

## **BUNCH RIDING**

### **WHY RIDE IN A BUNCH?**

- **Reduced effort for higher speed**

Well organised bunches can ride further and faster than solo riders or non-organised groups. You can expend up to 30 per cent less energy by riding sheltered in a bunch as riders in front of you overcome the wind resistance. Air or wind resistance slows the speed of riding. By taking turns at the front, all riders can share the effort and longer distances can be covered. Stronger riders can 'tow' the bunch by taking longer turns at the front and sitting in the bunch can help along weaker riders.

- **The company**

Riding in a bunch is much more sociable than being out on your own. In a bunch you ride close to other riders and, since you are expending less energy, you can talk to others more easily because you are not puffing as hard. You also have someone to enjoy that caffeine hit with after the ride.

- **Safety**

Riding in a bunch can help to improve safety by making the entire group much more visible to other traffic, especially from behind. Always remember that recreational riding should put more emphasis on safety than performance.

- **Discipline**

The discipline of riding in a well-organised bunch means your efforts are better controlled and makes it easier to stay focussed.

- **It's fun**

Don't forget why we are cycling in the first place. We can't all be Lance Armstrong, so just relax and enjoy this wonderful sport. (Aggression or disrespect will not be tolerated in this program.)

**However:** To make bunch riding work successfully, each member must be committed to the bunch. If done incorrectly, bunch riding can be hazardous for riders and other road users. Everyone needs to know the rules for everyone's safety. When done successfully, riding in a bunch is efficient, safe and highly satisfying.

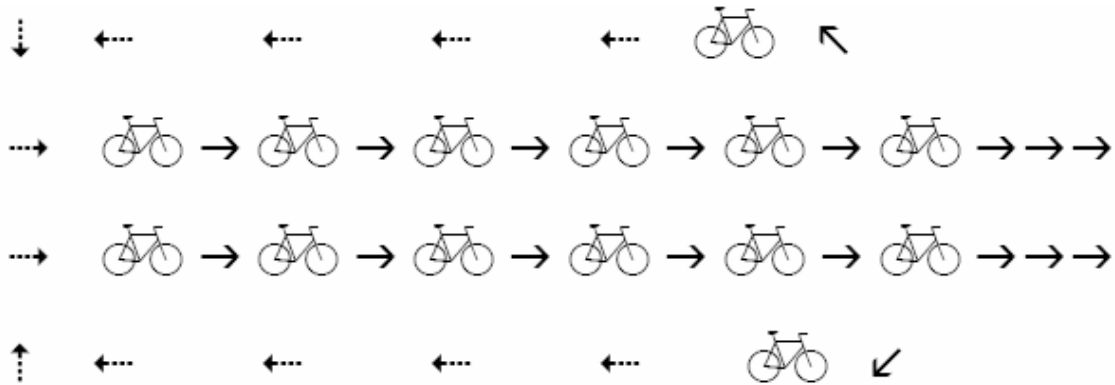
### **BUNCH FORMATION**

The most common formation for bunch riding is to ride two abreast, effectively pairs of riders following each other. The gap between your front wheel and the wheel in front should be approx. 30—60cm. Avoid “half-wheeling” and try to ride level with your partner. Riders will take turns at the front, acting as a windbreak for the rest of the bunch.



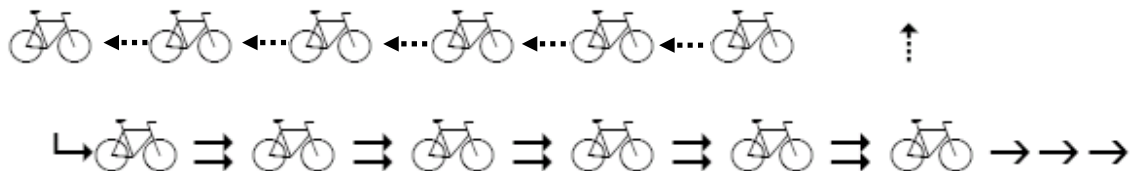
## ROLLING OVER

The most common way of swapping the lead is rolling over. The lead riders move to side allowing next riders through. The former leaders soft pedal until they reach the back of bunch and join in again, to become tail-enders. When you hit the front you will be using more energy. Try to maintain the speed without increasing it.



## PACE LINE

An alternative to rolling over is the pace line, which is often used in racing. One line of riders moves slightly faster than the other. When you reach the front, pull over to the slower lane and soft-pedal as you move towards the rear again.



## FRONT AND REAR RIDERS

In a bunch, the front and rear riders have special responsibility. When you are on the front or rear, you are not only responsible for yourself but everyone in the group.

When you are leading the bunch, try to monitor potential problems and give plenty of warning of impending stops or changes of pace. Clearly signal turns. Point and call out hazards such as potholes, debris or parked cars. Make sure you know where you are going. If you don't, either ask early or pull off to the back.

