



SO, YOU'RE GOING ON A GROUP RIDE

The GROUP RIDE ORGANIZER will alert you to the time and place for the ride. The organizer's responsibilities include notifying you of the time of the RIDERS' MEETING (which should take place immediately prior to the ride), matching the abilities and interests of the riders in the group, informing and preparing the group of any points pertinent to the ride, choosing the LEAD RIDER and the SWEEP RIDER (who both should be the most experienced and safety-conscious riders of the group), as well as organizing the route and controlling the group's activities once under way. Your responsibilities prior to the group ride include being familiar with the limits of your own riding skills, as well as thoroughly knowing the capabilities of your own motorcycle. If you are a newer rider, your group ride organizer should suggest that you complete a formal rider training class prior to taking part in the event. For longer trips, you also need to be aware of your own stamina. It's also important to realize that your motorcycle may handle differently when loaded with a passenger or luggage.

PREPARATION

An integral part of your own responsibilities is preparing yourself appropriately for the ride. Mental preparation is always crucial. Riding a motorcycle requires an alert mind that is free from distractions like worry and stress. This also includes riding free from the influence of alcohol or other drugs. For some, even too much caffeine or prescription drugs can adversely affect the ability to concentrate!

Preparing your motorcycle is also key. Prior to a longer ride or trip, it's a good idea to have your motorcycle serviced at your local dealership if you aren't able to do the work yourself. Tires should be in good condition and fluids should be changed if they haven't been replaced in a while. Remember to consider such variables as passengers or extra weight from luggage that might require a change in tire pressure or a suspension adjustment.



Group Riding

PROTECTIVE RIDING GEAR

Gear for your group ride should also be chosen carefully. Wearing proper riding gear not only can enhance your personal comfort on the ride by shielding you from the elements of harsh sun, warm or cold wind, rain and noise fatigue, but it can also enhance your safety by protecting you in the event of a crash. Wearing riding clothes in high-visibility colors that are accented with reflective tape or patches is also recommended, to make you easier to see. Each rider and passenger should wear a **HELMET DESIGNED TO MEET DOT STANDARDS** as well as **EYE PROTECTION**, a long-sleeved **MOTORCYCLE JACKET** appropriate for weather conditions, **FULL-FINGERED MOTORCYCLE GLOVES**, **LONG PANTS** and **OVER-THE-ANKLE FOOTWEAR** with soles that provide a good grip.

A few items that are always handy to pack include a rain suit, cell phone, a first-aid kit. And your motorcycle's tool kit and owner's manual. On a bright sunny day you might appreciate a tinted visor for your helmet or sunglasses, but be sure to pack a clear visor or sunglasses if your ride might continue past dusk.

PRE-RIDE CHECK

A thorough pre-ride check before the ride is a must. Use the T-CLOCS' checklist as a reminder of important components to check.

T = Tires & Wheels

C = Cables & Controls

L = Lights & Switches

O = Oil & Fuel

C = Chain & Chassis

S = Sidestand (Kickstand)



Group Riding

When you were contacted by your group ride organizer, they should have informed you about the time and place for the riders meeting. Prior to arrive at this meeting with your bike prepped, a full tank of fuel and everything else you plan to bring on the ride (and an empty bladder!). Generally, a riders' meeting will take place about 30 minutes before the ride. At the meeting, expect to receive a map noting the group's route, itinerary, and the location of fuel, meal, rest or lodging stops. Sometimes, if the ride is large enough, you may be asked to select a buddy within the group so you can watch out for each other.

HAND SIGNALS

Often during the rider's meeting, hand signals are reviewed so that you can communicate with the other riders during the ride. Hand signals are a useful tool to keep the group aware and cohesive on the roadway. Your group is free to determine its own set of signals. A list of some commonly used ones is attached.

