

SECTION 7: LEADING YOUR RIDE

Monitor the riders registering for your ride the day before, or earlier. If any are not known to you, you may wish to talk with them to ensure they and their bikes are suitable.

Before the start

Your ride checklist

- Your bike
- Your helmet
- Bike lights
- (Copies of your) cue sheet
- Sign on sheet
- Sun/reading glasses
- Pens
- Mini bike pump suitable for both Presta and Schraeder valves
- Tool kit including spare tube(s), tyre levers, a multi-tool
- Food and full water bottles
- ID
- First Aid Kit
- Cycle computer
- Mobile phone or, if not, a watch
- Lock, where advisable
- Money (cash/card)
- Opal card
- Sunscreen/insect repellent.

Last minute changes

Check the weather conditions before the ride. Cancelling a ride (or discontinuing) a ride due to weather conditions is your call as the Ride Leader. If you must cancel the ride, make sure to let all participants know.

It is important participants know how they can find out about any changes, including if a ride is cancelled (at the last minute).

If your ride is published on the Bicycle NSW calendar, it is possible to add 'Ride Cancelled' to the event. However, BNSW staff are not available very early in the morning and/or on the weekend to do this. The Ride Coordinator of your BUG may be able to do this, but they may not be available.

Ways to let your participants know of any last minute changes (including cancellation):

- Text message/phone call
- Email
- Facebook post

- Message on website or app

If you have to cancel a ride and have no way of getting in touch with the riders of your group, please make sure to go to the start of the ride (or arrange for someone else to go) to inform anyone that turns up, that the ride has been cancelled.

At the start

Arrive early at the nominated start place. This means you can welcome riders as they arrive, paying attention especially to riders you don't know. Pay attention to their bike, its condition and whether they have a water bottle.

You will also manage the assembly of the group, making sure that footpaths etc. are kept clear for others.

Designate a Sweep if you have not already done so. Ideally, your Sweep is an experienced rider who is able to assist with repairs, happy to ride at the back with the slowest rider and who knows the route and/or the area.

Every rider must wear an Australian Standards approved helmet. **No helmet. No ride. No exceptions.** A properly fitted helmet should be level and sit low down on the rider's forehead. It should be stable on the rider's head and not "flop about" even with the straps undone. The straps should meet just below the ears and the buckle should be snug, but comfortable under the rider's chin.

Pre-ride briefing

The pre-ride briefing is one of the most important parts of the ride.

You will welcome the group and give an overview of the ride: an outline of the route, the main features of the roads and paths ahead and notable hazards. You may wish to emphasise particular behaviours e.g. "keep behind me and in front of the Sweep", "make your own decision to proceed at give way signs and roundabouts, don't just follow the rider in front".

Introduce the Sweep and explain their role.

The Sweep rides at the back and is always the last rider. Their role is to ensure no one loses contact with the group and becomes lost and to contact the Ride Leader immediately if a rider has to stop due to a mechanical or personal issue.

They call commands and advice such as 'car back', 'keep left', and 'take the lane'. The Sweep rides with the slowest riders and may coach these riders to improve their technique, and to encourage any who may be flagging. The Sweep often manages a variety of problems during a ride and their role is often undervalued.

Make sure everyone has completed the sign on sheet and their ICE (In Case of Emergency) details are clear and complete. Take a head count and make sure this matches the number of riders on the sign on sheet.

Ask whether anyone has first aid or medical skills. If an accident occurs, you should be ready to call on these people for help and support.

A waiver should be provided with the sign on sheet ([see Appendix 4](#)). This is there to help protect you from litigation arising from an accident, although there is no guarantee.

Participants may question you regarding the waiver. You could explain you are a volunteer and while you have put a lot of thought into planning your ride with the aim of making it as safe and enjoyable for everyone, you cannot be held responsible for anything that goes wrong. For the safety of your group, it is important that riders follow your directions and attend the pre-ride briefing.

In the unlikely scenario a participant does not sign the sign on sheet/waiver, make it clear to them (ideally in front of a witness such as your sweep) they are not part of your ride. Record the conversation on the incident report form.

TIP

Even while you have the details of your riders, it is advisable for each rider to have ID and their emergency contact details on them. Details of a rider's ICE can, for instance, be taped inside their helmet.

Ask if anyone has a medical condition you should be aware of. Assure them this information will remain confidential in case they feel uncomfortable about informing you. The Sweep should also be informed of any relevant medical conditions.

