



KCC GROUP PACELINE RIDE GUIDELINES

1. PREAMBLE

Group riding, by definition, is a collective experience requiring a certain degree of harmony and cooperation between the participating cyclists. In many ways it's like a group dance where the better everyone understands the various steps the safer and more fun the whole ride experience is. In this case the steps are not difficult but what's essential is that everyone is doing the same dance at the same time. That's what this article is about. The Kawartha Cycling Club (KCC) would like to define how we group paceline ride so everyone is on the same page. To view our Risk Management Plan, click [here](#).

Only certain rides, where the skill level is high and relative rider capability and comfort is similar will use the paceline technique. The ride captain, with agreement from the participants will decide when to use. **The paceline techniques outlined below do not apply to our Time Trials, casual rides or trail and gravel rides.**

2. A Few Prerequisites:

- 2.1 All participants must be a KCC club member or a declared signed up guest of a KCC member.
- 2.2 You need a road bike in good working order.
- 2.3 E-bikes are not permitted in paceline riding.
- 2.4 You need to have a basic understanding of group paceline riding skills. If you don't, we can offer beginner group riding skill sessions upon request.
- 2.5 You need to be familiar with and willing to abide by our ride guidelines, be courteous and respectful of other cyclists and road users.
- 2.6 If the Ride Leader determines that a rider is not prepared for a ride, as per above, the ride leader has the discretion to refuse to allow participation in that day's ride.**

3. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Ride cancellations will no longer be posted on the day of the ride. Please be aware that club rides will be cancelled due to weather if:

- 3.1 It is snowing or raining 1 hour prior to the start of the ride and forecast to continue snowing or raining.
- 3.2 There is a forecast of 80% POP or more of rain or lightning or extremely high winds (50kph+) on the day of the ride.

Ride Leaders will not be attending cancelled rides. You're welcome to ride in any sort of weather but for safety and insurance reasons the KCC cannot run a ride when these conditions exist.

Remember we try our best to keep you safe and that we are only as good as the forecasts.

4. HOW WE PACELINE RIDE

- 4.1 Riders will be divided into groups depending on the number of riders in attendance.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding how many riders show up, no group or sub groups shall be larger than 10 riders, ideally, we try to have groups of 6-10.
- 4.3 Groups are defined by speed and distance. There are A, B groups. The "A" groups are the fastest and longest (26km/h+ average) followed by "B" (21-26km/h). Within B group we will break the groups down into "long" or "short" depending on rider turnout. Remember that these are average speeds for the full ride. Ride routes vary so average speeds will also vary depending on terrain.
- 4.4 Our goal is to have smaller groups of 6 to 10 compatible riders. (Our experience has shown that to have a group of cyclists who have similar fitness, and goals in mind for that day's ride results in a more enjoyable, safer and harmonious ride. Think about whether you want to go hard or easy that day and pick the appropriate ride group.
- 4.5 We attempt to have all groups led by a designated club Ride Leader or a leader selected from within each group. These volunteers know the route, carry a cell phone and have been instructed on how we ride. Most importantly, the Ride/Group Leader explains all this information to the group before they depart. Repetition of our ride practices week after week is key to members absorbing the information but also necessary to identify new riders and inform them of our ride and safety practices. New riders should identify themselves at the start of a ride.
- 4.6 Groups are to depart the ride start area in at least 2-minute intervals. We ask that the riders do not try to catch up to the groups ahead as this causes confusion and creates groups that are too big (remember, 6-10 people per group). The KCC usually has all the groups ride predominantly the same route so that riders who have miscalculated their fitness can easily drift back to the next group. Short cuts are available on most ride routes.