RIDING IN FORMATION

As part of a group ride, never pair up side-by-side by positioning your motorcycle directly alongside another rider. This riding formation does not give both riders an adequate SPACE CUSHION or room to maneuver: There is no place to go if you have to avoid a car or a hazard in the roadway. To talk, wait until you are both stopped. The only time a side-by-side formation might be required is during a parade event that is using a police escort.

Ideally, the group will ride in a STAGGERED FORMATION. Riding formations are for your safety as well as the safety of the group. When a group is riding in a staggered formation, it takes up less space on the highway than a single-file line, is easier for other motorists to see and, by PROTECTING ITS LANE, is less likely to be separated by other traffic. Larger groups should divide up into smaller, more manageable groups, ideally seven to ten riders.

Your staggered formation can be tight or loose, depending on traffic conditions. During heavy traffic, a tight staggered formation usually works best to keep other traffic from cutting into your group, although keep in mind that safety comes before the tightness of the group.



Group Riding

A staggered formation is the best way to keep ranks close and still maintain an adequate space cushion both in front of and behind each rider: A space cushion will give each rider plenty of room to maneuver and still maintain the riding formation. On a sunny day with dry roads, a minimum space cushion is considered to be a two-second following distance between a rider and the rider directly in front of them. During inclement weather it is advisable to increase following distance by adding more space in between riders of the group.

To establish a "two-second following distance," use this technique: pick a fixed object ahead of you - street signs or light poles work well, as do painted roadway lines. As soon as the vehicle in front of you passes the object, count off "one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two ..." If you haven't yet reached the object by the time you finish your two-second count, your following distance meets the two-second minimum.

In a staggered formation, the leader rides in the left third of the lane, while the next rider stays at least one second behind in the right third of the lane. The rest of the group follows this pattern. If your formation is correct, the third rider is two seconds behind the leader, but only one second behind the second rider.

If trikes or sidecars are part of your group, these machines should be ridden in the center of the lane, and keep at least a two-second following distance within the group to maintain a space cushion.

In certain situations, it is safer for the group to ride in single file. The single-file formation is best used when more room to maneuver might be needed such as on narrow or curvy roadways, in poor visibility, at toll booths, entering and leaving highways, on roadways with bad surfaces, when entering a traffic circle or roundabout, or in any other situation where more space cushion is needed.



Group Riding

By riding single file, each rider in the group can more freely use the entire lane and choose their own line through a turn. As with riding formations, keeping an adequate space cushion between riders and adjusting it to suit changing needs is important.

KEEPING THE GROUP TOGETHER

The Lead rider should plan ahead for changes and signal early so the word "gets back" to the rest of the group in plenty of time.

Many groups put newer and less-experienced riders near the back of the group. This way, slower riders won't hold up the group, but the Sweep rider, who is an experienced rider, is behind them to ensure that there aren't any problems. Other groups prefer to put newer riders up front directly behind the Lead rider so that the entire group can keep an eye on them and no one rider falls too far behind. This decision rests with the group and particularly with the Lead rider who is aware of the demands of the chosen route and the skills of each rider in the group. Your group should determine the way that suits its needs the best. The only two positions that require the most experienced riders of the group are the Lead rider at the front of the group and the Sweep rider at the end of the group. Of course, wherever the newer riders are placed, a good lead rider will set a pace that accommodates the skill and safety levels of all the riders in the group.

Another good way to keep the group together is for each rider to periodically check on the following riders in their rearview mirrors. This way if a rider falls behind, the other riders can slow down to prevent the slower rider from falling too far behind. If all riders of the group use this technique, the group will be able to maintain a fairly steady speed without the others feeling pressured to ride too fast to catch up.



INTERSECTIONS

Intersections are the area of highest risk for a motorcyclist. This is still true for the group, despite the increased visibility. All intersections should be approached with caution.

When making a left turn at a protected intersection, where traffic turning left has its own turn signal arrow, tighten the formation to allow as many riders as possible to pass through the intersection. Do not ride side-by-side; the group should make the turn single file or in a tight, staggered formation. Use the same procedure for right turns and remember to respect the rights of other roadway users. During your riders' meeting, you should have discussed what to do if all of your group cannot proceed through the light before it turns red. Knowing that the group will stop at a designated point up ahead will help keep each rider from feeling pressured to jeopardize their safety by running the light.

