



Birmingham Bicycle Club

Ride Leader Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in leading a ride for the Birmingham Bicycle Club! Group rides are a major offering of our club. Ride leaders provide the opportunity for riders of all abilities to enjoy this activity, so by choosing to be a ride leader, you are providing your club with an invaluable service.

A goal of the BBC is to offer rides on Saturdays and Sundays every weekend of the year, and on weeknights during daylight savings time. Ideally, multiple rides at varying levels of ability would be offered on the weekends as often as possible. And preferably, on long rides (those greater than 40 miles) two leaders would be available—one to lead and one to sweep at the back. So, by volunteering to lead rides, you are helping accomplish these goals.

There are some general aspects of ride leadership to be aware of. These guidelines are meant to help you make group riding an enjoyable and safe experience for both you and your riders.

Choosing a ride:

Choose a ride you are familiar with and enjoy. You are setting the tone for the ride, *so you should feel comfortable* with the route. You don't have to come up with a ride on your own--most riders are willing to share rides they've done. You can ask any ride leader for help with a route you like. Consider the start location and any factors that may affect the ride, for instance, a church parking lot on a Sunday morning. Check activities in the

community that may affect traffic in the area as well. (Tannehill Days, Homestead Hollow in Springville, Talledega, etc.)

Scheduling a ride:

Scheduling a ride is easy using the BBC interactive calendar. Simply click on the date you'd like to post a ride. If you do not already have a username activated, click on the Register for an Account and create a login. Once your username and password have been registered, you are ready to proceed. You're ready do add an event. Key fields are self explanatory. Begin by naming your ride. Usually it will be an indication of the location of the ride. Other fields include:

- Date, start time and location of ride
- Distance.
- Description of the ride that will enable the club member to determine if this is an appropriate ride for them. Describe features of the ride such as terrain, pace, type of climbs, minimum temperature, number of rest stops, if map provided, leader's policy on slower or faster riders, etc.

EXAMPLE:

Saturday, January 05, 2002 07:00 AM

Breakfast at Bogue's 20 Mi. Palisades, Homewood

An easy paced jaunt through Southside to refuel at one of Birmingham's best weekend breakfast stops. After breakfast we'll return through familiar residential roads in Crestline, Homewood, and Edgewood. The Palisades is on the south side of Red Mountain and Bogue's in on the north, so you can expect some serious climbing. Don't let hill-a-phobia keep you away; we'll take hills slowly. No map, the ride will stay together and the ride leader will wait at all turns 'till everybody catches up. Bogue's don't take American Express; or anything else besides cold hard cash. Bring a bike lock if you have one.

To get to the ride start: From intersection of I-59/20 and I-65 take I-65 south to exit 256 (Oxmoor Rd.) At the fourth traffic light turn left into Palisades Shopping Center. Park in front of Chi Chi's pizza at the far side of the lot well away from the stores.

All Riders Buddy Heerten 991-6154

- Ride Classification (see below).

Ride Classifications:

Expert: Rides for those who enjoy riding substantial distances, or significant hills, or a sustained brisk pace or all of the above. Not intended for the average recreational rider.

Experienced: Rides for those who usually enjoy a ride of 35 miles or more, and who are comfortable navigating by map if separated from the ride leader.

Sociable (Average): Rides designed to be kinder and gentler. The ride leader will usually average less than 13 mph., and will be attentive to the slower members of the group. No one will be dropped off the back of the pack.

Novice/All Riders: Suitable for beginners. A ride leader usually rides with the slowest rider, and questions are welcome. No one will be dropped.

- Indicate rest stops (if any). Remember that the average and sociable riders will require more regrouping and rest stops.
- Indicate if maps will be provided. **THE MAPS MUST BE READABLE. THE RIDER WHO IS SEPARATED FROM THE GROUP MUST BE ABLE TO NAVIGATE FROM YOUR MAP. REMEMBER, NOT EVERYONE IS FAMILIAR WITH THE AREA IN WHICH YOU ARE RIDING.** You can use cue sheets if you want but a map should also be provided, giving a rider the option to take a shortcut back, or otherwise navigate apart from the ride if necessary.
- List directions to the ride start. If it is a ride that has been done before, the ride captain may have that information.
- Provide a contact phone number. Include a mobile or cell phone number if you don't mind providing it, since ride conditions may change and members may not be able to reach a leader at home.
- Add anything else you'd like--make it as interesting or amusing as you like. This is supposed to be fun. The ride captain will help with text and details if desired.
- Indicate policy regarding late arrivals. This is up to the ride leader. For instance, in the ride description, "Ride will begin at 10:00a.m. sharp". Or "Leader will wait no longer than 10 minutes for late arrivals".

Day of a ride:

ANY CONDITIONS THAT ARE CONSIDERED UNSAFE FOR CYCLING ARE REASONS TO CANCEL A RIDE. It is up to the ride leader to make that decision. However, if you do cancel, out of courtesy to those who may show up, please report to the ride start to announce the cancellation.

Things to take with you:

- Sign up sheet, release and waiver of liability form to be signed by all riders.
- Pen
- BBC brochures
- Maps and cue sheets

You *may* wish to bring the following items with you, BUT THESE ARE **NOT** the responsibility of the ride leader.