5. RIDE FORMATION

5.1 Road Position

The Basic Ride Formation: **"Tight and to the Right"**

Our goal as a disciplined organized club is to share the enjoyment of the road with our club members as well as the general public. Riders must share the road with motorized vehicles. To reduce the potential conflict between these two groups we generally ride at off peak hours and frequent only the least travelled roads possible. In order to further protect ourselves we travel two abreast or in a double paceline. This is an internationally recognized cycling formation used by professionals and amateurs around the world. The main objective of the double paceline is to reduce the length of the line of cyclists

in order to allow vehicles to pass with greater ease and increased safety. It encourages drivers to make full lane changes when passing which provides a safer gap between the passing vehicle and the cyclists. Aggressive drivers may attempt the dangerous pass between the center line and the group, known as “threading the needle”. The Kawartha Cycling Club has implemented a ride position called “**Tight and to the Right**”. The idea is to take a traditional two abreast formation and position it as far right as is safely possible. ***Our goal is to accommodate the approaching driver with a clear view forward so that they make a clean and safe pass as soon as possible.***

To accomplish this, the KCC Riders are required to ride in a formation that is ‘tight’ and well disciplined. By ‘tight’ we mean that the Riders are to be 2-3ft apart laterally at the shoulders, and 2-3ft apart front to back (wheel to wheel). Experienced paceline riders may ride in a tighter formation provided the leader and all riders in the group agree. The group’s primary goal is to maintain the cohesion of this formation. It is the individual discipline of each rider to hold their position in a smooth predictable manner and not create gaps or overlaps which jeopardize the ride quality. **Do not move up inside a rider to your left without letting the rider know you are doing so.**

5.2 HOW WE ROTATE

We use two methods to rotate cyclists within a basic “tight and to the right” formation. One we refer to as a Social Paceline and the other as a Rotating Paceline. The Ride Leader will call out the appropriate formation for the needs of the group but any cyclists within the group can call out a suggestion.

5.2.1 SOCIAL PACELINE

This is our standard rotation used while warming up or just cruising along. In the Social Paceline we start from the premise of the two abreast formation where everybody is 2-3ft apart laterally and fore/aft. The two leading cyclists are breaking the wind and setting the pace. The lead cyclist on the right, after a reasonable period (1- 2 minutes, it’s flexible) asks the cyclist on their left to “**Cover Me**”. That means the leading left cyclist will gently ride forward and fade right to shelter the right side of the group. In turn the left side of the group will **gently** advance forward to the front of the group beside the right line. Those two riders will now lead the group for whatever time they feel comfortable with, again it’s negotiable. **All passes are to be done smoothly and gently and make sure that your rear wheel is clear before you fade right.**

A very important point to rotating a group: While you are in front of the group, the group is at your mercy. Anything you do, good or bad, will affect the entire group.

- 1) If your pass is smooth and steady, then the group will remain smooth and steady.
- 2) If you accelerate aggressively it will start to shatter the group and create gaps and confusion.
- 3) If you half wheel the lead rider beside you it will offset the whole group or create gaps.

We all have a responsibility to the riders behind us to move in a smooth and predictable way and watch the road surface ahead.

5.2.2 ROTATING PACELINE

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This rotation is different from the Social Paceline in one fundamental way: **The act of rotating is constant.** There are no static moments. When the left lead rider moves smoothly and gradually forward and clears the right line of riders, he/she then gently fades to the right. The transitioning lead rider must be careful not to touch wheels with the passed rider's by checking under their arm for the rider's wheel. The right rider can assist by calling out 'clear' when the passing rider is safely ahead. As soon as that first rotation is complete the next one begins as if all the riders in the group are part of the same chain. In the Rotating Paceline all the riders should be moving through the rotation at the same speed.

