

IAM RoadSmart Group Organised Rides

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1. Introduction

When motorcyclists meet they often choose to ride together as a group. Riding with a group of bikes can be great fun, but riding safely with others requires a degree of discipline – and sometimes restraint, too – if everyone is going to enjoy the experience. This guide describes a standard series of techniques that will assist groups of riders to enjoy their riding together in such a way that their own safety and the safety of others is maximised.

Note that some elements of this guide set out IAM RoadSmart Policy. Failure to comply with these sections may put a member's continued membership of IAM RoadSmart in jeopardy. These paragraphs are highlighted in grey, like this one.

2. A Standard Approach

The advantage of using a standard approach to riding in a group is that every person (Associate, Member or Observer) will have an understanding of what other riders in the group are likely to do, and what is expected of them while they are riding. It follows that this improves the chances of all members of the riding group reaching the required destination without getting lost and in the safest way possible. It also means that, should a rider take a wrong turn for example, they and the rest of the group have a method of locating each other again.

3. Safety

The primary consideration at all times when riding in a group is safety, and at no time may the safety of riders, or any third party be compromised for any reason. While the system explained in this guide should result in the elimination of undue risk for most circumstances, it always remains the personal responsibility of all riders within the group to exercise their own judgement about each and every course of action that they take. Each rider is responsible for their own safety, their own actions and any consequences that those actions may have.

4. The Law

Traffic laws must be obeyed at all times when riding on the Public Highway. At no time when participating in a Group Organised Ride will any person riding in the group be expected or required to act illegally. If there is a conflict between this Guide and the Law, the latter must be take precedence.

Please Note:- Any breach of the RTA or any other regulation legally enforced may result in the group insurance being negated.

Eligibility

The following may take part in a Group organised ride.

- i) IMI Observer, Observer & Trainee Observer (who must be fully paid-up IAM RoadSmart and Group members)
- ii) Member (fully paid-up members of both the IAM RoadSmart and Group)
- iii) Associate (enrolled through Advanced Rider Course) who must be under observation at ALL times.
- iv) Prospective Associate (who must be under observation at ALL times and must have been given an individual assessment before being invited to take part in a Group organised ride.) A prospective Associate will only be allowed to attend one Group organised ride before enrolling with the Group through an Advanced Rider Course
- v) Members/Observers from other groups (Run organisers will check the members' status with those other groups if the riders are not personally known)

Group organised rides may be restricted to particular categories of participant to achieve specific training objectives (e.g. runs for Associates and Observers only; for Full members (including Observers) only; or for Observers only).

The Group committee have the power to exclude specific members from participating in Group organised rides where, in their reasonable judgement, this decision is in the interests of other members, the Group, or IAM RoadSmart.

5. Associate Guidance

The ratio of Associates to Observer/IMI Observer on a Group Organised run should not exceed 3:1, and ideally should be no more than 2:1. Groupings may be arranged directly between the Associates and Observers OR the Group could arrange a set venue/start point where Associates are allocated to Observers.

The shaded section above is intended to apply ONLY when the Associates are receiving a guidance ride where the Observer will be giving a full briefing/debriefing (it is not intended to apply to all rides).

6. Pillions

It is recommended that Associates do not carry pillion passengers on Group organised rides.

7. Rider Ability

Each and every rider must ride within their own capabilities and must exercise their own judgement when determining the safety of their actions. If at any time a rider feels that they are not capable of continuing as the ride exceeds their own personal skill level then they should inform the leader or tail rider, who will consider appropriate options to take, which may include:

Organising 1:1 guidance for the rider separately from the group ride.

Adjusting the pace of the ride

Agreeing that the rider should ride completely separate from the Group.

8. Planning the Ride

The organiser should first decide upon the purpose of the ride, and the capabilities of the members who will participate. If either of these factors subsequently changes, the organiser should re-plan the event accordingly.

