



# Biking Group Manual

## *Rocky Mountain Seniors Ski Club*

The **mission** of our Biking Group is to provide opportunities for our members to socialize and to keep fit.

Biking is most enjoyable when riders with a similar style of riding, skill, and fitness ride together.

We have three general styles of riding groups. Depending on the number of participants, these groups may be further divided into smaller groups which may reflect skill and fitness.

### **Biking Groups**

Bikers in the **Black Groups** usually go the fastest, stop infrequently, and go the furthest. They enjoy hills.

Bikers in the **Blue Groups** like to stop occasionally to smell the roses, admire the scenery, take a drink of water, visit, etc. They do hills when necessary.

Bikers in the **Green Groups** bike at the most relaxed pace of the biking groups.

For the first two weeks of May, **instructions on biking skills** are offered for people who have not biked for awhile and those who want to polish his/her skills.

## **Some Notes Regarding Groups**

- Select the group you feel best suits your riding style and level of skill and fitness. At the beginning of the season you are discovering your own skill and fitness levels as well as the skill and fitness level of the groups. Eventually you'll find your comfort level.
- Be realistic about your skill and fitness levels. If you are undecided about groups, choose the easier group.
- A group's regular riders determine the pace of the group. If you select a slower-paced group (e.g. seeking an easier ride) you must not attempt to set the pace of the slower-paced group.
- Similarly a group should not have to wait for a rider who is significantly slower than the rest of the group.
- Participants take turns leading a group.
- If you decide to change your group part way through a ride you may do so only after you have informed both your new and old leader of your decision.
- If you want to leave the ride early you must inform your leader and sweep you are leaving the group.
- Biking Group members are reminded to be in the parking lot by 9:40 am. Leaders are asked to have the groups back by 12:00-12:30 pm

## **Group Riding Safety Guidelines**

- **Each cyclist is responsible for his/her own safety.**
- Some cyclists fall for a "herd instinct" when riding in groups - as if the group protects them, or there's nobody else on the road besides the group. It's dangerous to play "follow the leader" in a group of cyclists.

- Obey the rules of the road. Cyclists follow the same set of rules of the road as car drivers do.
- Keep the safety of others in the group in mind.
- Be predictable. Ride in a consistent straight manner.
- Keep an even pace. Do not brake or slow unexpectedly, be aware that there is a compounding effect to those following.
- Look ahead at what is happening on the road and anticipate the moves of the cyclists ahead of you.
- Indicate turns and stops. Use accepted cycling hand signals.
- Help riders behind you to find their way. Every rider should keep the rider behind within sight.
- Indicate changes of direction. The rider in front waits until the rider behind reaches the turn before moving on.
- Always call out and point to hazards such as glass, potholes, sand, and wet leaves. The rider in front is partly responsible for the safety of those following.
- Keep adequate distance and avoid overlapping wheels. If your front wheel touches the rear wheel of the rider in front of you, you will fall. Be defensive and stay safe.
- Keep 1 metre of clearance when you're passing another cyclist - more at high downhill speeds.
- When you're about to pass another cyclist, it's your responsibility to do so safely. Check behind you before you change your lane position. Call out, "On your left" to the cyclist you're passing, and pass on the left of his/her bike.
- Never try to pass another cyclist on the right.

- At crosswalks when you walk your bike, please move well past the intersection before remounting your bike. This allows cyclists behind you to clear the intersection.
- Use your bell to give an audible signal before overtaking a pedestrian or another cyclist.
- Use no ear devices except hearing aids on the group rides.
- Follow the directions of the ride leader.
- Use a buddy system to ensure that you are not left behind at any stage.
- Develop your biking skills. For some excellent information see <http://www.bikeclub.ca>.

## **Cancelling Biking**

Biking is never officially cancelled. If you think it is too cold or too wet to bike, stay home. If only a small group shows up, the group decides what to do and, if necessary, appoints a leader.

## **Guidelines for Leaders**

- For the safety and enjoyment of all, any group with more than 15 bikers must be split and an additional leader appointed.
- The leader is responsible for ensuring that good order and safety are maintained in the group. This could mean stopping for stragglers or accidents or ensuring someone goes back to assist with a puncture or breakdown.
- Assess the skills and fitness of the participants and adjust the route to accommodate the participants in

the group. Avoid pushing the members in the group beyond their comfort level. Riders who want a challenge can choose to move to a different group.