- Repair equipment, such as patch kit, pump, spare tire, tools, etc...
- Basic first-aid equipment, such as antibiotic ointment, cleansing wipes
- Sunscreen
- cell phone

Arrive at the ride start promptly. If you are unable to do the ride as scheduled, please either get a substitute, or have someone available at the ride start to announce the cancellation.

As riders arrive, welcome them and introduce yourself.

Be aware of those you recognize as new to the group and introduce them to others. This may be their first group ride and this may be their first impression of the BBC!

Prep your bike and gear for the ride early, in case others need your help.

All riders must wear helmets.

Start the ride promptly. Some people may have other plans after the ride, and usually have a time frame in mind. Ideally the ride should depart within 15 minutes of the scheduled time. How to handle late-comers is up to the discretion of the ride leader, but remember this is a scheduled group ride and your responsibility is to those that are gathered. You might encourage the late-comer to join as quickly as possible, ask the group if they mind waiting, or offer the rider a map to follow the group. Situations vary—use common sense as the situation dictates.

Suggested script for the start of the ride

- Announce that this is a BIRMINGHAM BICYCLE CLUB ride.
- Introduce yourself as the ride leader.
- Distribute maps/cue sheets.
- Review the route and known hazards on the route. Mention relevant safety concerns such as heavy traffic, steep descents, etc...
- Indicate where the rest stops are.
- If you want the riders to regroup at rest stops or turns, indicate that. You set the tone for the ride. If you want the riders to remain together,

communicate that expectation to them. If faster riders attend a ride with a slower pace, you may indicate that they are welcome to go ahead but the ride will be led as advertised. On longer rides it will be difficult to stay together, and it is probably unrealistic to expect them to do so. You can regroup at the rest stops.

- Announce that riders are expected to obey Alabama motor vehicle traffic regulations.
 - Stopping at all stop signs and traffic lights
 - Using hand signals
 - Riding no more than double-file, and single-file in traffic
- Emphasize safety, asking riders to ride courteously and predictably.
 - Point out or call out road hazards
 - Signal or call out turns
 - Call out and signal that you are slowing and stopping
 - Call out “car back,” “car up,” etc...
 - Avoid getting too close to or overlapping another riders wheel.
 - Look before changing position in a group and make sure the lane is clear before merging back in.
 - Ride 2-3 feet from the edge of the road to avoid debris and have room to maneuver if being passed.
 - When stopping to regroup, always pull OFF the road!!***
- Always perform the “ABC quick-check”. *See League of American Bicyclists sheet that follows for a complete reference. A briefer version would be done at the ride.*
- Go around the group and do introductions.
- Indicate where the ride is pulling out, point out the first turns, and tell where you will be during the ride (lead from the rear, in front, etc.)

During a ride:

- ***Ideally***, on long rides (those of 40 miles or more), there would be two ride leaders—one to lead, and one to sweep at the back. You may designate someone that shows up to act as second ride leader—someone familiar with the route. This is also a good plan to have if there are riders of varied abilities on the ride—someone will be in the back with the slower ones.
- Follow the route plan.

- Lead the ride as written in the calendar.
- If you change route or regroup points, make certain that all riders are aware of the change.
- If there are problems, address them early. Use common sense. You may address the issue or ask someone to leave the ride if they are riding in an unsafe manner or presenting a danger to others. This is very uncommon—most riders try to ride safely, but do not hesitate to address what you consider a danger to the group.
- Try to stay with the slowest rider or delegate a volunteer to stay with them. If a rider has chosen a ride beyond his or her abilities, unless someone is willing to accompany him or her back to the ride start, stay with him or her. Decide on a plan for them to safely get back to the ride start.
- Don't abandon a rider. There is a distinction between abandoning a rider and allowing a rider (presumably familiar with the area) to depart from the group when he can't/won't keep pace and/or chooses to go his/her own way. The ride leader should request that they should be informed when anyone decides to split off. There is also an assumption that those who show up for group rides have done so as responsible adults. There are practical limits to the degree of responsibility a ride leader can assume. As with everything, use common sense to negotiate these occurrences.
- If there is a physical or mechanical problem, do your best to resolve it before continuing the ride. If you can't resolve it and safety is an issue, suggest the rider pull off the road until help can be arranged.
- Be aware of traffic around your group and alert them accordingly.
- Ride according to the principles of vehicular cycling.

References:

(Effective Cycling by John Forrester)

(Street Smarts by John Allen)

- Be courteous, friendly, informative, and attentive.
Add loyal, reverent, and prepared! ☺
- If a rider is injured, **DO NOT ATTEMPT** to move him or her unless it is determined he or she is not seriously injured. In such a case, post other riders on the road to warn oncoming vehicles or solicit assistance. Contact emergency personnel when necessary.

After a ride:

- Account for all riders.
- Thank them and ask for comments on the ride.

- Pat yourself on the back for a job well done! It is your willingness to lead a ride that supports our club. Always remember that people do appreciate your time and effort.

For a complete review of safe and appropriate riding practices, it is recommended that the ride leader review materials provided by the League of American Bicyclists for the Road I Effective Cycling course, and ideally, take the course when offered.