At unprotected intersections that have no turn signal arrow, riders should proceed with caution and in single file. Each rider should act as an individual, only making the turn when it is safe and legal for them to do so. While awaiting your turn, remember to check your rearview mirrors, as other motorists may be expecting you to ride on as a group. The most important thing is to make the turn safely. The group can re-form after everyone has ridden safely through the intersection.

Blocking an intersection without specific permission and an appropriate escort is illegal in most circumstances. In the case of an escorted parade and event ride, riders should be given specific instructions at the riders' meeting on the group formation and the procedures to be used for moving legally through blocked intersections.

At two-way stop intersections, where you are required to stop, move through only when it is safe and legal. When stopping at an intersection with a light, close up the formation and sit side-by-side while waiting for the light to change. If you do this, the rider on the left proceeds first, and the following riders re-establish the staggered formation and space cushion as they depart.



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At yield intersections be safe and cautious. Turn your head to check for traffic before merging. Respect the law, other members of the group and other roadway users. Put safety and operating within the law ahead of trying to stay in formation. The group can re-establish its formation afterward.

INTERSTATES AND FREEWAYS

A staggered formation is essential on freeways and Interstates. Enter in single file and form up only after safely merging onto the roadway. Your Lead rider should maintain a merging speed that will allow enough space for following riders to safely merge.

Since riding in a group doesn't change your right-of-way, be alert to the fact that cars entering or exiting may cut through your formation if your group is traveling in the far right lane. It may be better to move the group over one lane when everyone has safely entered the Interstate. In heavier traffic, resist the temptation to close up the formation too much. Maintain your space cushion and at least your one-second/two- second staggered formation following distance.

Exiting an Interstate always requires a single-file formation. Doing so provides more time and space to react to whatever is at the end of the exit lane, or allows you to merge onto another roadway.

PASSING

When your group wants to pass slower traffic as a group for change lanes on a freeway or Interstate, the group may pass as a unit. When it is safe and legal, the Lead rider should signal the Lane change when he/she has determined the entire group can change lanes and pass as a unit. The other riders then follow this lead and signal one at a time to move into the next lane.

On a two-lane highway, when passing slower traffic such as construction or farm vehicles, the group should pass one at a time. Take special care if passing slower vehicles or horse-drawn carriages such as those that the Amish use. Be courteous and safe by only using marked passing zones. The leader should signal intentions first and then pullout when it is safe and



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legal. After completing the pass, the leader should return to the left lane position and continue at a passing speed to leave room for the next rider, then the next rider should move up to the left position and watch for a safe chance to pass. After passing, this rider should return to the right position and open up room for the next rider. The rest of the group should follow the same pattern.

Some people suggest that the Lead rider should move to the right side after passing a vehicle. This is not a good idea. It encourages the second rider to pass and cut back in before there is a large enough space cushion in front of the passed vehicle. It's simpler and safer to wait until there is enough room ahead of the passed vehicle to allow each rider to move into the same position held before the pass.

PARKING

Parking as a group has many benefits. If parking is organized, you get your group off their bikes more quickly. You also run less risk of blocking access to others trying to park in the lot. Avoid parking downhill or head-in, or you may find you need to use your fellow riders as a reverse gear! Try to park where you can pull through to make both the arrival and departure smooth. If this isn't possible, try to position the motorcycles so that the group can depart as a unit in single file.

LEAVING THE GROUP

If you plan to drop out of the group, notify your leader or ride buddy beforehand about the place or time you will be leaving the group. This way, they know you have not had a problem and need assistance. When you depart, the rest of the group should adjust the formation while maintaining a good space cushion and following distance. This may require riders to change their position to the opposite side of the lane.



