UK as soon as possible - email to incidents@cyclinguk.org
16. Contact any relevant managers or partner organisations to let them know what has happened.
17. If you think there could be a claim against you or the group, or any of the parties might need legal advice, contact Cycling UK's Incident Line as soon as possible on 0844 736 8452 - it's open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Ride Leader Checklist

Our top tips for making a ride go smoothly

- Work out a route you think your group is likely to enjoy, taking into account: distance; terrain; traffic; refreshments; toilets; points of interest; weather; season; ability of the riders; and any other factors.
- Be prepared to vary the ride if any of these change.
- Decide how you will navigate: GPS, maps, local knowledge, or a combination of all of these?
- Advertise your ride – don't forget to include: the meeting time and place; the approximate distance and pace; likely return time; and other essentials such as what the riders should bring, any planned stops and so on. During the ride
- Find out the names of everyone on your ride – not just for insurance purposes but it's also friendlier. Ask everyone to fill in their contact details on the Signing In and Out sheet.
- Enlist the help of any experienced riders to: keep an eye on newer ones; act as backmarkers; lead a second group; or even act as 'human signposts' at junctions or gates.
- Explain how you will lead the ride: any jargon and hand signals you might use; when and where you will wait for slower riders; how you will deal with traffic and so on but remind each rider they are responsible for their own safety.
- Point out any likely hazards in advance. In the unlikely event of an incident, please complete an Accident/Incident Report form as soon as possible.
- Avoid blocking roads and trails – choose stopping points carefully.
- Keep the ride flowing smoothly but do stop occasionally and give stragglers a rest before restarting.
- Some faffing is inevitable but don't allow it to go on too long or other riders will begin to get cold and restless.
- You have a duty of care to the riders and the public, so if you think someone may endanger themselves or others, have a quiet word; if their behaviour persists, you are entitled to ask them to leave the ride.
- You should lead by example and remain courteous and considerate to all road and trail users, including fellow riders.
- Ensure anyone who wishes to leave the ride is happy to make their own way home.
- At the end of the ride, thank people for coming and let them know details of the next one.

Suggested list of things to bring as a Ride Leader.

It's a good idea to carry a few essential items such as:

- Maps or GPS unit
- Selection of small tools, inner tubes, tyre levers and a puncture repair kit
- A fully-charged mobile phone
- Cards or coins for phone box – in some areas there may be no signal

For the full list of info available on the Cycling UK Web -

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/Support%20for%20cycling%20groups%20and%20clubs/ride-leaders-toolkit>

Ride Leader Checklist for the day of the ride

Pre ride.

- Pre Ride Briefing stating the destination, route, distance and climbing. Advise the group of any known hazards on route.
- Explain how you will lead the ride: any jargon and hand signals you might use; when and where you will wait for slower riders; how you will deal with traffic and so on but remind each rider they are responsible for their own safety.
- Ask the question to attendees about their bike being safe, their responsibility to ensure their steering, brakes, tyres etc., are safe. Ask about tools and spares, it is the riders responsibility to ensure they have what they need. Failure on their part impacts on everyone.
- Group size. Split the group if necessary based on size, ability and speed.
- Names and detail of the riders. Make sure you have all the names even if it is a mental note, you should have in your possession a confidential contacts list for this purpose.
- Guests or new riders. Make sure you have their contact details including ICE numbers and they have your contact details. Make new riders aware of the protocols and procedures and ask them to confirm they are capable of the ride needs. Consider asking a regular rider to be a ride buddy for the guest.
- Weather. Consider the weather conditions and revise plans if necessary.
- Nominate a back marker and if necessary, an assistant leader

During the ride.

- You should lead by example and remain courteous and considerate to all road and trail users, including fellow riders.
- Once the ride has set off, keep control of the group by stopping and waiting for the back marker to catch up. Ensure the group is stopping in a safe place and if repairs or punctures need doing, keep away from traffic.
- Duty of care. You have a duty to riders and the public, if anyone on the ride is endangering themselves or others, speak to them firmly or ask them to leave the ride.
- If anyone wishes to leave the ride, ensure they are happy and capable of making their way home.
- Should a ride set off and ice or other such hazards are discovered, carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the conditions, for example, call the ride off. Change the route, stay on main roads if they are clear of ice.
- Accidents. Record all the details of the incident or accident, take pictures. Complete an accident report and submit to the secretary.
- At the end of the ride, have a quick debrief with other riders.

Suggested list of things to bring as a Ride Leader.

It's a good idea to carry a few essential items such as:

Maps or GPS unit, a selection of small tools, inner tubes, tyre levers and a puncture repair kit. A fully-charged mobile phone. Cards or coins for phone box – in some areas there may be no signal.