The ride plan should take into account the distance to be covered, types of roads, fuel range of machines, /breaks etc.) No on-road section between breaks/debriefs should exceed 90 minutes

The Group should ensure that suitable full members are appointed as run leader and tail end riders, who are fully conversant with this guide book with regard to IAM RoadSmart policy and advice.

9. Publicity

Group organised rides should be advertised within the Group's usual communications channels (e.g. newsletter, email list, website). These channels should include a reminder that participants in Group organised rides are responsible for their own safety and compliance with the law, and should at all times ride within their own capabilities.

10. Size of Group

It is important to take into account the right of other road users to use the roads without unnecessary hindrance. Be aware that large groups of bikes riding together can disrupt the flow of traffic and should be avoided.

Where the number of participants is large, or riders are of mixed ability, and the route complexity or required skill level justifies it, consideration should be given to splitting the run into smaller groups, each with their own Observers.

11. Lead and Tail Rider Basic Principles

Riding in convoy and stopping on the road to allow riders to regroup are two practices that should be avoided when riding in a group and a well-established method exists that makes both unnecessary. This is the Leader and Tail rider system.

The basis of the system is that the Leader (usually the ride organiser) stays at the front of the group and the Tail Rider at the rear as the names suggest.

Whenever there is a deviation from the obvious straight ahead route, the rider travelling behind the leader pulls over in a visible and safe position to point all bikes in the correct direction. This bike is called the marker, and when the Tail Rider comes along the marker re-joins the route in front of the Tail Rider. As the journey continues each rider will in turn become the rider behind the leader, and therefore become a marker prior to re-joining in front of the Tail rider.

By following this basic system each and every rider regardless of ability within the group may ride their own ride, without the risk of getting lost. There is never a need to ride in convoy with all bikes in sight of each other. However, each rider should ensure that the following rider is still visible this means that there is no need to stop to allow riders to regroup or for anyone in the group to "play catch up" with the bike in front.

Putting it all into Practice

12. The Briefing Prior to Setting Off

1. Remind all riders that they are responsible for maintaining safety and complying with the law at all times.
2. Make sure that everyone is familiar with the Lead & Tail system. If the group is large consider riding in two or more separate groups, (subject to committee approved lead and tail being available)
3. All riders should be made aware who the Lead and Tail riders are and how they can be identified on the road.
4. Ensure every rider knows how to recognise the Leader's signal to stop and act as a marker.
5. Ensure that every rider is aware of the place/location of rest stops.
6. It is not necessary for every rider to have full route details, but it may be beneficial that all observers are aware of the rest stops and final destination.
7. Ensure that everyone is aware of the number of bikes within the group and who are riding together
8. Remind participants that if any rider is planning to leave the group other than at a pre-arranged stop, they should inform the Lead or Tail rider of their intentions.
9. Although no rider is expected to become separated from the group, it may be advisable to have a plan. Suggestions :
 1. Agree a rendezvous point and time.
 2. Exchange mobile phone numbers.

13. On the Road

1. Remember: Safety first!
2. At all times, each and every rider is responsible for their own safety, their own actions and any consequences that those actions may have.
3. The leader is responsible for navigation only, and every rider must use their own judgement about each and every course of action that they personally take.
4. Always obey traffic laws.
5. Ride at a pace that is legal and at no time ride faster than you consider safe for the conditions, always ride smoothly and predictable, try to avoid harsh acceleration or sudden braking or changes in direction.
6. At junctions take the obvious straight ahead route unless a marker bike indicates otherwise.
7. At roundabouts the marker will be on the exit route, if you cannot see the marker on the approach be prepared to completely circle the roundabout to confirm the correct exit (mainly large roundabouts)
8. Don't overtake others in the group unless they request you to do so. The Tail rider will NOT pass. However if you are uncomfortable with the pace of the ride, slow down and let all other riders pass and then continue at a pace you are comfortable with in front of the Tail rider.
9. If you intend to leave the group, let all riders pass you and indicate to the Tail rider your intentions.
10. When on the open road, ride in staggered formation when in close proximity to other group riders.
11. Allow other road users to overtake the group if they wish. Make space for them to do so if necessary and if it is safe to do so.