Tell your riders what type of ride it is, the destination, distance, how long you think the ride will take, and what you expect of them. For example, any rider who wishes to leave the ride before the finish should let you know first.

Explain to your group how you plan to conduct the ride: go over group etiquette/road rules, verbal communication and the signals that you will use (please see 'On the Ride' below).

If necessary ask for assistance from other more experienced riders, especially in a larger group. They can help to 'buddy' new or less experienced riders and to act as Signposts on a winding route.

Finally, ask if there are any questions. Aim to be on the road within 10 minutes of the advertised start time.

The pre-ride briefing should demonstrate to the group that you have competently prepared and planned for the ride. This should inspire their confidence in you as the Ride Leader. It is the basis of your authority and for you to expect compliance with any reasonable directions and requests.

On the ride

Start the ride at a moderate pace which allows you to monitor if the group is following in an orderly manner and ensures you can see the Sweep. The first kilometre of the ride is the time to check this and to stop and manage any issues.

As the ride progresses and you follow your pre-planned route, you will need to monitor the progress of the group behind. This can be difficult as you are the 'path finder' and your main focus is on the route ahead. Re-group points offer the best opportunity. You may also have a brief chance when stopped at a traffic control e.g. a stop sign. Some Ride Leaders find a small rear-view mirror useful.

The re-group points enable you to carefully assess your group. Is anyone lagging behind or looking fatigued or unwell? Ask your Sweep "All okay?!" with a thumbs-up, seeking a 'thumbs-up' in response. Your Sweep should join you at the head of the group to discuss any concerns such as overall pace, or with an individual rider. Make sure to give slower riders any breaks they need at re-group points. Don't rush off just after the sweep arrives!

Encourage your riders to rehydrate. A short pause in the shade on a hot day may be valuable.

Road rules

Rides must be designed and run in accordance with NSW Road Rules. Read current NSW bike legislation on the BNSW website here: <https://bicyclensw.org.au/nsw-bicycle-laws/>

Under NSW Road Rules a bicycle is considered a vehicle. As such, bike riders are required to obey the rules, including stopping at red lights or stop signs, giving way as indicated by signage and giving hand signals when changing direction. Failing to obey road or bicycle rules may result in a fine.

Cyclists:

- are required by law to use a hand signal when making a right hand turn (hand signals when stopping or turning left are encouraged).
- may perform hook turns at intersections unless prohibited by sign posting.
- can cycle two abreast but not more than 1.5 metres apart.
- can overtake two other riders who are cycling side-by-side.
- can travel in a Bus Lane, Tram Lane, Transit Lane or Truck Lane but not in a Bus Only Lane
- can ride to the left of a continuous white edge line.
- may overtake on the left of stopped and slow moving vehicles
- are required to wear an Australian Standards Approved helmet.

As the Ride Leader you must set a good example by obeying road rules, being courteous and maintaining a pace at the appropriate (advertised) speed.

At stop signs or intersections, join the row of traffic and refrain from passing up the inside. Don't make a vehicle that has already passed your group do it again.

Dangerous drivers

Just as riders have responsibilities when using the road, they also have the right, like other vehicles, to use the road and be shown courtesy and care by other road users.

If you or your group encounters a dangerous driver, get everyone off the road and wait until the driver has left. Do not escalate the situation by antagonising the driver further.

Take a picture of the number plate/car or write down the registration number and the type of vehicle. If possible, get a description of the driver. This information will be necessary when reporting the matter to the police. Bicycle NSW can assist you with this if required. Utilise the incident report form to record the information.

