

# Ride Leader Training

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New York Cycle Club



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## Attachments:

Ride leader guidelines  
Emergency first aid for cyclists.

## **1. Ride leader - Day of ride**

1. Arrive early to coordinate pre-ride activities.
2. Leave yourself time to formulate your pre-ride discussion
3. Be available to answer questions about the ride, mileage, lunch stops, food etc.
4. Bring a current NYCC sign-in sheet, available on our website  
<http://nycc.org/images/signup.pdf>
5. Ride leaders should be familiar with the ride leader guidelines and be able to cover these points in a 2min pre-ride talk

### **While participants are signing in, take the opportunity to assess their bikes and their suitability for that particular ride.**

- If they have not participated in a club ride before, you might casually ask them questions regarding their current riding status: i.e., how far they've ridden, what pace etc, and determine if they might have a problem keeping up with the group.
- Although it might seem unfair to turn back a rider at the start or at some point before you get too far along on the ride, it would be more of a burden to hold the group up every few miles waiting for that person to catch up.
- If they are physically unprepared, lack adequate water, snacks, spare tube, pump, railroad pass or their bike is poorly maintained, it would be equally unfair to leave them stranded, even with a cue sheet.

### **1.1 Pre-Ride talk/discussion**

#### **After everyone has signed in, introduce yourself, welcoming everyone on behalf of the NYCC.**

- If you weren't able to talk to all of the new riders previously, ask for a show of hands of those who have not participated in a club ride before and talk to them about their status before you take off.
- If you don't carry a cell phone, you might want to ask the group who has one.

#### **The following should be made clear to all riders:**

##### **Group riding skills**

- Impress upon the group that cycling with a group, as opposed to cycling alone, requires special cycling skills.
- Safety has to be one of the major concerns of group riding. There is a certain cycling etiquette, or rules of the road, which need to be followed.

##### **Describe your ride as advertised in the bulletin, including distance and pace (cruising speed).**

- Members must rely on the pace (cruising speed) and ride description as advertised, therefore, the leader is expected to adhere to his/her description accordingly. To deviate from this at the start would certainly be unfair to any participants who planned on doing the advertised ride. Monitor your speed often during the ride, as it is easy to be pressured by riders "pushing the pace". "Make allowances for hills". Keep the speed up hills proportionate to the pace.

##### **Announce your drop policy.**

- If you do not intend to drop riders, ask all riders to look out for each other.

- Also, announce where you intend to wait for lagging riders”
- Regardless of the level of ride that is planned, it is important to inform participants what to expect in terms of a drop policy.

**Emphasize predictable, single or double line riding attentive to local traffic laws and common sense. Do not bunch up at lights or while riding – maintain the line”.**

- Failure to do so may anger motorists and other cyclists who may want to pass us and could contribute to an accident. Don't allow cyclists to “move up” at a stop. They may do so while riding alerting other riders by saying “passing on your left”. (Never on the right).

**Notify the group that you'll be indicating your intentions by using hand and voice signals, such as stopping, slowing left turn etc., and calling out conditions such as holes, glass, doors etc., and expect them to do the same.**

- By not doing so, they might deprive a rider behind them from reacting to a dangerous obstacle and might cause injury or damage to their bicycle. On the other hand, make riders aware of their need to focus on their own in situations such as going through intersections or turns by not always following the group blindly.

**Discourage riders from “pace busting”. They break the ride tempo and compromise group safety.**

- If they go to the front, other riders may follow and the ride leader will no longer maintain control of the ride.
- If riders insist on going past the leader, other than where indicated, (such as hills), they should be asked to leave the ride.

The importance of a pre-ride discussion cannot be overemphasized. It lets riders know what you expect from them and what they can expect from you. Try to keep it brief, covering the topics above and anything else that will ensure a safe and pleasant ride.

## 2. Rider Leading Tools

Here are some basic tools to ensure you and your riders are in the best place to complete your ride safely, enjoyably, and in reasonable time.

**Cue Sheets**—riders may get separated (voluntarily or not), while others may be list- or text oriented rather than graphically oriented. Consider cue sheets that identify Turns, Street Names, Landmarks, and Incremental and Cumulative Mileage. Check out the NYCC website for examples. <http://nycc.org/rides.html#library>

**Maps**—even more basic than cue sheets; better maps always include side- or secondary streets, and a few streets before or after the intended route (so that if riders stray from a route or miss a turn, they can more easily reorient themselves relative to the planned route). Outline your route in a contrasting color (for example, with a Highlighter marker).