14. The Leaders Role

1. Plan a route that will be achievable for the abilities of the expected riders, with suitable refreshment stops and refuelling.
2. Brief all riders before the off (see above for what this should cover)
3. Ride smoothly and at a steady pace.
4. If you do not have a bike behind you to act as marker for a change in direction, stop in a safe place and wait until one arrives.
5. Unless there is a deviation from the obvious straight ahead route, you do not need to mark the junction except at roundabouts when the exit should always be marked.
6. Always leave a marker at a change in direction even if you think all the group are in sight of each other.
7. The ultimate responsibility for the safety of markers is their own, but you can help them mark the route effectively and safely by giving them plenty of warning that you require them to stop.
8. If it becomes apparent that the Group has come to a halt because a rider has had problems, retrace the route until you discover the cause of the hold-up and take appropriate action. Ensure that those who have stopped beyond the hold-up are kept informed of the situation.

15. When behind the Leader

Be prepared to stop and act as the marker when indicated to do so by the Leader, however if you are the second bike behind the leader and you realise that the bike in front has not marked a change in direction when indicated to do so by the leader, then mark it yourself.

Each rider should ensure that the following rider is visible at all times (this. If not he/she should stop somewhere safe. In this way, the group will soon be brought to a halt in the case of a problem. The lead rider will, if necessary retrace the route to investigate the cause of the hold up/delay and take appropriate remedial action.

16. When you are the Marker

Never compromise your personal safety or the safety of others by stopping in a dangerous location. No one in the group wants to get lost, but that is preferable to putting yourself at risk.

1. When the Leader signals for you to stop, do so only where you are safe and visible to the following riders.
2. It is your decision where to stop, but remember that to be an effective marker you need to be visible to the following bikes and point out the direction to follow.
3. Do not move until the Tail Rider appears. If the Tail rider fails to appear, still do not move. If something has gone wrong, someone will return for you. REMEMBER. You are all that's going to help the following bikes find the correct route.
4. If you see other riders from the group take the wrong direction do not attempt to chase after them. Wait until they and/or the Leader returns to the junction you are marking.
5. Make sure that what appears to be the last bike is really the Tail Rider; who will slow down as he/she approaches to enable you to pull out safely in front.

17. Tail Rider

1. As you approach the marker bike slow down to enable the rider to pull out. Do not pass them as this is how they will know you are the Tail Rider.
2. Watch for any rider who feels that the pace is too quick and is signalling for other bikes to overtake, allowing them to stay at the rear of the group in front of you. Observe them and under no circumstances encourage them to ride faster.
3. Keep an eye out for riders in front of you that are clearly riding inappropriately, or how may be "out of their depth". In conjunction with the Leader, identify appropriate actions to address the situation.
4. Watch for any bikes that have pulled over for any reason and stop to find out what the problem is.

18. If you get lost

The most common causes of getting lost are failure to see a marker or someone leaving the group while on the road and the bike behind follows. Both causes are avoidable if everyone follows this guide. If you do get lost and after 10minutes no one has found you, proceed to the destination point or contact the Leader.

19. Notes

If in the opinion of the most senior person present, a full member, through his/her attitude or actions, endangers others within the group ride or members of the public or whose riding would bring the IAM into disrepute he/she should be advised by that senior member to rectify said actions immediately or be excluded from continuing within the group ride. The member should be advised that at the conclusion of the ride a report will be submitted to the committee, regarding the incident.

Any rider who is identified as having problems maintaining their place in the Group organised ride will be separated from the group at the first opportunity. The rider may be given 1:1 guidance/advice by an Observer at the rear of the group and behind the tail end rider (i.e. no longer within the Group ride). If following advice, an acceptable level of improvement is seen, they should be allowed to re-join the Group ride.



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