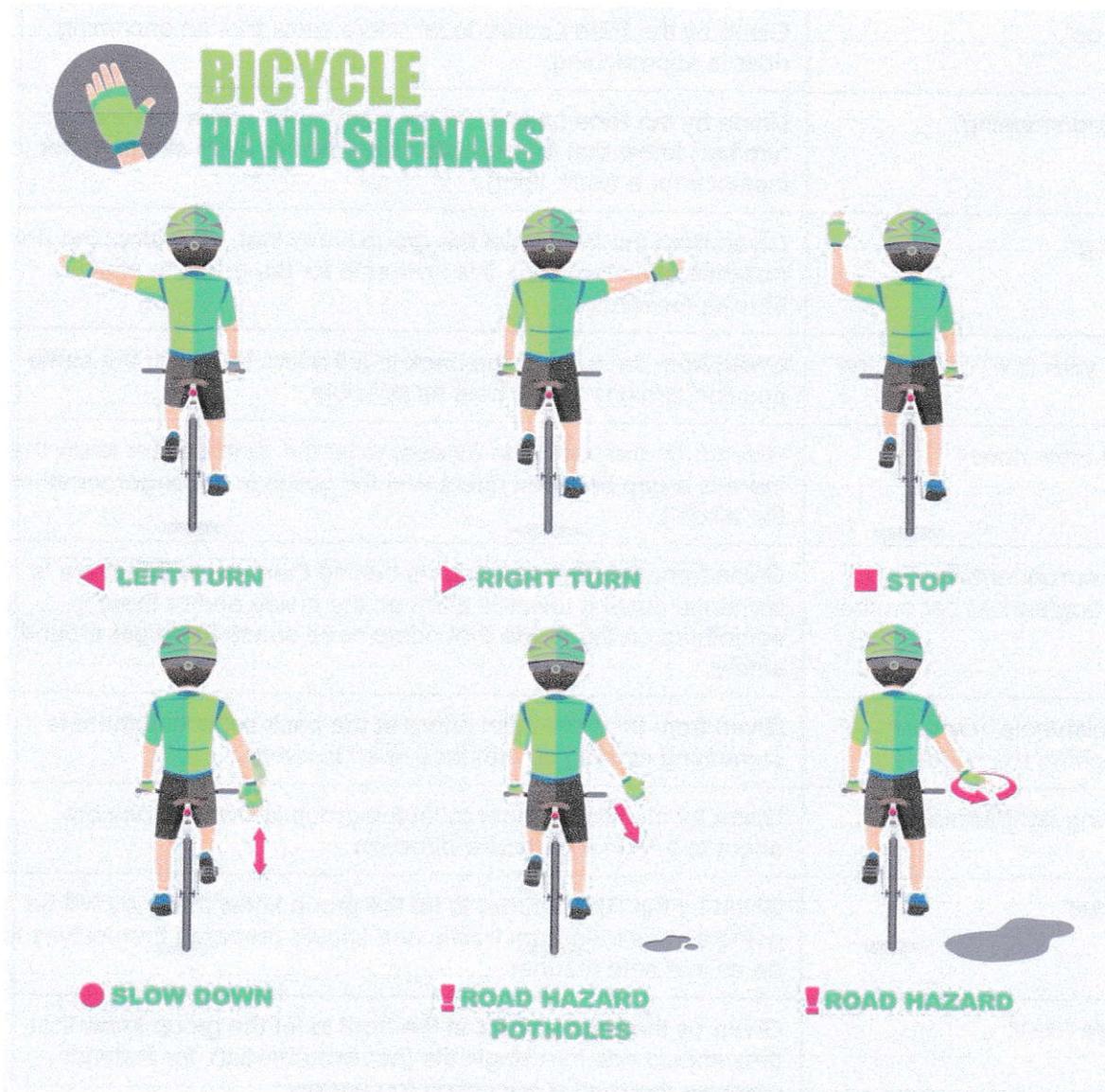
TIP

If you are riding with a group, we encourage you to discuss what hand signals and verbal commands you're using so everyone understands.

Hand signals

Common hand signals are:

- to indicate left
- to indicate right
- to point out potential hazards
- to indicate that you are slowing down/stopping.



Verbal commands

Common verbal commands are:

'All on!' or 'All on?'	In the first instance, it is the Sweep at the back letting the Ride Leader know that all riders are together. In the second instance, it is the Ride Leader at the front asking if all riders are together.
'Car/riders back!'	Given by the Sweep to let riders know that a car (or other cyclists) is coming towards the group from the rear (and about to overtake them).
'Bike up'	Given by the Ride Leader to let riders know that an oncoming rider is approaching.
'Slowing/stopping'	Given by the Ride Leader (at the front) to let riders (behind him/her) know that (s) he is slowing down or even stopping (for instance for a traffic light).
'Rolling!'	Given from the front to let the group know that, after stopping (for instance at a stop sign), it is now safe for the group to start moving forward.
'Hold your line!' or 'Hold the line!'	Given from the front or the back to tell riders to stay in the same position/straight line as best as possible.
'Gap! Slow down!'	Given from the back (the Sweep) to let the Ride Leader know that there is a gap between riders and the group is no longer together (or 'all on').
'Walker/runner/bike rider/dog/parked car on the left!'	Given from the front to let riders behind them know that there is someone coming towards them on the inside and/or there is something on the inside that riders need space for to get around safely.
'Rubbish/hole' (on your left/right/in the middle)	Given from the front to let riders at the back know that there is something coming up that they need to avoid.
'Turning right/turning left'	Given by the Ride Leader to let the group know that they are about to turn in a particular direction.
'Tracks!'	Given by the Ride Leader to let the group know that they will be going across train/tram tracks and should prepared themselves to do so in a safe manner.
'Single (file)!'	Given by the Ride Leader at the front to let the group know that they should ride in a single file (not two abreast), for instance, because the road is becoming too narrow
'Rough surface/road!'	Given by the Ride Leader to let the riders of the group know that the road surface is changing and precaution should be taken.
'Take the lane'	Given by the Ride Leader or Sweep to the group to occupy the full lane, usually two riders abreast, when approaching a narrow section of the road e.g. a two lane bridge

