



‘Club Run’ Etiquette

SAFETY is the single most important consideration for ‘Club Runs’ and we ask that you take this very seriously

Ride & Speak is an informal cycling club, unlike others traditionally operating in the Co Down area. Through our affiliation to Cycling Ireland, members are permitted to race ‘in club colours’, but ‘Club Runs’ are there to maintain fitness, are social, and are to be enjoyed. They are not races. On this basis, the principal we try to adhere to is:

“The fastest speed is that of the slowest rider”

Safety

Bike Maintenance and Preparation – It is essential that your bike is in a safe and road-worthy condition, with working brakes and functioning gears. If you are unsure, many local bike shops will offer a ‘bike check’ and will advise you on work that may be required prior to riding on the roads. We have a good relationship with several shops in the area, so can recommend one if needed. Carry suitable spare parts, clothing and some of your own food and drink so you are self reliant, also any medication you may need and your mobile phone.

Cycle Helmets – The UK Highway Code states that you **should** wear a helmet when cycling; this is advisory but not a legal requirement. However, it is British Cycling Best Practice that helmets always be worn when riding and Ride & Speak certainly recommend wearing them and when worn should be worn correctly.

Visibility- Rider discretion plays a part here, but we request that you carefully consider the appropriate lighting and high-visibility clothing when riding with Ride & Speak. This is to ensure that you are visible to all other road users, whatever the weather conditions.

Pot Holes, Uneven Road Surfaces and Hazards- Always be vigilant for pot holes, uneven road surfaces and any other potential hazards that you may encounter. If you are behind a rider, make sure that you are not too close, so that you have ample time to try and avoid any potential risk. It is the responsibility of all riders to look out for hazards.

Communication- Whilst it isn’t imperative that all riders point out the same hazard, it is advisable to make yourself aware of hand signals and shouts that may be used.

Group riding is one of the best and most enjoyable aspects of road cycling – whether you ride regularly with your club each weekend, train with a select few buddies as you build-up to your next race, or you’re making the trip to ride a sportive with a group of friends.

To newcomers it can be surprising, and potentially confusing, just how noisy a group of cyclists can be. With various signals and calls to warn the group of the hazards cyclists are exposed to, it’s vital you know what each one means, while being able and confident to make a call when you’re the rider on the front.

The nature of riding in a group means, if you’re not on the front of the bunch, you may not always see a hazard, but a well-drilled group using signals and calls correctly will ensure all riders remain safe on the road.

Signals

Slowing

With your arm outstretched, palm-down, and slightly behind you so cyclists behind you get a clear view of your hand, move your hand up and down at the wrist to indicate that you’re about to slow. Use this indication when you’re confident that you’re going to be pulling the brakes in order to significantly slow your speed.

Optional call: “Slowing!”

In addition to the signal, and if braking is more urgent and you haven’t got time to indicate safely, call out “Slowing!” loudly and sharply. This will give riders an additional stimulus to react to, apart from your rear wheel suddenly rushing towards them.



Stopping

Raise a hand straight above your head to indicate that you expect to stop. This indication supersedes the indication and call to slow.

Optional call: “Stopping!”

While optional, the call of “Stopping!” can be absolutely necessary if the nature of the stop is sudden or sharp, and if you therefore haven’t got the time to make the signal. This can make the difference between a safe stop and a potentially very dangerous situation, so ensure the call is loud, sharp and urgently made with as much notice as possible.



Indicating

An essential signal for all road users. Outstretch your arm straight out to the side of you to indicate your intended turn. Ensure you make this indication before you edge out to the middle of the road in the case of a right turn in the UK, so other road users have plenty of notice of your intentions. Always have a quick look behind you to make sure those other road users have seen and reacted to your indication.

If you're at the head of a large peloton, it can be helpful to raise your hand to just above shoulder height, and point in the direction of the upcoming turn.



Pothole or hazard on road

If you are approaching a hazard in the road, for example a pothole, manhole cover or drain cover, outstretch your arm on the side that the upcoming hazard will pass your bike and point to the floor. This will sometimes be accompanied by a circling motion – if there's time.

Optional call: "Hole!"

For deep and sharp holes in the road, a clear and loud call of "hole" or "holes" will help notify your fellow cyclists of the severity of the upcoming obstacle. However, this is not to be overused – on UK roads, if we all shouted "hole!" every time the road surface was less than perfect, we'd probably never stop.



