



**KENDAL**



## Group Riding Etiquette

Riding tips to keep our group rides safe and enjoyable



# Welcome

Kendal Cycle Club was formed in 2015. The Club has grown very quickly and attracted many new cyclists who have never been part of a cycle club. The committee has worked hard to ensure club members are safe. This has led to the publication of this document.

Cycling is one of the highest participation sports with significant growth over the last decade. Correspondingly, Kendal Cycle Club has also grown to be one of the most significant cycling clubs in Cumbria and it remains unique in that we continue to provide a broad offering to our members – road, cyclo-cross, mountain biking, Go-Ride, track, training, racing, and social elements making up a balanced club.

Whatever your desired interest in cycling, riding safely is of paramount importance. And riding in a bunch is radically different from riding alone. You can compare bunch riding to driving your car along a crowded M6 at speed, during peak hour. It only works if all drivers act consistently, stay alert and without surprises.

This is the key reason why this guide was put together and is made available free of charge to all current and prospective members. Being aware and understanding your responsibilities, both within the bunch and generally, will help protect you and your fellow cyclists.

Please read, understand and practise the disciplines and etiquette described. If in any doubt, ask a senior club member or committee member who will be more than happy to help you.

Without the voluntary contribution of our member's time and energy, the club could not be as successful as it is. We thank all volunteers, especially the Club Committee.

Thank you.

## Core Skills

BUNCH RIDING is a unique phenomenon that allows people from many diverse backgrounds and levels of fitness to train and socialise together. Regardless of your level of fitness and capacity, it is crucial that all of us understand and practise the basics in bunch etiquette.

### SOME BASIC POINTS

If everyone can remember some basic points it will be a lot easier to have trust in your training partners and have a more enjoyable outing.

- When you are on the front of the bunch you are the eyes of the bunch. Point out obvious dangers, pot holes, car doors, pedestrians etc
- Ride at an appropriate speed - remember that's why you are in the bunch to ride with them! If you want to hammer it, then do it solo or in designated sessions.
- Keep an eye out for wind direction and try not to fan out into traffic.
- Pass the calls up and down the bunch, so that everyone knows about the call.
- NEVER, EVER over lap the wheel in front!
- Always remember how many riders you have with you.

Following the guide points in this book will help you, and your training buddies, get the most enjoyment out of bunch rides in the safest possible way.

# Index

1. Welcome to the Kendal Cycle Club	1
2. Core Skills	2
3. Sharing the Road	4
4. New to the Bunch?	5
5. The Basics	7
6. Riding Tips on Bunch Etiquette	6
7. Warnings and Hand Signals	8
8. Cornering Skills	10
9. Rules & Responsibilities	13
10. Common Reasons for Accidents	20
11. Principles for Kendal Cycle Club Bunch Riding	24
12. Summary	25

## Sharing the Road

Practising courtesies and our etiquette within the bunch is important; furthermore, responsible, non-aggressive cycling in the bunch is important to gain mutual respect and harmony on our roads. To improve safety and consideration, when sharing Kendal's busy roads, members on club rides are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Obey the road rules, including traffic signals.
- Respect other road users – be courteous and anticipate mistakes (that we can all make).
- Be predictable and always indicate your intentions - use hand signals from the front of the bunch to the tail.
- Ride two abreast (in a bunch), but be courteous if the road narrows riding single file when necessary and when the bunch is small.
- At lights and junctions, stay in position behind queued vehicles rather than rolling up the side of stopped traffic.
- Wear a helmet at all times.
- Use lights when riding in low light conditions.

## New to the Bunch?

- Introduce yourself to the Ride Secretary before the ride.
- Take time to practise your bike and bunch skills; attend scheduled skills sessions.
- Ride towards the back of the bunch.
- Take corrections with a smile. Good bunch skills improve your safety, that's worth a smile!
- Be courteous to other road users
- Get help from experienced riders, or a properly trained cycling coach.

## THE BASICS

- Be on time
- Maintain your bike in good order
- Carry enough food, water and spares
- Learn to call and signal all hazards
- Stay alert
- Pass the Calls – Up and Down the Bunch