Verbal commands are (generally) given by the Ride Leader at the front or by the rider at the back (often the Sweep or a rider assisting the Ride Leader). For the safety of the group, it is essential that verbal commands are passed on from the front all the way to the back and vice versa.

Some verbal commands and hand signals can be given at the same time (as long as they mean the same thing). For instance, pointing at the road, the verbal command 'Hole in the middle' can be given.

Things to keep in mind

- Your group should look out for one another, stop and help riders who are having difficulties.
- Keep your arms relaxed on the handlebars – if you are bumped you are less likely to veer violently.
- Inexperienced riders may need to regroup more frequently. Wait for your Sweep to know your group is complete. Give adequate time for rests at regroups. Remember, the Ride Leader is the first rider to the rest stop and has the longest rest time so be sure to give every rider adequate time to recuperate.
- You may want to discuss topics like bike maintenance with faster riders to keep them occupied while waiting.

General rider etiquette

By following a few basic guidelines your ride can be a safe and enjoyable one for all participants and have minimal impact on other path and road users.

- Use shared paths and bicycle lanes where possible
- Be courteous to others on paths and roads
- Give clear hand signals that can be seen by riders in the group and other road and path users
- Keep left on both roads and paths
- Keep changes to speed and direction smooth and predictable
- Leave a gap between riders to give time to react to hazards. Never ride with overlapping wheels.
- Call out and point at hazards such as sticks, glass, bollards, potholes etc. Do not jump over obstacles.
- When riding, handheld phone use is illegal. If you have a Bluetooth device (helmet, ear phones etc.), you can use your phone to make or answer a call, or as an aid for navigation. The phone must be in a cradle fixed position and can be operated without touching the phone itself. Using your phone to text or take photos when in motion is a fineable offence.
- Don't listen to music while riding in a group in order to hear commands.

On-road etiquette

- Avoid obstructing other road users where possible
- Use road shoulders where practical, but stay clear of car doors

- Ride single file uphill and on narrow roads to give motorists space to pass
- Use bicycle lanes where provided
- Follow road rules and respect others rights
- Avoid riding in a driver's blind spots, remember if you can't see the driver the driver can't see you
- Allow yourself space from other bikes, especially those in front when travelling at speed, such as downhill
- Don't hold onto motor vehicles.

Shared path etiquette

- Give way to pedestrians at all times
- Ring your bell when approaching other path users and slow to pass other path users
- Thank pedestrians and joggers for allowing you space to pass them.
- Ride at a safe speed, remembering children are unpredictable and some path users may have mobility problems, go slow when passing other path users. This is particularly relevant riding up or down a hill, remembering all riders are at different points in terms of abilities.
- Allow space between riders so they have clear sight lines of what's ahead.
- Move off the path when stopped to regroup, check maps etc. and leave room for others to pass
- Warn fellow riders of oncoming riders, most groups use "Bike Up" as the call to indicate an oncoming rider.

Off road (trail) etiquette

Do not stop or stay in the middle of a track/trail. If you have to stop, have your group move off the track/trail (or the side) as much as possible. If this is not possible and you are attending to a mechanical, have two riders (one at the back/one at the front) look out for other riders to warn them.

Follow the signs! If a sign says the track is unidirectional then don't go against that direction.

Overtaking other (slower) riders. Call out to this rider in a friendly manner and ask if you may pass when possible. If you are riding in a group, let this rider know how many riders there are in your group ('Only me' 'Four more').

Riders wanting to pass. If you have a rider coming up behind you who clearly wants to pass, give them the opportunity to do so as soon as possible.

Thank you! Thank the riders who let you pass or let you go first (when travelling in opposite directions).

Never ride closed trails or cut corners. It often takes a lot of work to create and maintain trails and doing either can cause unnecessary damage to the track/trail.

