

# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

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# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

## 1. Tour de Cure bunch riding

**Bunch riding** offers many obvious safety features for cyclists, most notably, being seen by other vehicles on the road, as well as by pedestrians.

However, to ride safely in a bunch requires a number of important factors including – appropriate riding experience, fitness, a mechanically sound bike, alertness, consistent riding style, and excellent communications through clear and universally understood signals. If these general factors are not followed, the rider is putting him/herself in danger as well as the bunch. A small or simple error in bunch riding can lead to a disastrous outcome.

Tour de Cure Bunch Riding Rules and Etiquette guidelines are an amalgam of opinions and recommendations from experienced road cyclists, designed specifically for Tour de Cure riders.

It is important to note that all riding groups may have slight variations on signals and calls, on formations and etiquette and when riding with other groups, it is prudent to ask first what their bunch riding etiquette rules are.

**An aim of Tour de Cure is to be recognised as a respected pack of responsible and competent cyclists, held in high regard for their approach to bunch riding, their support of team riders and their commitment to Tour de Cure’s Bunch Riding Rules and Etiquette.**

**A key principle of Tour de Cure’s bunch riding etiquette is that the pack is as fast as the slowest rider. That is, we stick together as a focused and supportive unit.**

We also call the ride in advance as to the anticipated level – for examples, pace line ride, moderate pace, and recovery pace - enabling riders to assess the group speed, distance and ride suitability to abilities. Erratic riding with a faster break-away group pressuring slower riders to constantly catch up can lead to rider fatigue, sloppy riding technique and puts the bunch at risk of an accident.

## 2. The bunch formation

Riders pair off in 2 x 2 formations. Ride evenly with your partner, handlebar to handlebar. Don't sit directly on the wheel of the rider in front. Keep a distance of approximately 1 – 1.5 metres off the rear of the wheel in front. Increase that distance approximately three fold in wet weather. Do not focus on the rear of the wheel. Focus on the person in front and ahead through the line. This allows the rider to be more aware of the surroundings, increasing situational awareness.

### Tips

- 2 x 2 formation
- Handlebar to handlebar
- Wheel distance of 1 – 1.5m
- Wet weather gap 3 - 4m
- Look ahead through the line



# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

## 2.1 Half wheeling

Do not “half-wheel” or overlap wheels. This presents an extreme risk as you will be positioned within the front rider’s blind spot and any sideways movement or braking by that rider could result in wheels clipping and a fall involving any number of riders.



When the rider in front of you stands up, that is, gets out of the saddle, the bike will move back. This can happen any time, however climbing or preparing for a sprint are the most common times. If you are about to get out of the saddle, make sure you are at the top of your pedal stroke and have downward pressure on the pedal. To avoid a wheel clip, and likely resulting fall, always allow enough space between you and the rider in front.

## 3. Position on the road

Riders have clearly defined rights on the road that in simple terms allows riders to occupy a full lane, ride in pair formation and have the same responsibilities as motorists. However, not all motorists are aware of the rights of cyclists. Cyclists should take this into consideration and ensure all movements that are made are clear, noticeable and predictable to all around. Erratic or inconsistent cycling puts pressure on drivers of vehicles.

### 3.1 Slow traffic

When in slow traffic, do not ride between lanes to move past vehicles. It is hard for the driver to see, it distracts the driver’s vision and creates uncertainty for the driver as to what the rider/s may or may not do next. It also splits up the bunch with cyclists positioned between different vehicles.

Stay with the lane. It may mean the trip takes a couple of minutes longer, but you are reducing then likelihood of driver uncertainty, frustration and an accident.

When traffic is stopped at intersections, stop behind the last stationary vehicle as you would in a car. A Tour de Cure bunch will cover a greater length than most other vehicles and therefore should move like other vehicles.

## 3.2 Overtaking another rider

When passing another rider or bunch always pass on the right hand side.