- Adjust the pace so riders are neither spread out too far or bunched too close together.
- In order of preference, use bike trails (or multi-use trails), bike routes, quiet residential streets, country roads, other streets, and lastly highways (which should be avoided).
- Cycling is only permitted on sidewalks designated for shared use (typically wider than 2.5 metres).
- Scout out the ride before taking the group on the ride. This ensures there are no unsafe conditions.
- Before the ride begins, outline the route and advise participants of the location of the refreshment stop. If the group does get split up, members will know where they might catch up. Frequent head counts are helpful.
- At controlled intersections the direct everyone to cross only on the green light. Assure everyone the group will wait for those who miss the light.
- At uncontrolled intersections direct everyone to cross when there is a gap in traffic large enough for the entire group (if possible) to safely cross the road. Acting in unison, the group proceeds when safe to do so, under the leader's direction.
- Beyond the intersection the whole group should wait in a safe place for the stragglers to catch up.
- Ask one member to serve as a "sweep." This person brings up the rear and makes certain no one is left behind.

- Keep the group together and collect stragglers by stopping or slowing from time to time. The leader knows everyone is present when the sweep catches up with the leader.

## **Dealing with Other Road Users**

- It can be safe for the cyclist ahead of you to change lane position, but not safe for you. Check for other vehicles the same as you would when you ride alone.
- Look left, right, and left again for traffic at stop signs - don't follow the rider ahead of you into an intersection.
- Make a neat, straight line when waiting at intersections. Piling up and blocking the road is discourteous and dangerous.
- When you stop to rest or wait for companions, pull completely off the road or path. Do not block a road or a path.
- Cycle defensively. Even drivers who seem to be looking at you may be paying attention just to cars. When passing parked cars check for those with a driver - who might be about to open their door or pull out of their space.

## **Where to Ride on the Road**

- Generally, the more you follow the normal traffic pattern, the more predictable and safe you are.
- Ride on the right. If you ride in violation of the traffic laws, you greatly increase your risk of a crash and you may give up all of your rights. Bike paths are governed by traffic laws!

- Stay at a steady distance of approximately 1 metre from the edge of the ride-able part of the road.
- Don't weave between parked cars. Stay a constant metre from parked cars where overtaking drivers can see you.

## **Riding Side by Side**

- Cyclists often like to ride side by side. On a straight, flat road drivers can see you from behind, and you can usually see or hear them approach.
- Be courteous! Don't make drivers wait for you. Pull into a single line well before cars reach you. Call out, "Car back!" or "Car up!" to let the group know it's time to single up.
- A rear-view mirror helps you to check on the cars behind you and pull back into a single line to let the cars pass you.
- Never ride two abreast on a hilly or winding road.
- Riding two abreast is not legal in Alberta. One cyclist can be adjacent to another only if one is passing the other. (This law is sometimes enforced.)

## **Steering Out of Trouble**

- Beware of any slippery or loose surface: gravel, snow, ice, leaves, oil patches, wet manhole covers and wet crosswalk markings. Avoid these, or ride over them slowly. Don't turn, brake or accelerate, just glide ahead straight and smooth. Be ready to put a foot down for balance.
- Be especially careful of diagonal railroad crossings, a row of raised lane-line dots or a step between the

shoulder and the travel lane. Any of them can push your front wheel to the side and sweep your bike out from under you. Cross them as nearly as possible at right angles

- Beware of steel-grid bridge decks which can make balancing difficult. Test a grid deck at a low speed, and walk or use the bridge sidewalk if necessary.
- Any bump, rock or pothole more than 2 cm high can squash your bicycle's tires flat against the rims, damaging the wheels. Avoid the bumps if you can, and walk your bike if the going gets too rough.