Here are some important points to remember when executing the Rotating Paceline properly:

- 1) Do not attack or surge off the front when it is your turn to pull. You are supposed to go slightly faster than the receding line. Surging or attacking will cause gaps and jerk the speed of the line around. Pull smoothly and gently to the front and be there to shelter the riders behind you, not gap them.
- 2) Do not leave gaps within the line when you are in the back of the rotation. All riders need to focus on maintaining the same gaps all the way around the rotation.
- 3) Riders wishing to miss a rotation can do so by sitting a bikes length back of the group and allowing the group to rotate through. It's best to call out to the rider ahead that you are not pulling through to avoid their hesitation.
- 4) It's also helpful for the last rider on the advancing side to call out to the last rider to remind the last receding rider that they need to transition next. Gaps often happen when the last rider misses the transition.
- 5) The rotation can go from left to right or vice versa. Experienced cyclists will tailor the rotation so that the advancing line is sheltered from a crosswind. **We generally opt for the left to the right rotation because the HTA specifies passing on the left.**

5.2.3 SINGLE FILE PACELINE

We make every effort to ride on the quietest roads at the quietest times. If, for some unusual reason, we are forced to travel on an excessively busy road we will ride single file to get past the congested section. We also will ride long descents single file. Otherwise all our group rides are two abreast.

5.3 ECHELONS

This is a formation where the cyclists are spread diagonally across the road to gain shelter from a crosswind. Echelon formation is unacceptable for group riding in our community. An Echelon completely blocks the lane and is counter to our "Tight and to the Right" strategy where the driver is to be given a view up the left side of the lane.

5.4 STRAVA SEGMENTS

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Most group rides have a degree of compromise. One person's hammer fest is another person's recovery ride. We try to accommodate everyone's wishes by offering as many different groups as possible. We also offer different opportunities along the route for some hard efforts. Almost all our routes involve sections where the option exists for the riders to break from the group and go as fast as they wish. We call these the Strava Segment Hot Spots. All long climbs are automatically Hot Spots and as such the groups are permitted to break formation and regroup at the pre-designated spots at the top. **We do ask you to stay to the right and not scatter across the hill when the group breaks apart.** Slower riders stay right and make room for the faster riders to get by without forcing them too far out. We still want to stay 'Tight and to the Right'.

We also offer Hot Spots on flatter terrain. Your Ride Leader should inform you of the Hot Spot locations before and during each ride. There are three common denominators to a Hot Spot:

- 1) A very quiet section of road
- 2) No traffic lights or stop signs
- 3) A safe regrouping location at the end of the section

Some rules about Hot Spots:

- 1) Going hard is optional, not compulsory. Those that choose to cruise can rest assure that the group will wait for them at the regrouping point.
- 2) All riders must wait at the regrouping spot. Under no circumstances can anybody soft pedal down the road. This causes confusion for the late arrivers. They think the group is leaving them behind. If you feel the need to keep moving come back toward the late arrivers and then ride back with them.
- 3) Never regroup in a manner that would obstruct traffic in any way. All our regrouping spots offer plenty of space to pull over safely. No excuses for blocking traffic.

5.4 DESCENDING

In Kawartha Lakes we have several longer descents that can generate sustained speeds in excess of 60 kph. On those descents we recommend the group take the following actions:

- 1) The group should move into a single file formation.
- 2) Riders should move 1 to 2 m from the right edge of the road. It is not safe to ride close to the edge of the road at high speeds due to wind gusts.
- 3) Riders should open gaps of at least 3m plus between each rider front to back.
- 4) Send the heaviest and presumably the fastest riders down first to avoid bottlenecks. The goal is to reduce the amount of passing on the descent.

- 5) All passing must happen on the left. **Never pass on the right.**

5.5 COMMUNICATIONS – Before and During the Ride

Communication is critical to the success of all group rides. It starts right from the beginning even before the group leaves.

- 1) The rider needs to communicate with their group or Ride Leader to determine which group and pace of ride they want.
- 2) On the road, riders need to communicate the ride formation, rotation and pace. Riders at the front need to call out road hazards and traffic situations.
- 3) Riders at the back need to call out cars approaching from the back. The bottom line is that the quality and safety of the ride is dependent on frequent and clear communications between all the riders.
- 4) Never assume everyone in the group knows a car is approaching or that the group is turning. Everything that can affect the group needs to be called out.