Riders riding downhill should give way to riders riding uphill. Also right of way should be given to walkers/runners. Stop for horses and let the horse rider know that you are there.

Dangerous riders

If you have a rider who is (consistently) behaving in a way impacting the safety of your group, you must address the problem. As an example: a rider who keeps stopping suddenly.

Politely explain to them what they are doing is dangerous and how this puts him/herself and the other riders at risk. Explain or demonstrate the correct behaviour. If you do not wish to single someone out, you may choose a regrouping point to go over group etiquette together. This is generally sufficient.

If a rider persists with dangerous behaviour, ask them again to abide by the rules of the group. If they persist ask them to leave the ride. Utilise the incident report form to record the information.

Night Rides

Keep in mind most (good, rechargeable) light systems run up to 1.5 hours, so plan your ride accordingly. Keep your groups smaller and the speed slower. Include more regrouping points. A hands free (Petzel or similar) light will be a great help to you as leader.

Off road (MTB) night rides should not be technically demanding.

Problems that may happen during a ride

Mechanical

It is the responsibility of each rider (participant) to bring a bike in good working order. As a Ride Leader you have the right to request that a participant have their bike serviced first before they can join your ride (or have their bike serviced after your ride for the next ride).

The most common mechanical problems are:

Flat tyres

Every rider should be carrying their own tubes and pump. To help speed things along, suggest the rider replaces the entire tube and then patches the existing one in the comfort of their own home. "Speed" or glueless patches are also a fast option.

Broken spokes

A wheel with a couple of broken spokes can generally be ridden home with caution. Brakes may need to be adjusted to accommodate a buckled rim. Broken spokes can be tied to existing spokes to help prevent frame/paint damage.

Gears & Chains

Problem gears/drooping chains can usually be adjusted quickly using barrel adjusters and limit screws.

Change in weather conditions including thunderstorms

Adverse weather conditions can make the ride dangerous.

The most common cause of this is heavy rain (a summer storm) creating poor visibility and/ or flash flooding. Ultimately, the decision to continue or cancel the ride is yours as the Ride Leader. This may be done in consultation, but is always based upon the safety of the group.

Accidents, injuries and medical issues

During the briefing, Ride Leaders should have noted down if anyone has first aid or medical skills. If an accident occurs, you should be ready to call on these people for help and support.

Before attending to an injured cyclist always ensure you're not putting yourself or others in harm's way and escalating the situation. Use fellow riders to control the environment such as erecting barriers between the injured cyclist and a car, animal etc. To do this, riders can stand bicycles up to block the hazard i.e. traffic.

As the Ride Leader, you will need to manage the situation for the whole group – not just the injured but the onlookers who may swarm the injured. Give clear and concise directions to ensure all remain calm and assist in the best possible way.

In the case of serious injuries, call 000 for an ambulance.

If you do not know your exact location, using the Emergency+ smartphone app to call Triple Zero (000) can assist. The app provides you with your GPS co-ordinates and 'what3words' which you can tell the emergency call-taker, allowing them to pinpoint your location. The Emergency+ app is available to download free of charge from emergencyapp.triplezero.gov.au or in the Apple app store or Google Play.

If your phone is flat, don't forget you can call 000 from any mobile phone even if you don't know the unlock code.

It is the responsibility of the Ride Leader for making the decision to call an ambulance, unless a more qualified person has taken charge of the incident.

As the Ride Leader, it is your responsibility to look after any accident, injury or medical emergency within your group. If a minor injury or medical problem occurs, you are responsible for ensuring they return to the start of the riding safely whether by train, taxi etc. Do not force them to continue if they are unable to. Do not make them feel bad about disrupting the ride.

Your options with an injured rider are:

- The group waits until medical attention/lift arrives.
- A friend/buddy waits with them until medical attention/lift arrives.
- A friend/buddy escorts them home.

Call the injured rider after the ride to make sure everything is alright and if they need a hand getting home.

Ensure that you record the accident, injury or medical emergency on the Incident form.

Road rash/grazes

Minor falls often result in skin grazes. In this case it is best to clean the wound and apply an antiseptic cream and clean gauze. If there is no tap water available, then water from a water bottle is better than not cleaning the wound. In this case there would be a preference to use the injured rider's water bottle. It is recommended you allow the injured to apply water/ dressings to themselves where capable.

If the edges of a deep cut will not fit together or the wound is in a region where movement will prevent it from healing, then the person should seek medical attention as soon as possible.

A Ride Leader should finish the ride unless prevented to do so by an unforeseen event.