**Train Schedule**—a brief table or outline (or schedule from the carrier) included with your map/cue sheet to give riders a sense of return opportunities either planned with your ride or as “escape hatch” should they need to leave the ride.

**Cell Phones**—carrying these has become a more common practice among riders. Identify who in your group may be carrying one should need arise to summon quick help.

**Extra Tube**—ride participants are responsible for their own provisions, however here is one “extra” you can do for your ride group in the inevitable event that someone experiences a flat and does not have an extra tube. It takes less time than booting or stranding a rider or going off course in search of a bicycling shop.

**Basic Allen Set and Patch Kit**—having 3, 4, 5, and 6mm Allen keys and a patch kit addresses most common adjustment/repair needs.

**Frame Pump**—capable of inflating to tire pressure suitable for the type of ride you are leading; all riders should have a pump, far fewer come prepared with one.

**Bulletin (Monthly and Weekly Email Announcements)**—use the Club’s monthly newsletter and the weekly email announcements to communicate special tools/requirements for your ride: train passes, extra water, extra pocket food.

### 3. What if situations

#### 3.1 Accidents/medical emergency

When you're on a ride and an accident occurs, teamwork is critical. Direct the group that one person:

- take charge of the victim (usually a leader).
- direct traffic around the site.
- get all cyclists off the road.
- call 911 on their cell phone or flag down a passing car.
- write down the details of what happened—it's easy to forget the details. Record the victim's reactions; this could be critical to emergency personnel.

**Do not move the person or take their helmet off until you determine they are OK (see attached First Aid sheet for more details.)**

- Being reasonably prepared for an accident won't turn you into a noxious worry wart. In fact, it will make you an even more desirable cycling partner than you already are.
- You can raise your safety quotient by taking a CPR course. They're available all over the city.
- Carry first aid items in your saddle bag. See attached First Aid sheet for more details.

#### 3.2 Resolving Conflict

Your time and commitment to the NYCC are a privilege to your fellow riders. Their rights are to have a well-planned, safe, and enjoyable event. You have the same rights, and deserve the respect of your fellow riders.

Conflict on your ride can arise for a number of reasons; it can be between two or more riders, or be directed at you, the leader:

- One rider's action may cause perceived or real danger to another rider and that rider may react aggressively (verbally, emotionally, or worse).
- Criticism about a rider's style from you or another rider may be perceived as unjust or threatening (to their sense of self-esteem).
- Disagreement or uncooperative behavior with regard to the pace, distance, or route of your ride may lead to either of the two points.

As a Ride Leader your responsibility is to the overall enjoyment and safety of the ride and riders. Any of the actions above can pose a danger to you, other riders, or even the uncooperative rider him/herself.

You can resolve conflicts by following some basic steps:

- **Listen and Assess:** find out what the issue is—get your rider(s) to talk to you. Sort through emotion and lay out the facts. By doing so you are closer to removing the emotion from an issue and coming to logical resolution and one that hopefully the rider(s) will understand and support
- **Restate the tenets of the NYCC Ride Leader Guidelines** (advertised pace, route and rest stops, any behavior prescribed by laws of traffic or common sense/safety)—explain to the rider that the Guidelines are there to protect them, you, and all the riders
- **Take action:** can you suggest to defuse the issue:
  - An uncooperative/unskilled rider be sent to the back of the group
  - You can send a rider off of your ride
  - In extreme circumstances you can disband the ride. Explain to your other riders why you are disbanding—some (if not all) may choose to follow you anyway—typically the rider at the heart of the conflict will leave or will see how he/she is perceived and will modify their behavior

**Avoid escalating conflict by not taking conflict personally.**

- Find facts
- Invoke the Ride Leader Guidelines
- Let riders know you are looking out for the well being of the group

Feel free to contact your Ride Coordinator or a fellow ride leader if you ever want to discuss an incident or have questions about how to handle a conflict situation.