Over taking on the inside is hazardous as the rider needs to be alert to traffic movements on both sides of the bike. Overtake on the right and make sure sufficient room is available to move back across in to line without causing the cyclist/s you have passed to have to brake suddenly.

Advise the rider or the bunch to be passed by calling "Riders back". When passing the bunch, keep calling "Rider/s right" so all riders within the bunch are aware your bunch is passing. Add a greeting as well, and keep the tone of calls friendly.

If the bunch has split (eg as a result of spreading out over a hill climb) and commences to regroup at the top or beginning of the descent, when regrouping, let the rider you are to join know that you are regrouping on the left or ride side by calling "On your left" or "On your right".



## 3.3 Riding two abreast

Cyclists' are fully within their legal rights to ride two abreast on roads. There are times however when cyclists should not exercise this right. Such times include:

- uphill left hand bends. They are particularly dangerous in single lane and dual lane roads. eg. The Old Pacific Highway north of Sydney is a flagged high risk due to motor cycles. They travel at speed and, once positioned for a forthcoming corner, are not as manoeuvrable as a car. Keep well to the left and in single file if needed.
- Single lane roads with traffic. Respect the traffic by forming a single file to allow traffic through.
- Stationary or parked vehicles in the lane. The bunch moves to single file formation to pass parked vehicles.

## 3.4 Road hazards

Road hazards are many and varied and include potholes, debris (glass, rocks, gravel, rubbish / litter, sticks, branches, leaves), machinery/vehicle parts (bolts, nuts, cables, tyre tread, hub caps, rope, wood blocks), drain grills, rough surfaces, road repairs, metal plates, reflectors (cats eyes), oil slicks, water, wet surfaces and garbage bins.

In addition to traffic, other moving hazards may include opening car doors, pedestrians, runners, and stray animals.

Riding too close to the gutter and slipping off the road into it can present risks. Getting back over the lip of the gutter requires skill to hop out. If your bike is in a gutter. slow your speed and remain in the gutter until it flattens out. Then exit at an angle.

# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE



**Train and tram tracks.** Ride over tracks at an angle, ideally perpendicular to the tracks to avoid the wheel becoming caught.

**Wooden bridges and "Pick a Plank".** In regional areas there are many bridges with wooden planks. The planks run lengthwise and gaps between the planks can be hazardous.

Riders need to position themselves in the bunch prior to arriving at the bridge by moving into single file. Increase the distance between each rider to be ensure good visibility and aim to stay on the same plank. The rider should keep the line of sight at approximately 10m – 20m in front and maintain a moderate pace to help balance and keep the plank to best avoid the wheel becoming caught in one of the gaps between the planks.



## 4. The lead riders

The lead riders take the greatest responsibility for the bunch. They set the pace; they make the calls for road hazards and warn the bunch of forthcoming traffic changes. This is not the time for the social chat.

Lead riders should scan the road ahead for obstacles and other potential risks – scanning 100m ahead or more and scanning back to the front of the wheels. The lead riders' eyes must be focused on what lies ahead, and be aware of peripheral developments at all times. They should have excellent situational awareness to make calls early and communicate clearly so that when moving around obstacles all riders have sufficient time and space to follow.

When in pair formation and a hazard is identified, the lead rider makes the call. If a hole in the road is identified, the call is **"hole left"** (of the left hand lead rider, called by the left rider) **"hole middle"** (of both lead riders, called by both riders) or **"hole right"** (of the right hand lead rider, called by the right rider). The calls also apply for all hazards that may cause a risk to the bunch. Eg. "Stick middle", "glass left", "rock middle".



# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

Wherever possible, the lead riders try to take hazards in the middle between the left and right lead rider. That is done without moving the bunch into a higher risk situation (for example, moving the bunch over into another lane, or moving too hastily at the last minute).



Lead rider calls "Door" and signals to move across to the right away from the hazard

**"Door"** The opening of car doors is a frequent cycling hazard. Lead riders scan for any movement in parked vehicles or vehicles that may have just pulled into the curb ahead, or the shopper who has just returned to the vehicle, to assess the likelihood of a vehicle's door opening. If a risk is identified, the call of **"door"** is made. The bunch is alerted to the hazard, and the left side of the bunch is readied to move across from the risk. The call can also help alert a driver/passenger to the bunch approaching and hopefully he or she will take extra care when opening the vehicle's door.