One final but important point regarding communication. We have Ride Leaders who are there to try to maintain the quality of the ride but the best way to keep us all at our best is when we all communicate best ride practices. If you see someone riding inappropriately by overlapping wheels or surging off the front, we all should say something. Be polite but make it known that that was not proper. We all own these rides and if someone does something dangerous it's in everyone's best interest to correct it.

Don't let bad habits go unaddressed. Say something before it's too late. We all have a responsibility to the riders around us. When we are at the front, we are responsible to the riders behind to provide a smooth and steady pull and to point out hazards. When we are at the back, we are responsible to call out cars coming from the back and to maintain the integrity of the group by not allowing gaps. Don't wait for the Ride Leader to say something, we all own the ride equally.

5.6 EMERGENCY STOPS

When being approached by an emergency vehicle (fire truck, ambulance, or police) with its lights and siren activated, we are required under the HTA to pull over our group and stop. It doesn't matter if the emergency vehicle is approaching from the front or behind.

Act fast and act safely and in control: when a siren is heard or lights are seen, immediately shout out to your group to pull over and stop. A siren or lights means stop now but not a panic stop, a controlled and safe stop.

How to stop a group: let's presume your group is riding 2 abreast.

- 1) The Ride Leader calls out to the group
 - "EMERGENCY STOP, GROUP STOPPING NOW"

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- “RIGHT LINE STOP FIRST”
- 2) “LEFT LINE PASS AND STOP”
 - 3) The right line applies their brakes to reduce the speed in a controlled manner, eventually pulling over to a complete stop. Once stopped, riders must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersections.
 - 4) The left line completely passes the right line and once safely clear, slows in a controlled manner. Once stopped, riders must keep as close as possible to the right edge of the road, clear of any intersections.

This can all happen within seconds. There is no need for panic. What is essential is that the decision to perform an “emergency stop” be made quickly, loudly and clearly so that the group has time to perform the stop safely.

6. IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL RIDING TIPS

- 6.1 Ride smooth and steady all the time. No sudden or abrupt movements or over reactions to potholes, etc. Call out Pot Holes.
- 6.2 Don't be that person who surges when it's their turn to pull or leaves gaps in the rotation and never, ever overlap.
- 6.3 When following a wheel be just slightly offset by 3-4" so that if there is a sudden stop you don't immediately slam into the wheel ahead. The offset gives you an additional few feet to recover.
- 6.4 **When you are at the front of the group on a short descent, pedal to keep the pace up.** Remember there are riders drafting behind you who will have to brake if you don't keep the pace up.
- 6.5 Keep a group together on rolling terrain using a 'Social Paceline' and then as a group, climb slightly easier but descend harder. The group speed will be more consistent, and the group will more likely remain intact.
- 6.6 When picking your group be realistic. It's better to be comfortable in your group than maxed out all the time.
- 6.7 **Group rides are not races.** We are there to support each other by taking turns in the wind. Only in Hot Spots is it ok to try to drop your friends.
- 6.8 When you see someone committing a ride foul, politely say something. We are all responsible for the quality of our rides.
- 6.9 If you get a flat, give a loud shout out right away or there is a good chance the pack will ride away without even noticing you. If the group knows they will stop and help you fix it quickly.
- 6.10 **Do not yell obscenities to motorists or get into arguments with the police.** We ask that riders not engage in any kind of confrontation with drivers or police officers. This includes hand gestures involving the center digit. We are working hard to improve the reputation of the KCC and all cyclists in general. If words must be exchanged, let the Group Ride Leader do the talking. (Feel free to video the exchange if you feel the individual is dangerous.) It's

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important to understand that when you ride with the club and when you wear our club jersey you become an **Ambassador** for both the club and all cyclists in general. Let's not do anything to fuel the flames of discontent. Nothing meaningful gets resolved on the road.

Keep Safe, have fun and thanks for riding with the Kawartha Cycling Club.