**3.3 Dealing with Large Groups*****Anticipate:***

- Forecast for good weather
  - Popular destination
  - Few alternative ride listings for the day
1. Encourage riders, especially riders who are new to the NYCC, to RSVP before the ride—you'll get some sense of potential participants and handouts (cue sheets, maps) needed
  2. Recruit a fellow cyclist "in your league" to come out for the ride—you'll be sure to have some moral support if not even an improvisorial co-leader
  3. Break the group into smaller riding groups that are manageable and appropriate to your riding style and route—be sure to agree on regrouping locations throughout the ride to ensure an overall sense of cohesion for the day
  4. You may need to ask for, or nominate (with nominees' consent) sub-ride leaders (to effect the previous point)—is there anyone present who has ride leading experience?
  5. You may still need to break the group into smaller groups and jockey between, and sweep, the groups (this is effectively, though surreptitiously, assigning subgroup leaders—if they catch on that they're in effect "subleading," their confidence level will build during the ride with positive and constructive feedback, or you can reappoint subgroup leaders if appropriate)
  6. Be sure maps and cue sheets get distributed evenly among smaller groups

**3.4 Getting lost**

- Don't panic
- Asses the situation:
  - Did you miss a turn and realize it immediately?
  - Have you been going for miles without noticing?
  - Can you easily back-track and be back on the cue-sheet?
  - Is the cue-sheet wrong?
- Explain to the group that you are lost/missed a turn/what is happening.
- If you are close to a deli/gas station have a pit stop and try to find yourself on the map.
- Ask fellow riders if they know the way.
- Take out your map and plot the course back to the cue-sheet or catch up on the cue-sheet at a point ahead in the ride.
- You might have to change the destination of the ride if seriously off course.
- Don't panic - it happens to everybody sooner or later.

### 3.5 Major Mechanicals

#### **General**

Always carry:

- multi-tool (Topeak Alien is the most complete and includes a chain tool.)
- chain tool
- tire boot
- spoke wrench (Spokey or Park)
- patch kit
- tire levers
- two tubes

Optional:

- valve extender

#### **Booting a tire**

If when you attempt to inflate the tire and you see the inner tube bubble through a hole in the outer surface you need to place material on the inside casing of the tire to keep the tube in place.

- The best thing to use is a Park Tools pre-glued mylar boot, about \$1.00 a piece. Lacking one of these use any tear resistant thin material such as an energy bar wrapper or a dollar bill.
- With the Park Tools patch you can inflate the tire to full pressure, with the other materials inflate until you see the material itself start to bulge and then back off a bit.

#### **Hesitant or Autosifting Rear Derailleur**

When the rear derailleur does not shift cleanly from one cog to another or seems to shift of its own accord it is usually the result of incorrect derailleur cable tension.

- Check the cable run under the bottom bracket to make sure it is unobstructed.
- While looking at the back of the bike find the barrel adjuster located at the point the cable enters the derailleur.
- Turn the barrel adjuster one quarter turn in the direction in which the derailleur is not shifting correctly. If it hesitates shifting to the larger cogs turn it to the left. If it hesitates shifting to the smaller cogs turn it to the right.
- Shift through all the gears while turning the cranks and continue adjusting in quarter turn increments until shifting is smooth.
- Remember: If you want it to shift more smoothly to the large cogs turn the adjuster towards the large cogs. If you want it to shift more smoothly to the small cogs turn the adjuster towards the small cogs.

#### **Jammed Chain**

When the chain jams between the chainrings and the chainstay you probably won't be able to just tug it out.

- Insert a screwdriver or similar lever (wrapped in cloth so you don't scratch the frame) between the chainstay and the chainwheel and apply a little mechanical advantage. Most modern chainrings are surprisingly flexible.
- If this does not work, see the section on breaking a chain.
- Suggest that the person get a Third Eye chain watcher to prevent this in the future.

#### **Broken Derailleur Cable**

If the rear derailleur cable breaks, the derailleur will automatically shift to the smallest cog. You have three options:

- Leave it in the smallest cog and ride in the biggest gear. You don't want to ride too far in the small chainwheel and small cog combination or you can damage the cog.

- Move the chain to a larger cog by pushing inward on the derailleur and tightening the high-limit screw on the derailleur until it lines up with that cog. You may have to fiddle with the limit screws to get it to run quietly. This will give you at least two middle-range gears with a decent chain line by using the front derailleur.
- Push the derailleur inward while turning the cranks and when you reach the cog you want, place a stick between the derailleur cage plates to stabilize the spring tension.

### ***Broken Brake Cable***

There are various ways to attempt to repair broken brake cables but none of which is reliable for a road bike.

- If the front brake cable breaks; call a cab.
- If the rear brake cable breaks you should be able to make it home very carefully since you still have over 66% of your braking power. Do not attempt to ride in a paceline with only one brake.

### ***Breaking a Chain***

You will have to break and reset a chain if the rear derailleur jockey wheels jam or the tension spring breaks, the chain becomes lodged between the chainwheel and chainstay, or the chain itself breaks.

