

Mancunium Chapter

Group Riding

Key Points

- **Ride within the law**

Always obey road traffic regulations and ride within the law.

- **Mirrors**

Check your mirrors more frequently when riding in a group.

- **Break-downs**

Should someone break-down, only the “Sweeper” should stop to assist.

- **Staggered formation**

Use the staggered formation only where it is appropriate and safe to do so.

- **2 second rule**

It is important to stay within the speed limits, but it is also important that riders keep up with the rider in front. Try to maintain a two second gap between you and the rider in front. Lagging behind increases the chance of the group being split, makes it more difficult for the ride leader and frustrates riders behind you.

- **Overtaking within the group**

The Chapter has a policy of no overtaking within the group. Make progress and maintain the two-second rule to avoid the need for overtaking.

- **Be aware of and courteous to other road users**

Inevitably the group will get split at some point at roundabouts, traffic lights etc. Be aware of and courteous to other road users.

- **Remember that you are responsible for your own riding and safety at all times.**



Mancunium Chapter Safe Riding in a Group

Rules of the Road... It's the Law

When riding on the UK's roads we are all subject to the laws of the Highway as described in the Highway Code. We are all responsible for our riding habits and riding within the law. Should we decide to break the rules, e.g., speeding or riding irresponsibly, then we are liable for prosecution by the police. Hatters Chapter ride-outs are planned by Road Captains who will ensure that the route is suitable and safe for group rides. Road Captains are not responsible for individual's riding skills and compliance with the law - **IT IS THE INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBILITY TO RIDE SAFELY AND WITHIN THE LAW, AND OF COURSE, WHEN YOU RIDE IN A GROUP; YOU RIDE AT YOUR OWN RISK.**

Mirrors

Mirror, signal manoeuvre. When riding, you must be aware of those around you, even more-so when riding in a group. You may not be responsible for those around you and how they ride, but if you are in an awkward position that puts you at risk, be prepared to take appropriate action, and to do this you need space. Check your mirrors more regularly than usual, there is another reason for using your mirrors regularly; the Buddy System (more later).

What If You Break-down?

Organized ride-outs have a Lead Rider and Tail End Charlie; with larger groups of riders, a Road Captain will take the role of Sweeper. The Sweeper's duty is to assist with any breakdowns within the group. If you break down, the Sweeper will pull up with you and check that you are safe and assist where possible. It is advisable that you carry breakdown insurance cover as well as a mobile phone. The Sweeper is not responsible for getting you and your bike home.

First Aid

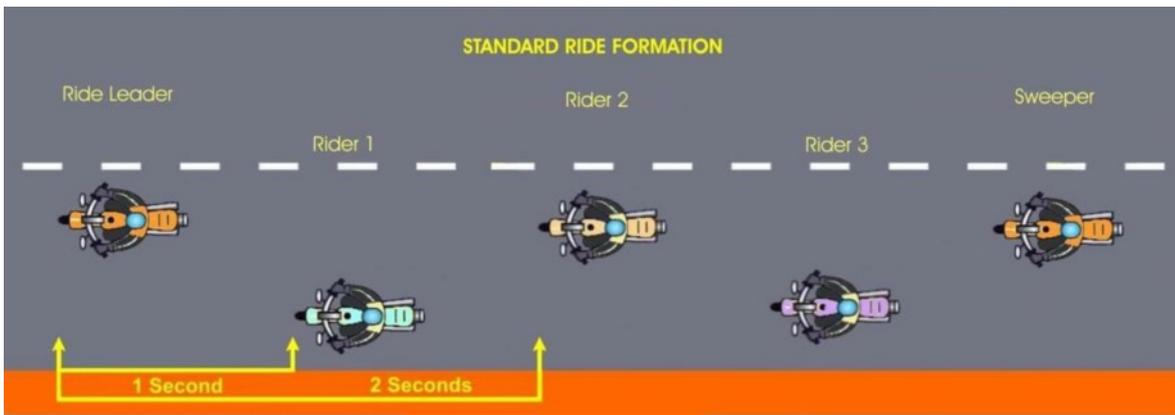
Many Road Captains are trained for first aid. If you become ill or are injured during a ride-out, a Road Captain will assist with First Aid where necessary.

Lead, Tail & Sweeper

All ride-outs are pre-planned to ensure the ride is safe and suitable for group riding. Usually the Lead Rider is the one who has organized the route. The Lead Rider (wearing an orange high-viz vest) will lead the ride-out and signal to the ride-out various instructions during the ride to ensure safe riding and continuity of the ride. The Tail Rider, also known as the Back Marker or Tail-end Charlie (and wearing a high-viz yellow or green vest) – is positioned at the back of the ride-out group. His role is to mark the end of the group. Most ride-outs will also have a Sweeper (usually wearing a high-viz yellow vest). The Sweeper's role is simply to stay at the back of the ride, just in front of the Tail-end Charlie and to assist with any breakdowns. He will also assist with any other issues that may arise due to heavy traffic, lost riders, etc.

Staggered Formation & Keeping Your Distance

The general formation of a ride-out consists of the Lead Rider, the ride-out members and Tail-end Charlie (occasionally, there will also be a Sweeper at the back with the Tail-end Charlie). The Lead Rider will position himself in the centre or to the right of the lane; behind and to the Lead Rider's left, the '2nd Man' positions himself/herself; behind the 2nd Man is the 3rd, staggered and behind and to the right of the 2nd Man. This staggered formation continues down the line. Whilst riding, always remember to use the Two Second Rule. This applies to the rider immediately in front of you, so the staggered rider to your left (or right) would be just one second in front. Only when the road narrows and the ride has to form a single file does the staggered formation rule change to a conventional single file ride with suitable spacing between the rider in front, Two Second Rule applies.