**Other calls** including **"Car up"**, **"Walker up"**, **"Runner up"** **"Riders Up"** are examples of calls by the lead riders alerting that vehicles, pedestrians, joggers and cyclists are ahead of the bunch.

A hand signal behind the lead rider's back to move across should be given by the lead rider to alert riders behind to move across and away from the forthcoming hazard.

It is important to identify only what is hazardous to the bunch. Calling hazards that pose minimal or no risk to the bunch presents a risk in itself. For examples, the hazard is too far to the side to pose a risk, or the hazard is too minor such as a few leaves or a small amount of light gravel. The group will start to ignore the lead riders' calls. When a significant hazard is then called, the likelihood of the call being ignored is high and the probability of impact with the hazard consequently is high.

## 4.1 Traffic lights



When approaching a set of traffic lights the lead riders take responsibility in making the call. When the traffic light changes from green to amber, the call made will be **"lights...stopping"** with the lead rider signaling by holding up a hand, or **"rolling"**. Remember that the bunch is one vehicle so if the bunch is committed to roll, do not make sudden decisions in the middle of the bunch to stop, unless immediate danger threatens. This will cause heavy braking towards the back of the bunch and possible accidents among riders.

Some riding groups call "rolling" from the rear to indicate to the front riders to keep rolling. As the front riders have best view of the traffic signals and call "clear" or "stopping" at intersections, it makes most sense that the front riders continue this communication at traffic lights.

## BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

Tour de Cure lead riders are responsible for making **"lights...stopping"** or **"rolling"** calls, with the one vehicle committing to the call, except when large bunches.

### 4.2 Large bunches

Excluding a situation of imminent danger, the only variation to this rule is when the bunch is large - more 12-14 riders; or the small bunch is spread out. In these circumstances when travelling through intersections, or roundabouts, the call "stopping" may be made by a rider/s in the middle of the bunch. Riders need to be attentive and alert to calls to ensure safe stopping.

When entering a roundabout or turning at an intersection the lead riders must call **"clear"** or **"car left / right"** or **"stopping"**. All calls should be relayed clearly and swiftly down the line so that each cyclist makes the call for the riders directly behind.

Where roundabouts are of two or more lanes, the bunch must keep within the lane in which it entered the roundabout. Cyclists too frequently cut the corner of roundabouts crossing over into the inside lane and risk taking the back of the bunch in front of passing traffic. The lead rider, to ensure all riders keep to the lane, is to call **"hold the lane"**.

The lead riders will indicate if riders should move a small distance across a lane, eg, with obstacles on the side of the road, such as parked vehicles or garbage bins. A hand signal behind the back of the lead rider closest to the obstacle will indicate to riders behind to move over. The signal is passed down the line.

### 4.3 Changing lanes



Lead rider signalling lane change

When the group needs to change lanes, (eg to move across to turn right at an intersection) the lead rider on the side of the lane to move into should raise an arm up, pointing high in the direction of the lane, to signal to the group that a lane change needs to occur. The rear rider will give the call of either "wait" or "over", ensuring that is clear not only for the rear rider to move over, but for all riders.

### Single file



### 4.4 Single file

The lead riders are also responsible for calling "single file" formation when the road narrows, or traffic increases. A raised open hand above the helmet pointing forward and the call **"single"** indicates to the bunch that single file formation is to occur.

Tour de Cure's rule is for the left side rider to maintain speed with the right side rider easing off speed momentarily and moving left into line. The rider on the right moves in behind the rider on the left.

## 4.5 Pace setting

Ensure the group is able to stay with the lead riders. The lead riders should focus on keeping a constant speed that is to the group's ability.