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ROADSIDE EMERGENCIES

If a member of your group has mechanical difficulties or has been involved in a crash, the following riders should all stop, including the Sweep rider and the chase vehicle (if your group has one). The riders ahead of the incident should continue on to the next scheduled stop area since doubling back could cause additional safety problems.

The Sweep rider should assess the situation and, if it appears there will be a delay, send one rider ahead to meet the rest of the group at the next scheduled stop area. If medical assistance is necessary, the sweep rider can use their cell phone to call 9-1-1.

SEPARATED FROM THE GROUP

You might get separated from the group because of a traffic signal, traffic or other reasons. Don't panic. Your group should have a pre-planned procedure or a place selected in which to regroup. Don't feel pressured to catch up, especially if it means breaking the law or riding beyond your limits. Proceed to the regrouping area or call the pre-selected contact person for your group.

ROADWAY HAZARDS

You may encounter differing types of roadway hazards or severe roadway conditions while on a group ride. When entering construction zones, it is probably best to ride single file, reduce speed and increase your space cushion. This will allow riders to adjust their lane positions and respond to the roadway conditions more freely.

Maintaining a good space cushion and following distance throughout the ride will allow riders to react to roadway debris like sand, gravel and oil. If riding in a staggered formation, it may be better to change to single file. The lead rider should use pre-determined hand signals. Avoid riding over debris unless you have no choice. Not only could you damage your tires or bike, but you also risk throwing the debris into another rider's path of travel. Ride as smoothly as possible and avoid sudden changes in speed or direction. The same is true for wet roadways.



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ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Riding into the sun may seem scenic in movies, but can be hazardous for a motorcyclist. The glare makes it difficult for motorists to see one another. This might be a good time to plan a break as these conditions increase rider fatigue. But if you must ride into the sun, reduce speed and increase your space cushion. Remember, it may be more difficult to see roadway hazards.

Make extra precautions when riding at night. Be visible. Consider wearing a retroreflective vest. Make sure that all lights are working and your headlight is adjusted properly. Reduce speed and increase your space cushion. Remember that roadway hazards will be more difficult to see at night.

HAVE FUN

A group ride can be one of the most exciting on-roadway motorcycling experiences. Taking part in a group ride is a great way to share the fun and camaraderie of motorcycling. Following these guidelines will help make the ride safer and more enjoyable for you and everyone else taking part in the ride.



Group Riding

**POLICE - STATE TROOPER
(TAP TOP OF HELMET)**

HAZARD IN ROAD



SLOW DOWN



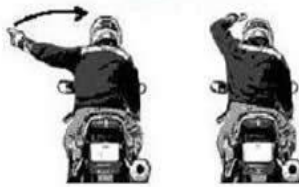
**SINGLE
FILE**



**DOUBLE
FILE**



PULL OFF ROAD



**FUEL
STOP**



STOP



SPEED UP



YOU LEAD



TURN OFF SIGNAL





SELF TEST

Read each question carefully and mark the answer that you think is best.

1. Matching the interest and abilities of a group of riders is a main consideration of the ride organizer. The organizer should prepare the route and control the group's activities while under way. Each member of the group should be aware of their own responsibilities as well. One of those responsibilities is preparing your machine. Before you join a group ride, it is recommended that you:
 - A. Eat a good breakfast
 - B. Service your motorcycle and fill the tank
 - C. Leave a light on at home

2. It is each individual's responsibility to have their own motorcycle ready BEFORE the ride starts. Always do a pre-ride check before each ride. The T-CLOCS system includes which of the following components:
 - A. Tires
 - B. Controls
 - C. Lights
 - D. Oil
 - E. Chassis
 - F. Stands (Sidestand/Kickstand)
 - G. All of the above



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3. Each rider should mentally prepare for the ride. Look forward to the fun of the ride and avoid alcohol and other drugs, excessive caffeine and stress prior to and during the ride. Riders should also pair up in the "buddy system" before beginning the ride. The reason for pairing up in a "buddy system" is to:
 - A. Make new friends
 - B. Have someone to eat lunch with
 - C. Watch out for each other

