

WHAM Group Riding Guidelines

Most bikers often ride in groups. WHAM recognises that this activity becomes more enjoyable and safer if group riding is practiced with a greater awareness of the issues. This guide sets out the principles for safe group riding and forms the basis for our training “master classes”.

Awareness and attitude

We know from your comments **the greatest concern for riders in Groups is about the behaviour of fellow riders**. The anxiety to “keep up” can lead to rash decisions with potentially disastrous consequences. The frustrations experienced when having to ride with others who do not match your pace or style can produce the same results.

The guidelines here are designed to foster a greater awareness between group riders and enable safe progressive riding. However there is no substitute for practice; WHAM encourages open discussion and will offer *Group Riding Master Classes* to promote safe and effective Group Riding.

What’s in the Guide?

- First something to remember, “G R O U P”;
- then some further detail
- some optional group signals

All leading up to out on the road “master classes”



G R O U P

GROUP

- Know your fellow riders
- Have their mobile phone numbers
- Understand their riding abilities and their bikes
- Be aware of their progress on the road

ROUTE

- Know the route
- Agree planned stops before you start
- Programme your SATNAV or look at a map
- Identify potentially tricky navigational points on the route before starting out

OPEN ROAD

Follow the 2 second rule for all traffic, group riders included

Adopt the overtaking position if wanting to pass other traffic or a group rider

Be aware of those in front and behind

At turning points allow the rider behind to see which direction you take

URBAN

Close up to keep the group together

Use a staggered formation where possible

Filtering – when you stop in traffic leave space in front of you for group riders to join

PROTOCOL

Ride for yourself at all times

Be courteous to other road users

Always ride within your capabilities

Let others know if you intend to leave the group

Agree an Emergencies procedure

1. Group

Know your fellow riders

- Take extra care if they are new to the group
- If you want to, select a ride leader
- If you want to, select a tail-end-Charlie
- If you want to, agree when the riding order changes

Have their mobile phone numbers

- Charge your phone before you ride
- Remember to switch it ON!

Understand their riding abilities and their bikes

- Avoid frustration by:
 - i. keeping the Group to a manageable size (ideally 3 or 4 riders)
 - ii. follow the route to avoid anxiety about getting separated from the group or lost
 - iii. make safe overtakes of other traffic and other group riders
 - iv. always wait for the following rider at turning points

Be aware of their progress

- The rider in front may slow because they have seen a hazard
- The rider behind may slow or stop if they have a problem

2. Route

Know the route; ask if you are unsure

Agree planned stops for

- Fuel
- Coffee
- Comfort breaks

If you use a SATNAV do programme it but remember that individual SATNAV's can show variations to the same route! Always know your destination.

Identify potentially tricky navigational points en route before starting:

- Complex junctions
- Built up areas
- Motorway intersections

If you become separated from the group don't panic. You will know your destination, follow the route. They will see that you have disappeared and will be waiting, marking your next turn.

3. Open Road

Follow the 2 second rule

- This is the preferred following distance, increase if conditions warrant it
- Ride for safety with good forward observation

Adopt the overtaking position if wanting to pass other traffic or a fellow rider

- Allow fellow riders to safely pass – enjoy your ride!
 - Avoid following too close unless intending to overtake – don't "push" a fellow rider.

Be aware of those in front and behind

- Can the rider(s) in front see you in their mirrors?
 - Consider adjusting your speed for the rider behind - particularly after you have made an overtake

At turning points allow the rider behind to see which direction you take:

- Leaders should plan to adjust their speed to gather the group prior to turnings, particularly at complex or difficult places
- If necessary wait for following riders in a safe but visible place
- Be positive they have seen your new direction

4. Urban

Close up as slower speeds mean closer formations can be achieved. A tight group is less likely to be separated by vehicles pulling into a gap or traffic signals splitting the group.

Use a staggered formation if useful and safe.