On rolling undulations, the bunch should stay together, maintaining the speed of the lead riders. When commencing an ascent, the lead riders should accelerate into the hill to avoid the bunch slowing as normally speed reduces going into a hill.

### The "Concertina Effect"



Once at the crest of the hill the lead riders need to keep pedalling for another 100m to let the riders behind complete the hill at the same constant speed.

If the lead riders relax at the crest and slow, a "concertina effect" (where the bunch closes in and then expands repeatedly) will result with the following riders having to slow or even brake on an uphill section.

Do not stop pedalling when you drink / eat as this causes a ripple effect through the bunch. This can cause a rear end collision.

On hills that are steeper or longer, riders may agree to climb at their own pace. If agreed, the bunch will break up for the climb. After the top of the hill, the lead riders will nominate a safe area to stop and wait for the group to re-bunch.

Lead riders need to pedal when going down hill. The bunch behind will have the advantage of "slip stream" and can travel faster without pedalling. To avoid the "concertina effect" the lead riders should always pedal downhill and upon reaching the bottom of the hill, pedal faster to maintain the same speed for 100m. This allows the following cyclists to maintain a constant speed down into the flat, avoiding the concertina effect.

## 5. The tailenders

The riders on the back of the bunch have important responsibilities; particularly the rider on the right hand (outside) side. This person must call the bunch across a lane or lanes or warn of trucks, cars etc that are approaching the rear of the pack when on narrow and/or single lane roads.

When the lead rider signals to cross over a lane, it is the right tail rider's responsibility to check and assess the clearance available. The call will either be "**wait**" or "**over**".

"Wait" is repeated until it is clear to call over. The tailender signals to the traffic behind of the lane change, then moves across into the open lane. Then, and only then, the rider calls "over" after ensuring it is clear for all riders to move across, and that a vehicle is not continuing to pass the bunch.

## BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

It is important that the instruction is called (relayed) up the line. When crossing over, the bunch needs to move as one group and does not fragment.

On a narrow or single lane road the last rider must warn of vehicles behind. A call of **"car back"** is a simple call that all should understand. The bunch should move over to the left, or if the road is too narrow, move to single file to allow the flow of traffic to occur.

When the bunch is not riding in the kerb side lane, i.e. the inside lane, (due to a merging traffic lane from the left or perhaps an upcoming right turn) and a vehicle passes the bunch on the inside lane, the tailenders call **"car inside"** not **"car left"**.

A call of "left" can cause some riders to react adversely by moving over to the left, posing a significant risk. The term "inside" is better understood for riders and is safer.

The tailenders, whenever checking for hazards behind the bunch, need to ensure they have moved further back from the rear wheel of the rider in front to give sufficient space before looking, in case the bunch suddenly slows. Before taking their sight from the rider in front and the bunch itself, they need to have assessed the motion of the bunch as being steady and predictable.

### 6. Calling it through

All riders play an important part in bunch riding and clearly relayed communications is paramount. The lead riders can give the best signals possible but unless they are acted upon by being passed down the line, substantial risks can remain.

There can be a tendency for riders in the middle of a bunch to hear the call and react by avoiding the hazard, but not pass the call down the line. A middle bunch rider may assume the call was loud enough to be heard by others – a risky assumption. The middle of the bunch must be alert to relay the calls at all times – call it through - to ensure the entire group's safety.

#### Supporting the callers

Give encouragement from time to time to the lead riders, the tailenders and other riders who have been making clear, responsible calls. It offers recognition, encouragement and reinforces to all riders the importance of good signals and calls in bunch riding. Without positive feedback, there can be a tendency for riders to reduce the calls and signals made.