## **Basic Braking**

- Your brakes must be in good condition to give you the most control. Good bicycle brakes work powerfully and smoothly. If your brakes are weak or grabby, it's time for a tune-up.
- If you squeeze only the front brake lever, the bike will stop quickly, but the rear wheel will rise off the ground and you could go over the handlebars. If you squeeze only the rear brake lever, braking will be weak, and the rear tire will skid.
- Always apply the rear brakes first. Use the rear brake as a signal to tell you how hard to apply the front brake. Squeeze the front lever three times as hard as the rear, while increasing force on both brake levers at the same time.
- For a powerful stop, squeeze the brake levers harder and harder - the front always three times as hard as the rear. The rear wheel will eventually skid. But by

this time, most of the weight will be off the rear wheel, so it will skid only lightly.

- In emergency stops slide back in the saddle.
- Braking technique is different when the road surface is slippery, or if you're turning. Under these conditions, the front wheel can skid. You must brake lightly and use the front brake less. Avoid turning and braking on a slippery surface.

## **Tips for Climbing Hills**

- Anticipate the upcoming hill by shifting onto a smaller chain ring (granny gear) before starting up. After doing this, you will have to gear up on the cassette (rear wheel) while still on the flat. Then, as you climb, you will only have to adjust the cassette gear to the grade.
- Try to maintain a steady, comfortable, high cadence. Gear down as necessary.
- Slide back on the saddle, pressing down with the heels, to use the hamstrings as well as the quads.
- Move the hands close to the stem and sit up straight to maximize breathing intake.



## EQUIPMENT CHOICES

### Bicycle

- Your bicycle should match your riding style. Consider where and how long you want to ride. A decent bike will last at least 5 years, a quality one probably 20 years.
- Many of the cyclists in our group have chosen a hybrid or a comfort bike that appeals to people who generally stick to the pathways and roadways. The hybrid's frame geometries and adjustable rise stems allow for a more upright seating position, while softer suspension forks and suspension seat posts give that little extra comfort many of us are looking for.
- A real bike shop will help you choose the right bicycle to suit your riding style and will also be able to fit your bike to your body proportions.
- Knowledgeable staff can often adjust the alignment of an uncomfortable seat and make it comfortable. Try an adjustment before purchasing a new seat.
- Your bicycle must be in good working order. The gears must shift smoothly, and most importantly, the brakes must work well. If you aren't sure that your bike is in top shape, take it to a qualified mechanic for a tune-up.

### Helmet

- All cyclists in our group must wear a helmet approved for biking. The helmet must be properly fitted.

- A good fit means the helmet
  - is level on the head.
  - touches all around, comfortably snug but not tight.
  - does not move in any direction.
  - straps form a "V" just below and forward of the ears having no more than the width of one finger between the chinstrap and the chin.
- Helmets should be replaced after a serious crash or every three to five years.

## **Water Bottle**

A frame-mounted water bottle lets you drink as you ride - important on any trip of more than an hour.

## **Rear View Mirror**

A rear-view mirror can be helpful when maneuvering in traffic. Useful mirrors include a small, helmet-mounted mirror, a small mirror that clips to your glasses, or a handlebar-end mirror.

## **Cycling Gloves**

- Cycling gloves improve your grip on the handle bars and protect your hands during a fall. They also improve your comfort by cushioning your hands against road shock from the handlebars.
- Before you purchase gloves note where you put pressure on your hands while riding and buy gloves with padding at these spots.
- Fingerless gloves are cooler in the summer; full gloves are comfortable in the spring and fall.

## **Cycling Shorts**

Cycling shorts or liner shorts (with their strategic padding) really add to your cycling comfort. Liner shorts are the less expensive and can be used under shorts or long pants.

## **Tools**

A small tool kit, spare tube, and frame pump - and the knowledge to use them - will get you back on the road when your bike has a flat tire or other common minor breakdown. A new tube is quicker to install than patching the old one! Most on-road repairs are simple and easy to learn.

## **Baggage**

A bag on the bike is a far better choice than a backpack, which will leave your back hot and sweaty in warm weather. And it's easier to balance without a backpack. Let your bike carry the weight!

## **Wet Weather Gear**

A cyclist's inexpensive rain cape along with fenders on your bike can help to keep you dry in wet weather.

## **Personal Identification**

You should carry identification on your bicycle at all times.