Filtering – leave space for riders to join

- At lights if you have filtered to the front leave space for fellow riders to join you
- If following and it's safe to do so take the opportunity to filter up to your lead rider

5. Protocol

The **GOLDEN RULE - Ride for yourself at all times.**

Be courteous to other road users

- Recognise that groups of motor bikes can be intimidating

- If safe to do so, thank other vehicles especially if they have allowed you through

Ride within your capabilities

- Be aware of WHEN you feel pressured to keep up - and do something about it!
- Don't be tempted to up your pace when you see a fellow rider closing behind you – unless there is a good reason invite them to pass and continue to enjoy your ride.
- Be aware of your bike; with usual checks before the ride and if any problems develop “stop soon” (see Group Signals section) to sort it out: don't carry on regardless

You know about overtaking; in Group rides there is “other traffic” and your fellow riders. You're fully aware of what to do with “other traffic”; here is some guidance to ensure we all continue to ride for ourselves and show consideration for our fellow riders:

- When you approach another Group rider and do intend to overtake adopt the overtaking position to signal your intent.
- **Wait for a few seconds** until you are sure the rider has seen you. At this point you may well receive a clear invitation to overtake – if you believe it to be safe, off you go.
- Without a clear invitation either the rider has not seen you; they don't think there is a safe overtake; or there will be some other reason: so beware!
- Without that invitation it is the absolute responsibility of the overtaking rider to conduct the manoeuvre with skill, care and consideration. Consider, for example, is your fellow rider planning an overtake themselves?

Only leave the group after informing them

- By agreement at a stop and not en-route

Group Riding Signals

These signals should be used just like all others. Your priority is your own safety so you **Take** and **Use** information for your riding plan as a priority. Giving information to other road users (even fellow riders) is not necessarily fundamental to your safety.

Message	Action	Information
Hazard on the road surface 	Leg out (left or right)	
Indicators left on 	Left hand clench/unclench	
U-turn (or Garnfield!) 	Circle index finger above head	
Follow me 	Pat back of helmet 3 times	

Slow down	Slow down arm signal (as Highway Code)	
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Group Riding Signals (2)

Stop information		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop soon (unplanned stop) 	Left arm down, open hand and palm facing to the rear	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel 	Point to petrol tank/filler cap	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink/food 	Drinking from a cup action	No diagram
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort break 	Left hand slow down movement with clenched fist	

Training

The overriding principle is for SAFE riding at all times: nothing must detract from each rider's responsibility for their own safe ride.

The Master Class is for "Advanced" riders who understand and ride to "the system" – riding in Groups won't change this however it introduces other hazards to be managed.

As the training progresses there should be an increase in confidence with a corresponding reduction in anxieties about sufficient SEPARATION and loss-of-CONTACT.

Those we share Group rides with are our fellow bikers - this experience is enhanced by fostering a courteous awareness of how both you and they are riding. *Remember you'll all be sharing the next coffee stop!*

Group training

Typically a Group (at least one Observer and a small number of members) will ride to practice elements of group riding technique and skills. Master Class exercises aim to teach and develop basic group riding skills. Given that riders will come to these classes with different experience and skills in Group riding all the exercises may not be necessary for all Groups. The specific requirements for a specific group of riders will be assessed by the assigned Observer at the time but could include:

1. Pre-ride briefing
2. Route planning/marketing
3. Inter-group communication/emergencies
4. Open road riding
5. Urban riding
6. Overtaking

The following “aide-memoire” notes are written for Observers:

1	Pre-ride briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review specific group-riding risks • Awareness of group riders, retention of independence and discipline • Know the route – you may be at the front! • Ride Leader and/or Sweeper required? En route changes? • Contact numbers exchanged, mobiles on/charged! • Split into small groups, try to match riding styles • Separation/re-join procedure • Enjoy the ride at your pace, no pressure • An opportunity to learn and brush up your riding skills • Route planning, see next section... • Use of radios?
2	Route planning/marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know destination, planned stops • Decide on route marking approach • GPS programmed, maps or road-book prepared • Difficult navigation areas planned • If you’re not planning to complete the whole ride; make sure the group know where you will leave • Agree an emergencies procedure – safe roadside stop for contact • Discuss inter-group signals which may be used
3	Urban sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow position – close up to reduce separation • Adopt a staggered formation where safe to do so • Filtering where safe to do so, create space for others if possible
4	Open road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ride for yourself and within your capabilities, don’t allow “keep-up syndrome” • Follow position: “only a fool follows too close” – adjust for conditions • Overtake position if intending to pass • Show all other road-users courtesy • Inter-group contact empathy • Allow group overtakes – don’t create pressure on you or the overtaker

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you do overtake you may be waiting whilst route-marking• Make sure the following group rider sees your direction
5	Overtaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 classes of traffic “normal” and “group”• Consideration for group riders and other traffic alike.• Maintain separation to allow overtakes unless you are planning an overtake• Fast bikes and fast cars are probably better in front of you• Before overtaking a group member wait (for a few seconds) to ensure they have seen you • If a group member does not give an invitation to pass THINK!