- Campagnolo 10-speed chains require a special pemralink with two pins and a proprietary tool. Do not attempt to repair these chains with a normal chain tool.
- Shimano hyperglide chains require a new “subpin” or rivet each time the chain is broken. If the person is not carrying an extra subpin, do not attempt to break the chain and reconnect since the chain will be significantly weakened and could brake under pressure. These chains have HG embossed on the links.
- All other chains, barring those with gold master links, can be disconnected and re-assembled using the same rivet and normal chain tool.
- The chain tool has two sets of teeth for holding the chain. The set farthest from the chain tool handle is the set used for pushing and resetting the rivet. The set closest to the handle is used to make adjustments to stiff links.

### ***Truing a wheel***

If a wheel has a *mild* wobble you can adjust by adjusting the spoke tension.

- Check the wheel for loose spokes and tie a blade of grass around each one to mark it.
- Turn the bike upside down so that the brake pads become truing calipers.
- Tighten all loose spokes
- Spin the wheel and look to see where it scrapes one of the brake pads.

Truing a wheel is not rocket science but is difficult to explain without pictures. Refer to Chapter 6 Section C of *Zinn & The Art of Road Bike Maintenance* for a concise explanation.

## **3.6 Safety**

### ***Err on the side of safety***

If you have any doubts always err on the side of safety.

- Don't try sprint through red lights.
- Don't try to beat a car to a turn.
- Don't take a shortcut down a one-way street.

### ***Wear a helmet***

No political discussions. Just wear a helmet.

- The pros don't wear them.

- From Tyler Hamilton, U.S. Postal on his latest accident.  
*I've never hit the pavement that hard in my life. Luckily, I was wearing my helmet - which broke into pieces upon impact. I'm more than indebted to the guys at Giro for keeping my noggin intact - on this occasion and many others too numerous to count. This experience is a good lesson for everyone - so be smart and protect your head.*

#### ***Put new riders in the back***

If this is someone's first ride with the club you may want to ask them to stay off the back for the first part of the ride so you can assess their riding skills and they can see how the group operates.

#### ***Don't bunch up a stop lights***

- Keep in line at traffic lights.
- Don't creep on the right side of cars.

#### ***Take a lane***

- Form a double file line and take a lane if you are not obstructing traffic.
- Entrance to the Madison Avenue bridge.

#### ***Turn as a group***

- Keep the line tight so that the group turns as one unit. This discourages impatient drivers from trying to cut in.
- Know and obey the traffic laws

#### ***Use your contacts***

- Identify the experienced riders in the group.
- Ask them to assist in keeping the group together.
- Ask them to work with the less experienced riders.

#### 4. Scouting/Mapping a route:

To start off, all you really need are a few good routes out of Central Park, the rest is easy. All the standard routes are described in our NYCC ride library. (<http://nycc.org/rides.html#library>) Below a few suggested routes to get to

##### **New Jersey:**

Riverside, Saint Nicholas to the George Washington Bridge, then Hudson Terrace to 9W or 505, or Summit to Clinton to 501.

##### **Westchester:**

Western Westchester - Broadway to Route 9.

Central Westchester - Madison to the Grand Concourse, Webster to Scarsdale.

Eastern Westchester and Connecticut: Madison, the Grand Concourse, Bedford Park to Shore Road.

##### **Long Island:**

Queensborough bridge, Queens Boulevard, Union Turnpike to Marathon and the Long Island Expressway service road.

- Once you have reached the outer limits of our great city, chose a destination you always wanted to go to. Grab either a detailed Hagstrom map, or a more general Rand McNally map to chart your course . . . and you're on your way!
- As can be expected, having previously cycled in the area helps tremendously as it will provide a foundation of country roads that you will eventually tie together into a route. Once you find the best way there, you must find a "bike friendly" lunch stop; which invariably means a deli or sandwich stop with a good selection of food, drinks, and rest room(s).
- Our best ride leaders did most of their scouting this way; finding a destination and joining the roads to get there. It helps to have a good cycling companion, as scouting is an imperfect science requiring many revisions, and having a friend along makes it a lot more fun.
- Additionally, what sometimes looks good on paper is seldom as desirable in reality. Mapping companies sometimes erroneously assume that you are riding a jeep instead of a bike, so don't be surprised to find a road that has more rocks than pavement, or requires Lance Armstrong-like skills to climb.
- Although many routes require between three and five scouting trips for perfection, it's always worth the effort. You will soon realize that scouting is the best part of leading a ride, since it allows you the opportunity to create the experience that countless future riders will eventually enjoy.