## Riding Tips

- **ACCELERATING:** Accelerating away from lights and across lanes should be done in a more dignified manner than when you are on your own, so that other cyclists are not dropped.
- **BRAKING:** Avoid braking as much as possible and give warning beforehand. When stopping for lights, do so gently without slamming the brakes on. The same goes for stopping pedalling suddenly, which can cause an accident.
- **CORNERING:** Give your partner plenty of room in the corner and keep level with them. Corner at a safe speed so that everyone behind can keep up and hold your wheel. If you find that you are continually 'losing wheels' then it is time to do some cornering practice. (See next article on Cornering)
- **DOWNHILL:** If you are at the front of the bunch, keep pedaling down gentle gradients. If you don't everyone else will be putting on their brakes.
- **HALF WHEELING:** Half-wheeling is one rider always riding in front of his partner, which then puts the whole bunch out. It is essential that you keep level with your partner if at the front: keep your handlebars level with the handlebars of the rider next to you, rather than your front wheel level with theirs.
- **SITTING ON:** Keep reasonably close to the cyclist in front of you and again keep level with your partner. If too much of a gap is left the bunch is always playing 'catch up'. Keep your head and eyes up. Don't watch the gap between bikes. Scanning ahead will give you early warning of changes.
- **UPHILL:** In some bunches everyone splits up and goes up at their own pace while other bunches try and stay together. If that is the case and you feel like dropping off, pull off quickly so that others don't get caught behind you. When climbing a hill and deciding to get out of the saddle do it in one continuous flowing movement. Otherwise the wheel slows momentarily and can hit the wheel of the cyclist behind, causing a fall.

# Warnings and Hand Signals

## STANDARD BUNCH CALLS

Bunch riding means all members of the bunch need to make calls. Calls need to be passed by all riders through the bunch, so that a call from the back makes it to the front etc.

Below is the list of 'Critical calls'. These are the standard for Kendal Cycle Club rides.

<b>The Call</b>	<b>Hand signal</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
'single up'		The bunch needs to change from 2 abreast to single file.
'Pair up' 'stopping' 'slowing'		It is safe for the bunch to go back to 2 abreast riding. When the bunch needs to come to a stop. made (preferably before it happens) when the group changes speed.
'clear'		Made when approaching junctions or through roundabouts to signal it is safe. (Also 'clear left' and 'clear right')
'hole'	pointing towards the hole coming	A dangerous hole in the road is approaching. Made by the first rider and passed through the bunch by all riders. (Includes 'left' 'right' and 'middle'). This is not for every tiny bump in the road.
'rubbish'	pointing towards the obstruction coming	A dangerous obstruction is on the road and approaching. Made by the first rider and passed through the bunch by all riders.
Left arm bent and placed behind back 'door'		The bunch is approaching and passing an object that may need you to move off your line to avoid. Eg a parked car. passing a car with potential occupant set to open or has opened door.
'car front'		On a narrow street a car coming the other way presents a potential risk so stay tight to the left.
'car back'		A car is behind the bunch wanting to pass or a car is overtaking the bunch
'turning left'	left arm out	Bunch will be turning if road is clear, be alert. (Also 'turning right')
'steady'		Used when riders on the front are pushing too much and breaking the bunch up.
'ease up'		Used when a rider or number of riders are dropped from a bunch. The front riders reduce speed such that those dropped can regroup.
're-group at the top'		On a climb the front rider will crest the top and find a safe spot to pull over for the entire bunch until all members have finished the climb.
'all on?'		Made from the front riders to ask if the bunch has regrouped.
'all on!'		Made from the back to signify that the bunch is back together.
'mechanical'		Problem with a rider which means the group needs to stop. (Use this for all issues including punctures as puncture is sometimes confused with 'bunch up'.)



## When Chain Ganging.

'paceline'

Bunch begins paceline effort. Steady and smooth movements. (movement is from right lane to left lane on the front)

'clear'

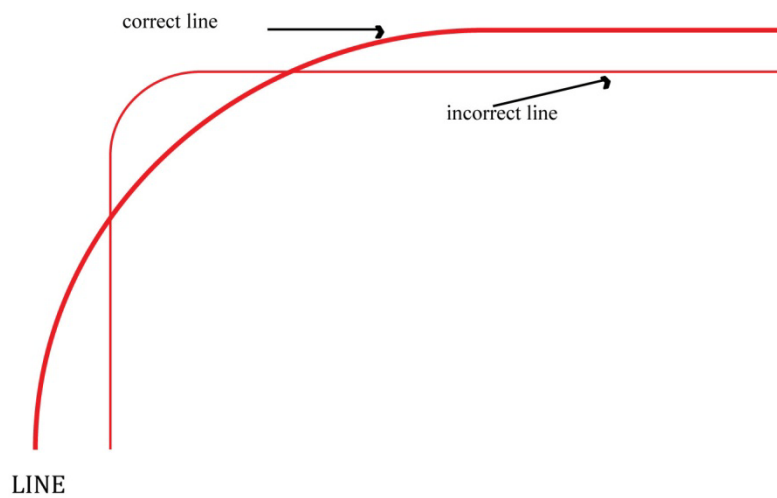
Used by the front left rider to signal that it is clear for the right rider to come in front

'last'

Used by last rider on right to indicate to the rider on the left they will need to move across. Note: Riders still need to check it is all clear to come across.