If you are at the back of the bunch, you are effectively the rear-vision mirror for everyone. Keep a lookout behind for overtaking traffic. Let everyone know with a call of "car/truck/bus back!" On narrow or winding roads it may be difficult for a car to pass a bunch riding two abreast. If a car is clearly stuck behind the bunch it is your responsibility to let everyone know, and perhaps direct the bunch to ride single file by calling out "single!" Also, be aware of what is happening within the bunch – has someone dropped off the pace and been left behind? Make sure the message is passed up the line.

Riders in the middle have the responsibility of passing on the calls and signals from front and rear riders down the line.

## **DO**

### **1. Point out obstacles**

Point out obstacles such as loose gravel, broken glass, holes, rocks or debris on the road, calling out "hole" etc as well as pointing is helpful in case someone is not looking at your hand when you point. It is just as important to pass the message on, not just letting those close to the front know. Another obstacle is a parked car, call out "car" and sweep your hand around your back to let people behind know. Point out runners or walkers on bike tracks and slower bikes if you are passing someone on the road.

### **2. Speak to each other**

Let others know what you are doing. If you are pulling off, letting someone in, have dropped a chain or got a flat tyre yell it out so everyone knows what you are doing. If someone is doing something dangerous, like pulling out of the bunch when a car is overtaking, yell it out. Very importantly: PASS ON CALLS!

### **3. Look ahead and around**

Do not become obsessed with the rear wheel directly in front of you. Try to focus four or five riders up the line so that any 'problem' will not suddenly affect you. Scan the road ahead for potential problems, red lights etc, and BE READY. Be aware of others around you.

### **4. Obey the road rules**

Especially at traffic lights - if you are on the front, and the lights turn orange, they will definitely be red by the time the back of the bunch goes through the intersection. You will endanger the lives of others if you run it.

### **5. Pedal downhill**

Pedal downhill when at the front of the bunch. If you do not pedal, the riders drafting behind you will have to put on their brakes. If you are at the front and feel you need to coast down a hill, then it is time to peel off and let someone else have a turn.

## **DON'T**

### **1. Do not ride in an erratic manner**

Any sudden movement by you will probably cause another rider to take avoiding action. The more riders in a group the more exaggerated the effect of any careless moves.

### **2. Do not overlap wheels**

Overlapping your front wheel with the rear wheel of the bike in front of you is the most common cause of bunch accidents.



### **3. Do not surge when it is your turn at the front**

When riding in a group the aim is to keep the same pace. When it is your turn at the front, roll past the lead rider without accelerating. Similarly when you are the lead rider and your turn is finished ease up and let the next rider roll through maintaining the same speed. Only the rider pulling off should be changing their speed.

### **4. Do not panic**

Do not panic if you brush shoulders, hands or bars with another rider. You are more likely to fall from an over-correction or panicked swerve. If someone swerves into you, stick out your elbows, try to stay relaxed in your upper body to absorb any bumps and gently push them away. This is a part of riding in close bunches and is quite safe provided riders do not panic, brake or change direction.

### **5. Do not prop when you stand out of the saddle**

Many riders, even the experienced ones, freewheel momentarily when they first get out of the saddle to go over a rise or a hill. When doing this, the bike is forced backwards. This can cause chaos in a tightly bunched group of riders. The sensation of the rider in front coming back at you is unpleasant and can cause crashes. Try to keep forward pressure on the pedals when you get out of the saddle, and stand gently, to avoid this situation.

### **6. When climbing hills, avoid following a wheel too closely**

Allow for others' bad habits. Give room and be ready for a rider to prop as they get out of the saddle. This can often catch a rider who is following too closely, resulting in a fall from a wheel touch.

### **7. Do not hog the front**

Some riders are in the habit of getting to the front and then just sitting there for the whole ride. This is selfish as it means others do not get a go, and in addition it makes for a boring ride. Time at the front will depend on the situation – sometimes it will be a second or two, sometimes 30 seconds or a minute. If you are tired or struggling with the pace, have a very short turn – you don't need to be a hero. On occasion, traffic or road conditions will not allow you to pull off the front for a while.

### **8. Do not use your aero bars in a bunch ride**

Never use your aero bars in a bunch ride - not even if you are at the front. Using aero bars means that your hands are away from the brakes. Aero bars are for time trial or non-draft triathlon use only. You will not be allowed to race with aero bars on your bike.

#### Compiled from the following sources:

Brisbane City Council <http://www.ourbrisbane.com/activeandhealthy/recreation/cycling/bunch/>

Canberra Cycling Club <http://www.canberracyclingclub.org.au>

Rare Indigo Management [www.rareindigo.biz](http://www.rareindigo.biz)

TVCC <http://www.vikingcycling.org.au/general/info.asp#BIKESAFE>