Calls should always be:

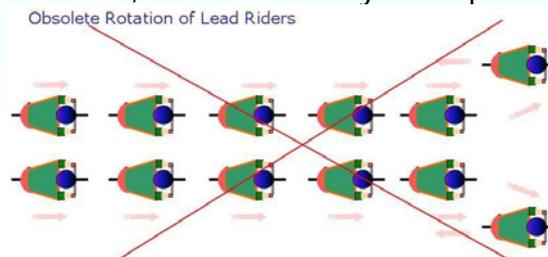
- Clear
- Deliberate
- Not panicked or screamed out
- Consistent

## 7. Rotating the lead

### 7.1 Training rides

Lead riders should stay on the front for approximately 10 kilometers or 20 minute intervals then rotate off. Fatigue can set in quickly otherwise. They have been concentrating on hazards as well as maintaining a controlled, smooth the pace. Rotating the lead gives other riders the opportunity to go to the front. If a rider is not fit or strong enough to do a turn, they should let their partner know, and when it is their turn at the front, both advise the next lead riders of a further lead change, and both promptly rotate off. Do not suddenly pull out of the line prior to getting to the front. Sudden movements are hazardous.

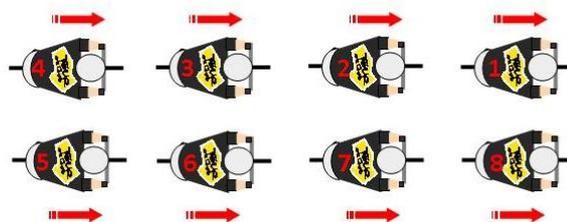
The rotation procedure has been reviewed and changed to ensure greater safety. Previously, the procedure involved the front riders “peeling off” left and right, on a safe section of road. The bunch rolled through while the former lead riders soft pedalled until the bunch had almost passed then fell in to line at the rear. During this transition, the bunch was effectively riding four riders abreast, albeit for a very short period of time.



The updated manoeuvre involves a **rotation** of lead riders in an anti-clockwise direction, similar a “rolling echelon” formation used in pace-lining but at a slower speed.

Rider safety has been improved as the bunch maintains the two abreast formation at all times.

#### Tour de Cure Training Rides – Rotating the Lead (1)



Maintain 2 riders abreast

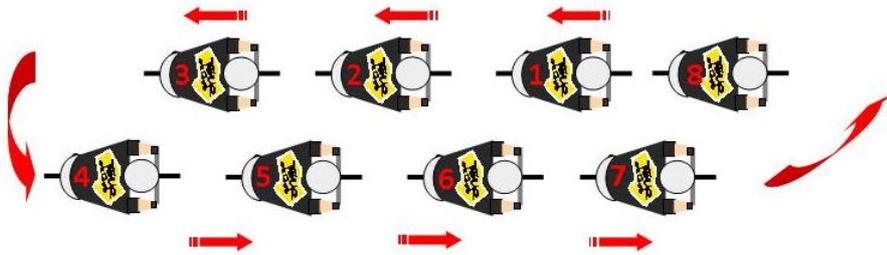
The call of “Rotating” by the front riders 1 & 8 signals a change of lead riders is to occur

Riders 7 & 6 will take the lead from riders 1 & 8

In a “rolling echelon” formation

## BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

### Tour de Cure Training Rides – Rotating the Lead (2)

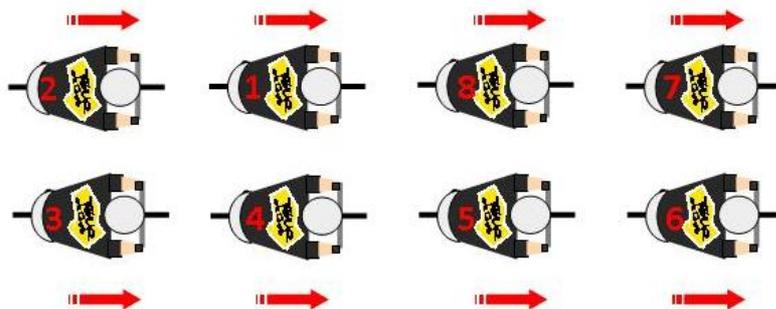


- Rider 8 accelerates and moves left in front of rider 1
- Rider 7 accelerates and moves left in front of rider 8
- Rider 6 accelerates and takes front right lead position

The diagram above, Rotating the Lead (2), shows the same formation as occurs in a pace line manoeuvre, that is, a rolling echelon, but at slower speed.