Watch Your Speed – Using the Buddy System

Each rider should make mirror checks at regular intervals to ensure they can see the rider behind them. Should a rider see the person behind fall back substantially, then he/she should slow down. This has the effect of slowing down the whole ride-out until the Lead Rider notices that the ride-out has fallen back. The Lead Rider will then pull over and wait for the rest of the ride-out to re-group. It is important to stay within the speed limits, but it is also important that riders keep up with the rider in front. Riding with excessive gaps in the group (ie, allowing the two second rule to extend to three or more seconds) encourages other vehicles to break into the group, disrupting the ride-out.

The Best Bit ‘till Last – The Second Man Drop-off

Chapter ride-outs use the second-man drop-off system to keep the ride heading in the right direction at junctions and roundabouts. This involves the Ride Leader indicating to the rider immediately behind (known as the 'second man') to pull over to a position of safety and mark the way to the rest of the group. The dropped-off rider remains in that position - however long it takes - until the sweeper and back marker (in yellow or green hi-viz jackets) appear.

The simplest drop-off is the left turn junction. The Lead Rider, will, as he approaches a left junction, indicate in the usual way, and then point to his helmet to alert the following rider, before pointing to the kerb. The 2nd Man will indicate left and pull over, placing himself in a position that is clearly visible to the ride-out members and other traffic. He/she must not stop where he places himself/herself at risk.

At a right turn, the Lead Rider will indicate a turn right and then, using his left hand, will point to his helmet then point once again to the kerb. The 2nd Man will pull over to the kerb if safe to do so, and then point to the right so that the ride-out can clearly see that the ride-out has taken the right turn junction. Alternately, if the right turn junction is open with no obstructions, the 2nd Man will take the right turn and then immediately pull over allowing the rest of the ride-out to see that he has taken the right turn junction.

Traffic lights are treated in the same way as regular road junctions. Should the route for the ride-out be straight through a traffic light or cross-roads, then there is no requirement for a 2nd Man to drop off.

At Roundabouts, the Lead Rider, as he takes an exit off a roundabout, will once again point to a kerb. The 2nd Man will pull over where it is safe to do so and in sight of oncoming ride-out and traffic to indicate which exit was taken off the roundabout by the ride-out.

At traffic lights, roundabouts and some large road junctions, *ghost islands* are used to control traffic. It is rare but on occasions, where safe to do so, a Lead Rider may utilize a ghost island as an early indication marker on the approach to a junction or roundabout.

Confusion can arise where there is a fork in the road. Lead Riders will indicate a 2nd Man drop-off to indicate which road is the correct route for the ride-out.

Multiple Drop-offs

Where there is a complex road configuration or busy road traffic, the Lead Rider may choose to drop off more than one person. An example may be a large roundabout where the Lead Rider will indicate a 2nd Man drop off on the approach to a roundabout (perhaps utilizing a ghost island) and then another drop-off at the roundabout exit road.

Rejoining the Ride-out

As the Sweeper and Tail-end Charlie approach the drop-off point, he/they will slow down to allow the drop-off rider to rejoin the group in front of the Sweeper and Tail-end Charlie. The rider will then stay at the end of the ride-out taking his place in the staggered formation at the tail end until he is superseded by the next drop-off rider who rejoins the group at the next junction. If, however, traffic conditions do not allow this, then you must rejoin the carriageway when safe to do so and rejoin the Ride-out – the Tail-end Charlie will slow down to allow you to catch up. Once safe to do so, overtake the Tail-end Charlie (and Sweeper) and rejoin the Ride-out.

Crossing Over

Probably one of the most hazardous manoeuvres carried out en masse by the ride-out group is the cross-over. Crossing over from inside to outside staggered riding position

(or vice versa) can be very hazardous if the gaps between riders are too short. When road or traffic conditions dictate, changing position should only be performed when safe to do so.

When riding in 2 abreast, staggered formation, if a rider has to pull out of the riding group and this causes a gap, **DO NOT** change position. Maintain your position in the group with the gap. **This also applies after a 2nd Man Drop; do not change your position in the group.** Use your mirrors, signal and then manoeuvre.

It's Your Choice

Remember, your safety is your responsibility. The Lead Rider will always consider road safety and drop-off options, however road conditions are continually changing and a planned drop-off might not be as originally thought. Always make sure that you stop in a safe position and well visible to all traffic and ride-out. If necessary, park up and stand on a pavement and point to oncoming ride-out to show direction of drop-off route.

Patience

In heavy traffic or built-up areas, the ride-out may become heavily fragmented and split up. Be patient and wait for the Tail-end Charlie before leaving your designated drop-off point. If you leave too early the ride-out will get split up and the latter part of the ride-out will miss the turn and get lost. If the ride-out does get split up, stay at your drop-off point. Using the Buddy System, the Lead Rider will eventually stop and wait for the ride-out to regroup. If the ride-out has split, the Lead Rider will organize a Road Captain or experienced rider from the group to back-track along the route and pick up the stragglers.

It is not a rare event to lose part of a ride-out, and 99% of the time, the ride-out is lost simply because ride-out members do not follow these simple rules of dropping off when requested and waiting for the Tail end Charlie.

Keep safe, ride well and enjoy.