4. There is no perfect list of riding formations. Different situations call for different formations. However, regardless of the formation, smart defensive riding strategies still apply. Spacing of the group is important for safety. The distance between you and other riders is your safety cushion. A good minimum distance rule of thumb in a staggered formation is:
 - A. Nose-to-tail
 - B. Side-by-side
 - C. Two seconds between you and the rider directly ahead

5. In a staggered formation, the leader will ride in the left third of the lane, while the next rider stays at least one second behind in the right third of the lane. The rest of the group follows this pattern. A staggered formation is usually best for large groups because:
 - A. It takes up less space on the highway
 - B. It is easier for other motorists to see
 - C. It is the best way to keep ranks close while still maintaining a space cushion
 - D. It is less likely to be separated by other traffic
 - E. All of the above



Group Riding

6. Certain conditions will warrant a single-file formation. Single file will allow each rider to more freely use the entire lane. The group should move into a single-file formation under what conditions?
 - A. When entering and leaving a highway
 - B. At toll booths
 - C. On bad surfaces
 - D. When negotiating a traffic circle or roundabout
 - E. When the roadway has more curves or less visibility or shoulder room
 - F. All of the above

7. When passing slower traffic, the group should pass one rider at a time. First, the Leader should signal and then pullout when it is safe and legal. After completing the pass, the leader should return to the left lane position and continue riding at a passing speed in order to open up room for the next rider. The next rider should move up to the left position and watch for a safe chance to pass. Special care should be taken when passing what kind of slower traffic?
 - A. Construction vehicles
 - B. Farm vehicles
 - C. Horse-drawn carriages
 - D. Always use special care when passing slower traffic

8. At non-protected intersections, riders should proceed with caution and in single file. Each rider should act as an individual, only making the turn when it is safe and legal. This is important because:
 - A. Making the turn safely is more important than the tightness of the group
 - B. Individuality is more important than the group
 - C. It gives each rider a chance to break away from the group



Group Riding

9. Riding in a group will increase your visibility over riding alone. However, common sense still applies and areas of highest risk for the lone motorcyclist remain areas of high risk for the group. The area of highest risk for motorcyclists even in a group is:
 - A. The highway
 - B. A two-lane roadway
 - C. Intersections

10. Because you are part of a group ride, you might assume that your group has certain extraordinary rights and can legally ignore certain traffic signs in favor of keeping the group formation intact. This is not the case; you must obey all laws and signs and pay particular attention to which of the following:
 - A. Yield
 - B. Merge
 - C. Left turn on arrow only
 - D. All of the above

11. If a member of your group has mechanical problems or is involved in a crash, the riders ahead of the incident should continue on to the next scheduled stop to wait for a report on the rider with the problem. Riders should never double back as this could cause additional safety problems. Which of the following members of the group should stop:
 - A. The leader of the group
 - B. The Sweep rider
 - C. The chase vehicle
 - D. Everyone should stop
 - E. B & C



Group Riding

12. You may become separated from the group because a signal or other traffic may break the formation. Your group should have a pre-planned procedure or place to regroup or a designated contact. If you become separated from the group you should:
 - A. Panic
 - B. Proceed to the pre-planned meeting place and/or call the designated contact person
 - C. Ride as fast as possible to catch up

13. Bad weather is always a possibility. Remember that safety is your first priority and wet roadways have slick surfaces. If the weather turns bad, the group should:
 - A. Tighten up the formation
 - B. Reduce speed and increase the space cushion
 - C. Let everybody go home on their own

14. Roadway construction can be a minor inconvenience or cause major delays and severe roadway conditions. Safety and maneuverability should take priority. If the group enters a construction zone, be sure to:
 - A. Reduce speed and increase the space cushion
 - B. Wave to the workers in hard hats
 - C. Use a side-by-side formation

15. Following the group ride guidelines will help ensure that your ride is safer and more enjoyable for everyone involved. On a group ride be sure to:
 - A. Have fun
 - B. Obey all traffic laws and rules of the roadway
 - C. Be courteous to the other riders in the group
 - D. Use your common sense
 - E. All of the above



Group Riding

GLOSSARY -

Chase Vehicle - Any car/van/truck that carries luggage or other needed accessories for the trip and that either follows a group ride during its journey, or arranges to meet the group at specified points during the journey.

