

## PART 1. TOP 5 DO's WHEN RIDING IN A GROUP + BONUS DO

Doing a group ride this past weekend, I noticed some very bad decisions made by cyclists usually going the other way. So, I decided to put together a series on riding styles and things TO DO & NOT TO DO when riding in a group. Even though most of these bad decisions were made by less experienced riders, we can all be reminded of safe practices when riding your bicycle. Be especially aware when riding within 'protected' bike paths since these will also trap you and prevent you from avoiding collisions with other cyclists (see photo below).

Of course, these examples are only the tip of the iceberg. Please let us know your thoughts and ideas by contacting us so we can add them to part 2.

### 1) LOOK UP & PAY ATTENTION!

This past weekend's weather was exceptionally nice. 75°F at the beach brought out hundreds of cyclists. The bad news is that I saw way too many cyclists looking straight down at the ground, making them totally unaware of

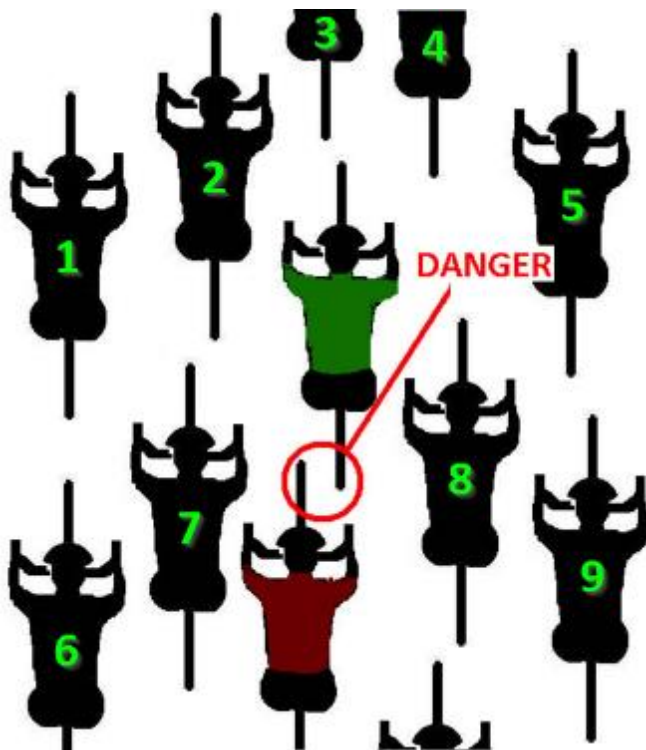
approaching groups and upcoming obstacles. Every one of these cyclists weaved left and right veering into the opposing lane where our lead person would have to slow then yell "HEY", followed by a loud "MOVE OVER" and "PAY ATTENTION." When larger groups are forced to brake hard, this creates a dangerous ripple effect. If anyone loses attention even for a split second, this could cause an overlapping of wheels and a major crash. Looking up and looking where you are going is even more critical if riders are trapped inside a bike path with barriers on each side. Looking at the photo above, K-Rails were installed after several cyclists were killed by drunk drivers who entered the unprotected bike path and ran over the cyclists. Several years ago, Cal Trans added several miles of K-rails (or Jersey Barriers) protecting cyclists from the cars. The downside is that it does not protect cyclists from other cyclists, pedestrians, dog walkers, joggers running 4 abreast, new mothers pushing their double-wide strollers, etc. So, when you are on your bike, **LOOK UP** so you can see what is coming at you!

2) LOOK AT ROAD – Using your peripheral vision, be aware of what's on each side of you as well as what obstacles are in the road. Road obstacles, aka "road furniture" can be anything from pedestrians to animals, poles, rocks, gravel, or anything that can potentially take you down. Looking at the pictures above and to the right, here are two examples of road furniture. In the picture above, notice how this person is walking on the center-line effectively taking up more than one lane. Quick decisions are mandatory since this person could choose to walk back



the other way without looking, thereby putting himself right in your path. As you are approaching, **what would you expect to happen, what would you expect him to do?**

- 3) **HOLD YOUR LINE** – Be predictable! Especially when riding in a group, the last thing you want to do is swerve left to right/right to left, surge forward/backward possibly taking someone’s wheel out from under them. In all cases, you want to ride straight down the road and when turning, keep the same radius. The last thing you want to do in a group ride is to dive into corners swinging wide when exiting. **Hold your line and ride predictable.** Try to achieve the highest honor in a group when they refer to you as a “**good wheel to follow**”.
- 4) **DON’T OVERLAP WHEELS or PROTECT YOUR FRONT WHEEL** – The truth is that you alone are responsible for your front wheel and, when riding in a group, not everyone in front or next to you knows where you are, nor how close you are to them.