Oncoming hazard

As you approach a physical oncoming hazard, take the arm on the side of the hazard behind you and point across your back in the direction the cyclist behind you will need to move in order to avoid it. In the UK, the hazard usually approaches on the left in the form of a parked car or similar, so the left arm is normally used.



Gravel/debris

For specific hazards where the effect will be a potentially slippery surface, take your outstretched hand, palm down and wave at the floor. This can also be used for a broken or unconsolidated road surface.

Optional call: "Gravel! /Loose! /Ice! /etc." Calling out the nature of the hazard loudly can add extra important information to your fellow cyclists. Ensure you use clear, single word calls to avoid confusion.



Come through

We've all been there, where we've been doing far more than our fair share of the work at the front of the group, and have seemingly been left out to dry.

While riding, flick your elbow out on the side you want the wheelsucker(s) to come through. Emphasise this by safely moving out slightly to give them extra room to come by, and ease off the pedals very slightly; they'll get the message.



Cattle grids, railway tracks, speed bumps

For hazards running across the road like rail tracks, cattle grids and speed bumps, take your hand behind you and draw a line horizontally back-and-forth across your back.

If a hazard of this type is even close to being in line with the direction you're riding, such as tram lines, trace that line clearly in the direction it runs to point it out to your fellow cyclists.



Thanks/acknowledgement

It's so easy to forget to do this, but makes the world of difference for road-user relations. If an oncoming vehicle has let you and/or your group have space to make a turn or have access to a narrow stretch of road first, acknowledge them with a raised hand of thanks. Making this sign obvious – for example with an additional smile or a raised thumb – can help 'humanise' you on the road, and conveys genuine appreciation for the actions of the other road user.

It's also a fine road cycling tradition, especially in the UK, that road cyclists acknowledge each other as they pass by. A nod of the head and smile, or a hand raised off the 'bar, will do the trick for oncoming riders, or just say "hello" if passing a cyclist on the same side of the road. Be nice out there!



Calls

On top of the calls that function in tandem or in place of signals, here are others that rely solely on clear vocal communication.

“Clear left/right”

Used when attempting to join the flow of traffic from a junction to indicate that the road is clear and the group can begin to move through the junction without stopping but, crucially, after slowing to check for traffic. As a result, this call should only be used when the junction offers a clear line of sight in both directions.

The absence of this call indicates the default position that a vehicle is approaching, and that it's unsafe to pull out of the junction or across the split road. Some riders also use a “car left/right” call to emphasise the presence of traffic in this situation, but make the call loud and understandable so not to confuse “car” with “clear”.

“On the left/right”

For use between cyclists, this warns a rider in front of you where you are in relation to them on approach. For example, calling “on the right” as you approach a slower cyclist from their right flank, and vice versa.

This is particularly common in sportives, especially on the continent where the route can be mountainous and the speeds higher on descents. Here, the language of cycling – French – is generally used and understood. “A gauche” means “on the left”, and “a droite” means “on the right”.

“Car up”

Warns of a car approaching from up the road, usually actively travelling towards the group. This call is used when the road is narrower than a dual-direction single carriageway with enough space for vehicles to pass each other without avoiding action.

You can also tweak the call to indicate other common hazards in this scenario, such as bikes (pedal- or motor-powered), runners, tractors and horses.



“Car back”

Warns of a car approaching from the rear of the group, which means it’s also the only call which originates from the rear of the group.

As a result, it’s vital to call clearly so that other group members hear and pass it up the line as your voice won’t travel as far forward against the flow of the bunch. Variations as with “car up” can be used, but in reality are only needed very rarely.



“Car down”

The call of “car down” is also commonly used, but, while not wrong, can be confusing because of its potential dual-meaning: warning of a “car down the road, ahead of where the group is”, or a “car back down the road, where the group has just come from”. As a result, if “car down” is to be used, it must be with clear consensus throughout the group to use it in place of “car up” or “car down”.

With that in mind, if you’re a member of a club or regularly ride with the same people, it’s worth agreeing what calls you will use in order to save confusion and avoid misunderstandings.

However, the additional difficulty with this is that you may become accustomed to a potentially ambiguous call when different riders come together at events such as sportives. Therefore, everyone can simply avoid this self-inflicted confusion by using “up” and “back” as calls when other vehicles are approaching.