The diagram below, Rotating the Lead (3) shows the new lead riders, Riders numbered 7 & 6, with the original lead riders back in the bunch and resting from their turn leading.

### Tour de Cure Training Rides – Rotating the Lead (3)



- Riders 7 & 6 are the new bunch lead riders
- Riders 1 & 8 are able to rest in the middle of the bunch
- When the next rotation occurs, Riders 5 & 4 will lead

# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

As a courtesy to other riders, lead riders should not rotate off just before the commencement of a hill. A rotation of the lead should always occur on the flat.

If you are in the line and must pull out, tell your partner and, if it is safe, move to the left and to the left side of the bunch. If you are not fit or strong enough to stay with the bunch, do not over-exert. Rotate off in the same manner. It is much safer than trying to “hang on” and risk your own and others’ safety.

## 7.2 Pace lining

This usually involves cycling at high speeds, and with Tour de Cure riders that can be anywhere from high 30kph to high 50kph, pending riders’ abilities, weather conditions, road and traffic conditions and duration of the pace line.

The rotation is the same procedure as rotating the lead above, but at a faster speed. A rolling echelon forms.

The rider rotating to take the front position of the pace line must maintain the same speed as when he or she was drafting. The temptation is to accelerate and this only breaks up the pace line formation, as it demands ever-accelerating surges of speed from riders following.

As the tailender transitions into the faster moving ‘pace line’ he/she calls **“last rider”**. This informs the new last rider to get ready to move across as well. Without this call, the pace line can easily break up as the riders do not transition to the right quickly enough and then get dropped. This gets worse the faster the pace line is going.

If you cannot do a turn at the front, stay off the pace line, rather than try to slot in mid-line, or stay in the same position. Move to the back of the pack and indicate to riders around you that you are not joining the pace line.

A good pace line requires all riders to maintain consistent speed, smooth motion, clear calling and heightened situational awareness of impending hazards.



### 8. New riders joining the bunch

Riders new to Tour de Cure should take time to learn the bunch's communications, the calls and signals made and the general riding etiquette. The best way is to read a copy of the Bunch Riding Etiquette then put it into practice at the back of the bunch – by observing, listening as well as talking to one of the more experienced or designated 'buddy' Tour de Cure riders.

After evidence of good balance, control, communications, overall riding skill and feedback from the rider him/herself, the rider will be invited to join the main bunch, take the lead at times, join pace line riding etc.

Regardless of the cycling experience of the new rider, it is vital to the safety of all riders that communications are known and understood by all parties, and that Tour de Cure's riding etiquette is closely observed.

This is particularly so when an unknown sole rider, or riders join the Tour de Cure bunch out on the road. Unless the riding and communication skills are well known to the whole bunch, the rider/s joining must be told they may join but remain at the back of the bunch. Outline diplomatically the reasons why. The explanation should satisfy a responsible rider's query. If the rider is not happy with the rationale, ask them to continue with their own ride. The same applies if the rider's riding poses any threat to the bunch.

When a rider new to Tour de Cure or a rider/s want to join the bunch on the road, ask yourself, 'Do I have confidence in the rider's calls and signals for hazards, slowing, stopping, for "over" or "clear"? If there is doubt, a risk presents itself to you and therefore the bunch, and strategies should be adopted to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring.

### 9. Wet weather

Wet weather poses many additional hazards. Visibility is reduced for both rider and driver. Road surfaces can become slippery with oil slicks, leaves and other debris. The incidence of flat tyres can increase as road debris sticks to the wet tyres longer than in dry conditions.

To reduce the likelihood of accidents in the wet:

- Increase the gap between riders – approximately 3 – 4 metres
- Brakes and wheel rims will be wet. Allow for a much longer braking distance and time to slow or stop. Pump your brakes before descending to help clear water build up on the rims and brakes to help improve friction.
- Slower your acceleration to avoid skidding
- Slow down generally. Do not ride as fast, especially when cornering.
- Deflate front and rear tyre pressure from maximum by approx 20psi to provide more tyre contact on road.