If everyone follows the DO’s and DON’Ts in (1), (2) and (3) above, your group ride should be safe and fun. So, what happens if someone’s mind starts to drift? The answer is that most cyclists will start moving shifting their position. They might slowly veer to the left, or veer to the right or slowly move forward eventually overlapping their front wheel with the rear wheel of the person in front of them. If the person in front moves or swerves quickly, then they will bump into the side of the front wheel taking it and the other rider behind out. The rider behind will end up on the ground possibly taking out others as well. So, pay attention and DON’T overlap wheels.

**Great Example** - The photo to the left is a pretty close representation of pack riding during a criterium race. It might also simulate your group ride as well. The only cyclist in danger of bumping wheels and going down is the one in the red jersey (bottom center of picture). The cyclist in the red jersey is overlapping the rear wheel of the cyclist in the green jersey.

*Figure 1 This is a great example for you to run your own scenarios with. Understanding these dynamics will also help you be safer on group rides.*

Some typical scenarios follow. I will refer to the picture to the left and the numbers on the cyclist’s backs.

- Cyclist 1 sees cyclist 2 so cyclist 1 will not move too much further to the right.
  - Same scenario with cyclist 2 and cyclist 3. If cyclist 2 does move to the right, the cyclist in the green jersey will place their left hand on cyclist 2 hip telling cyclist 2 someone is there so don’t move over any further. If cyclist 2 does move further to the right, the cyclist in green will push harder on cyclist 2 hip.
  - How about cyclist 5? If cyclist 5 moves to the left, cyclist 8 can slow a little so cyclist 8 won’t be overlapping wheels. If cyclist 5 moves to the left, cyclist 8 is too far back to be able to put his hand on cyclist 5 hip. Cyclist 8’s other option is to speed up quickly then pushing cyclist 5 on the hip. This is a more dangerous move since it would surprise the green jersey cyclist making him move to the left. If cyclist 3 slows, then the cyclist in green will hit cyclist 3 front wheel.
  - So, go ahead and play with different scenarios which will help you understand group dynamics and become a safer rider.
- 5) **POINT OUT OBSTACLES IN THE ROAD** – You will need to practice some hike handling skills by taking one hand off the handlebar and pointing with the other. Make sure to switch back and forth.



So, what happens when there is an obstacle in the road? In my experience,

- a) Half the time, no one points anything out. Even within an experienced group, it's inconsistent at best. I've ridden with groups where nobody pointed anything out, even large potholes, glass, nails, a tree branch.
- b) It's hard for anyone further back than the first two cyclists at the front to see any obstacles in the road, so, it is their duty to **YELL** out what kind of an obstacle is coming up (rock, branch, pothole, glass, etc.).
- c) Again, it's critical to **YELL** out what obstacle is coming up.
- d) It's also critical **HOW** you point! Photos 1, 2 below are representative of how most cyclists point out obstacles. The problem with pointing like this is that, again, only the cyclist behind the person that is pointing this way can see it. This is because the cyclist directly behind the cyclist pointing blocks the view from anyone further back to see. So, not only do you **NOT** see the obstacle, you **DON'T** see where the cyclist is pointing.

Even when someone ahead points out an obstacle, it's of critical importance **HOW** you point. Here is a trick that will make sure that everyone behind can see (see photos below).

PHOTOs 1, 2 – Imagine if I am in front and someone is drafting me on my right side. **NO ONE** behind them will be able to see where I am pointing.

PHOTO 3 – Here is the trick! Point to the obstacle with your arm anywhere between 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock. That way, **EVERYONE** behind can see where I am pointing. Try and implement this on your next group ride. Discuss this during your pre-ride safety chat. Email us back and let us know how this worked, let us know your experiences.



- 6) **BRING ALONG ESSENTIALS** – BONUS ITEM. I have seen these happen way too often. In other words, “**Don’t Be That Guy.**” For example, someone gets a flat and forgets their (pick one or more from the following list);

<i>Spare tubes</i>	<i>Keys</i>	<i>Appropriate identification</i>
<i>CO2 cartridge</i>	<i>Nutrition</i>	<i>Pump or CO2 pump head</i>
<i>Tire levers</i>	<i>Water bottle(s)</i>	<i>Brings a tube with 28mm valve stem but has 35mm deep rims</i>
<i>Cell phone</i>	<i>Water in the bottles</i>	<i>I’ve even seen cyclists forget their helmets!</i>

## SUMMARY

Those are my top 5+1. Please feel free to write back to us and let us know your TOP 5. Also, let us know how your scenarios went (#4) above. We might even include your ideas next time in PART 2.

One last request, write back and let us know if cyclists are point out road obstacles. If so, which method (#5 above) do you see most often.