

## Group riding etiquette

Your safety and the safety of everyone in the group must be your first priority. When riding in a group, you automatically forfeit some personal autonomy for the good of the group. Apart from a motorcycle, the thing you need most in a group motorcycle ride is a good dose of common sense.

1. Every rider should ride to his or her own capabilities, the prevailing conditions and the road rules.
2. Start the ride with a full tank of petrol. Assemble at least 15 minutes before the departure time for the ride briefing.
3. Most group rides will include a Tail End Charlie (TEC), preferably someone with radio contact. The TEC rides last in the group and stops to help anyone who needs assistance. The Ride Leader should make sure everyone knows who the TEC is.
4. If the planned route has a few twists and turns, the Ride Leader may decide to use corner markers. Corner marking involves **everyone** on the ride. Here's how it works: As you approach a corner or intersection the Ride Leader will point with his left hand to a spot on the side of the road before the corner. The rider directly behind the Ride Leader pulls over, where it is safe to do so, and signals which direction the group should turn, with blinkers, arm waving or both. The corner marker must stay in that position until the Tail End Charlie approaches and signals the corner marker to re-join the group, **ahead** of the TEC. If the TEC doesn't show up, **go back and look for him**.
5. If you come to a corner and you cannot see the rider behind you and there is no corner marker. Only where it is safe to do so! You should out of courtesy, wait for the next rider to appear. When the rider sees where you're going you can move on.
6. If the pace is too quick for you, back off until you feel comfortable. If you prefer a leisurely pace, you should allow other riders, including the Tail End Charlie, to pass you. You can catch up with the rest of the group at the next stop. If you fall into this category, tell the Ride Leader and the TEC at the ride briefing, and make sure you know where the planned stops are and how to get there.
7. If the pace is too slow for you, you can overtake, but **ONLY** when it is safe for all concerned. **NEVER** overtake on a bend, **NEVER** overtake across double lines, **NEVER** overtake within the same lane, and **ALWAYS** use your indicators. If you pass the Ride Leader however, you have effectively left the ride and you're on your own!
8. Stay alert and maintain a safe distance from the bike in front of you, at least a two second interval between riders. Too many accidents occur when someone stopped paying attention for a split second and ran into the bike in front of him.
9. As soon as you see the rider in front of you turn on his indicators, turn yours on as well, giving the riders behind you as much notice as possible.
10. If you see something that could be a hazard – a stick, a pothole, a dead animal, a live animal, whatever – point to it clearly with your hand or boot so the rider behind you is aware of it. Do this only if it is safe to take your hand off the handlebars temporarily. Do it for oncoming bikers as well.
11. On multilane roads the group should try to be in the same lane as the leader. But don't compromise safety to get there.
12. The universal signal for "I'm in trouble" is thumbs-down. If you have to stop and need assistance, make sure you stop in a safe place and signal clearly thumbs-down to the riders behind you. If you're just stopping to get another piece of chewing gum or to plug in your iPod, signal clearly thumbs-up as the group pass. If you see a rider pulling over giving the thumbs-down signal, pull over as soon as it is safe to do so. If your fellow rider is in trouble he'll be grateful for any help you can give. And you never know, it might be you who needs help one day.
13. Riders wishing to deviate or quit the ride midway must notify the Ride Leader or Tail End Charlie before leaving.

There are probably plenty more tips on good group riding etiquette. If you've got any, share them with us and we'll add them to this list. Send them to the Ride Captain. **Remember, if we all think safety, we'll arrive safely.**