DOT Helmet - a helmet that is designed to meet the U.S. Department of Transportation FMVSS 218 standard in the areas of impact and penetration resistance, retention and peripheral vision.

Eye Protection - A visor/face shield on a helmet or a pair of riding goggles made out of a shatterproof material. Many visors and goggles that are specifically for use while motorcycle riding are manufactured to meet VESC 8 [Vehicle Equipment Safety Commission] standards as shatter resistant.

Following Distance - The amount of distance between your motorcycle and the vehicle you are directly following based on time and speed. The minimum distance on a dry surface is equivalent to two seconds.

Full-fingered Motorcycle Gloves - Gloves manufactured specifically for motorcycle use in either leather or man-made fabrics in which each finger is completely covered. Some gloves offer extra comfort and protection in the form of padding or armor on the fingers, palm or back. Some gloves are gauntlet-style, covering the wrist, for extra comfort and protection.

Group Ride Organizer - The individual who coordinates a group ride. Duties may include choosing the date, location, purpose and participants of the event. The group ride organizer does not necessarily need to be a member of the actual riding group.

Hand Signals - Signals using hands and arms that are used between riders in a group while riding so that the group can effectively communicate crucial information with one another, e.g., the presence of a hazard in the roadway.



Group Riding

Lead Rider - The very first rider in a group of motorcyclists who sets the path of travel, looks ahead for openings to make lane changes on highways, determines the riding formation, rest stops and the pace for the group ride. Along with the Sweep rider, the Lead rider should be one of the most experienced riders in the group.

Mental Preparation - Preparing your mind to go riding so that you are ready to process information and respond immediately. This includes freeing your mind from distractions, thinking about the route and avoiding over-the-counter and prescription drugs, alcohol and too much caffeine.

Motorcycle Jacket - Along-sleeved jacket made of a durable material and manufactured specifically for motorcycle riding to provide comfort and protection.

Over-the-Ankle Footwear - A low-heeled boot or high top-type shoe which covers the ankle bone, is made of abrasion-resistant material, and has a sole that provides a good grip on the foot pegs.

Pre-Ride Check - A check of your machine's general condition, critical components and fluid levels prior to every ride to help ensure a safe ride. The T-CLOCS checklist covers the exact items to check.

Protecting Your Lane - Riding in a portion of the lane that maximizes your ability to adjust positions to see other traffic and maximize your visibility to other motorists.

Protective Riding Gear - The entire ensemble of clothing needed to adequately provide you comfort and protection during your ride. These include a proper helmet, eye protection, a motorcycle jacket, full-fingered gloves, long pants and over-the-ankle footwear.



Group Riding

Riders' Meeting - A meeting of all the riders planning to participate in the group ride event held approximately 30 minutes prior to the ride to discuss the route, hand signals and any other information each rider needs to know about that day's group ride event.

Staggered Riding Formation - The staggered placement on the roadway of each motorcycle where the leader rides in the left portion of the lane and the next rider rides in the right portion of the lane, one second behind. Following riders continue this pattern while maintaining a two-second following distance from the rider directly ahead.

Space Cushion - The area you create and maintain immediately around your motorcycle and other vehicles that gives you plenty of time and space to react to hazards.

Sweep Rider – The last rider of the group who keeps an eye on the entire group and stops with any rider who experiences trouble to assess the situation and determine a solution. Along with the Lead rider, he or she should be one of the most experienced and safety-conscious riders of the group.