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- Be wary of materials that are slippery in the wet. eg. metal plates, grills
- Be wary of white paint or road paint generally (crossings, lane lines)
- Avoid the centre position of a lane where vehicles drip oil from their sump and in the wet becomes hazardous.
- Check your lights are in working order with new batteries for maximum light strength and having a second tail light will only benefit. Keep them on in wet weather.

### 10. Near misses

They do happen. In any workplace, in any social activity there are risks and there will be some lucky escapes and near misses. Those incidents are important to note with the bunch and discuss at a later stage. Identifying near misses, assessing what could have occurred and giving consideration to how best to avoid such an incident in the future is a simple way to help boost the group's safety. The Bunch Riding Rules and Etiquette Document can record recommended riding safety improvements. We can learn from mistakes but we can learn more from the more frequent "near misses".

### 11. Key reminders for bunch riding

- Be consistent and predictable with your actions. Braking suddenly, swerving, jolting motions increases the risk of accidents
- Do not use your mobile phone when riding. If an emergency, pull over and call, or leave the phone for the rest stops.
- IPODS / anything audio - No. Do not wear earphones or any apparatus that may reduce normal traffic noise and riders' calls when bunch riding.
- Lights. Front (white) and rear (red) working. Check battery strength.
- Hand signals. At times hand signals cannot be made by the riders as both hands are required on the handle bars (eg rough roads, tight cornering) In those cases, the rider always makes a clear and loud call.
- Check all attachments to the bike are securely fastened (light fittings, pumps – preferably in the back pocket or better still gas cylinders; bidons and cages are secure)
- Obey the road rules and give drivers the respect you also expect.
- If you brush shoulders, hands or handle bars with a rider, don't panic, or make a sudden direction change. Just roll on and make a slight separation.
- Before stopping for mechanical repairs (eg flat tyre), call "mechanical" and when stopping get completely off the road.
- Ride within your abilities. Don't over-extend in bunch riding.
- Practice. The best method of developing sound bunch riding skills is to ride frequently in bunches and occasionally with different bunches to observe and learn variations.
- Be aware who is in your group. If a rider has dropped off, one or two riders should turn back to check and offer support if needed.
- Dress for the weather conditions and try to keep your body warm throughout the ride and at breaks





# BUNCH RIDING RULES and ETIQUETTE

## What to take for training rides and bunch rides:

- A repair kit; pump or gas cylinders; 2 x new tubes; Levers; Money; Mobile phone in waterproof case. Contact numbers of fellow riders.
- Identity - drivers licence or contact / address details on laminated paper.

## Remember:

- Ride handle bar to handle bar – width about 1m apart
- Keep a constant distance from the wheel in front.
  - o In the dry, keep a gap of 1m - 1.5m;
  - o In the wet, keep a gap of approx 3m – 4m
- Don't close that gap when climbing
- Every rider call and call clearly through the bunch
- Never overtake a rider on the left hand side
- Be aware of direct and peripheral hazards – good Situational Awareness

**Regardless of how experienced you may be as a cyclist, as a bunch rider, or how fit you are and how well you communicate calls and signals, safe bunch riding relies on a highly responsible and organised team effort.**

## 12. Acknowledgements:

The document has been developed and updated through consultation with Tour de Cure cyclists, feedback from State Police, cycling groups and associations, reviewing cycling websites of State Government Departments, and assorted bunch riding articles from Australia and overseas.

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**Malcolm Heath, Rider, Tour de Cure  
November 2010**

**Have your say: Comments / feedback about this document are welcomed.**

**Email: [mheath@comkay.com.au](mailto:mheath@comkay.com.au)**

### **Tour de Cure Limited**

Unit 18, 39 Herbert Street, St Leonards NSW 2065 AUSTRALIA  
ABN: 56 302 713 357