## Cornering Skills

Cornering is not just an important skill for racing cyclists who want to survive criteriums. It's also important for cornering downhill at speed and for commuters in traffic because cornering at a decent speed helps you to blend in with the traffic flow.



This is the line you take through the corner. (See diagram above). You need to flatten the line as much as possible. This will depend on how much space there is to manoeuvre. In most cases there will be a car's width. It is always important to visualize the line that you will take as an imaginary line on the road. If you suddenly see a pothole or a slippery grate readjust your line. Do not look at the pothole!

## Cornering Skills

**BRAKING** The second point to remember is 'braking'. Never brake in a corner as you risk losing control of your traction. Brake before a corner. Get into the habit of being at the correct speed before you reach the corner.

**EXITING** Keep your line in mind as your bike returns to upright. To maintain your general average speed, pedal out of the saddle straight away. This will be a necessity for racing cyclists.

**BODY POSITION** The lower your centre of gravity, the better you can corner. In other words: be on the drops, drop your body down and back over the rear wheel. Lean into the corner and keep the inside pedal up. Keep your weight on the outside pedal.

Those that race will want to pedal through the corners as much as possible. In this case you need to know your bike and how much you can lean before you will hit a pedal on the ground. When you are off the bike, lean it to the side of the down pedal to the point where it touches the ground.

# Your Responsibilities

## DOS AND DON'TS OF BUNCH RIDING

The only way you can learn bike skills and bunch skills is to practice, but without basic knowledge of the rules and responsibilities involved, practice alone will get you nowhere. Here is a more complete list of the Do's and Don'ts of Bunch Riding.

**FORMATION** – the bunch is one vehicle Riders should pair off in 2 by 2 formation. You should not sit directly on the wheel of the rider in front. Try to maintain about a 30cm distance off the rear tyre and ride slightly off to the side of the rider in front. Newer riders may need to leave a larger gap, up to one and a half wheels behind.

The reason you offset slightly from the wheel in front is for better vision down the line and to allow more time to react to problems. If single file is called to allow a car or truck to pass, the rider on the left slots in behind his partner on the right.

Use one whole lane and ride side by side, even with your partner, slightly offset by a tyre width off the wheel in front.

## Your Responsibilities

**SITTING ON THE WHEEL** - You should focus on the rider in front, and scan ahead. By focusing on the person you will be more aware of what is happening in the bunch. It won't take you long to judge the distance between you and the rider in front.

**POSITION ON THE ROAD** - Cyclists have clearly defined rights that allow riders to occupy a full lane, ride in pair formation and have the same responsibilities as motorists.

It is dangerous to ride to the far left of a lane. This exposes you to greater danger from cars trying to squeeze past. A car must give you a full metre when passing. When possible give parked cars – with or without an occupant – a one metre clearance. Ride a metre out from the gutter to avoid glass and rubbish.

## Your Responsibilities

**THE LEAD RIDERS** - The two riders on the front have a huge responsibility. They must set the pace, call all road obstacles and warn the bunch of any traffic changes.

When approaching a new set of lights the lead riders have sole responsibility in making the call. It will either be lights, stopping or going. Remember that the bunch is one vehicle so if the bunch is committed to go, then don't make decisions in the middle of the bunch to suddenly stop. This will cause heavy braking towards the back of the bunch. If the lights are turning orange on approach, the lead riders must be aware of the size of the bunch and make the appropriate call. It is better to be more cautious than gung-ho! When entering a roundabout or an intersection the lead riders must call clear or car coming. All calls should be relayed down the line.

**IN THE GROUP** - Maintain your separation far enough from the rider in front to avoid any risk of touching wheels (an almost certain crash for the rear rider who touches if it happens) but stay close enough to stay in the wind shadow of the rider in front - less than half a wheel diameter separation for experienced riders, up to 1.5 wheel diameters for newer, less confident riders.

Watch the rider in front – not just their back wheel – it's easier to maintain your separation that way and there is valuable knowledge for you to be learned from those in front of you.

Warn those behind (and in front) of hazards coming their way. ALWAYS point to and/or describe shortly (but loudly) holes, broken glass, or anything likely to endanger those behind you – they may not be able to see the danger and at pack speeds you come on them quickly. Typical calls are hole (left/centre/right); glass, car (back/right/left/front). Once warned those behind need to watch for the item called and look for the path that clears the problem – Do not look at the problem or you will travel there!

**THE BACK MARKERS** - The riders on the back also have a huge responsibility, particularly the rider on the right hand (outside) side. This person must call the bunch across lanes or warn of trucks, cars etc that are approaching when on narrow and/or single lane roads.

On a narrow single lane road the last rider must warn of cars behind. A call of car back is a simple call to understand. Only call over when passing vehicle has passed all riders not just back markers.

## Your Responsibilities

**ROLLING OVER – ROTATING** - The lead riders should not attempt to stay on the front for too long; five kilometres is plenty. This gives everyone a chance to go to the front. If you feel that you are not fit enough or strong enough to do a turn, go to the front, advise your partner and both immediately roll off. Do not suddenly pull out of the line prior to getting to the front - this only leaves gaps.

The rotate / roll-over procedure is simple. It's where every rider in the bunch moves position, similar to a slow paceline. The two front riders make a signal with their hands to indicate that they'll rotate. The rider on the right moves ahead slightly, and moves to the left side, in front of his previous team mate. The rider who was behind him on the right side moves forward to take the lead position on the right side. At the rear of the bunch, the rider on the left moves across to the right side of the bunch.

**CHAINGANG** – The formation is similar to a chain, where the rolling off the front occurs at speed by the lead rider. Keep the speed constant, do not slow down as you roll off; wait until you are well clear. The rider rolling off immediately starts soft-peddalling dropping speed. The rider coming through does not pick up speed. Surging through by the lead rider only strings the field out making it hard for those moving back down the line to move back on to the forward moving line.

Riders in the slower pace line must stay on the wheel. Do not stop pedalling. This causes huge gaps in the line and can drop riders off the back.

Those riders not able or wanting to join the pace line should stay slightly off the back of the line containing the riders coming off the front, in the left line in single file, thus not confusing the paceline which may think someone on the right may be coming through. You will get good cover here, and you won't disrupt the riders in the pace line.

## Hazards

- Potholes. Note where potholes lurk on your normal training routes. Plan your line well in advance to avoid them. Don't expect the road to be in the same condition every day. Potholes have a habit of sprouting up out of nowhere, especially in the winter and early spring due to the daily freeze/thaw cycle.
- Painted lines. These can be slippery, especially the wide markings for pedestrian crossings at intersections. The paint fills in the asphalt's texture, producing a surface that's uncertain when dry and deadly when wet. The danger is worse when the paint is new.
- Dry oil slicks. These may be nearly invisible, but you can spot them as darker streaks on a gray pavement. Be real careful in corners. You aren't safe if you ride through oil on the straights. The greased tread might slip in a corner just ahead.
- Wet oil slicks. If it rains, a small oily patch can grow until it covers the whole lane. Be on the lookout for the telltale multi-colored water.
- Wet metal. If it's been raining and you come upon anything metal in the road (manhole cover, railway line), it's as treacherous as riding on ice. Cross it with the bike absolutely upright. Even a slight lean can cause the wheels to slip.
- Wet leaves. Even if the road is dry, there can be moisture trapped between leaves littering the pavement. When you see leaves in a corner, slow down and round the bend with your bike upright, not angled.



# Principles for Kendal Cycle Club Group Rides

For an enjoyable and safe ride the following principles should be courteously followed:

- Obey the law, road rules including traffic signals, and respect other road users.
- STOP and WAIT for mechanicals, punctures and accidents.
- Ride groups start together and finish together. No rider shall be dropped and abandoned.
- Groups will stop, wait and regroup at the top of each climb – stopping where it is safe to wait.
- If the group is split by a red light, the front part of the bunch will slow and wait for the remainder to rejoin.
- If any rider feels the pace is too slow either take a longer turn on the front or ride away from the bunch from the back – having told the group what's occurring. DON'T race off the front.
- The aim is to maintain a safe separation between bunches NOT to push the pace and catch the bunch in front down the road.
- Pass all calls up and down the bunch (including the route).

## SUMMARY

- Always check intersections/roundabouts for traffic.
- Always warn the riders behind of hazards.
- Don't brake suddenly
- Don't half wheel your partner; keep your handlebars even with theirs
- Don't surge, it's tiring and causes gaps
- If changing the route, warn the bunch well ahead
- If on the front, warn of traffic ahead
- If last, warn of traffic behind.
- Maintain your pace and your separation
- Merge left rider behind right if single file called
- Watch the rider in front, not just their back wheel
- Lastly, be tolerant, responsible and supportive.



For more information:

**[kendal.cc](http://kendal.cc)**

**[info@kendal.cc](mailto:info@kendal.cc)**

**[facebook.com/kendalcycleclub](https://facebook.com/kendalcycleclub)**

**[twitter.com/kendalcycleclub](https://twitter.com/kendalcycleclub)**

**[strava.com/kendalcycleclub](https://strava.com/kendalcycleclub)**