

TCMC Group Riding Primer

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Roles and Responsibilities:

It's best to start with the definition of the roles we play while on a group ride. Remember, a group ride is a team effort. Your participation directly affects those around you.

Road Captain:

The Road Captain is in charge of the ride and the destinations of the ride. He or she will have designed a route, make the maps, and, if needed, will signal other riders to mark corners or block intersections during the ride. The Road Captain is the first bike in line. The Road Captain will Pre-Ride the route and Post a route map. The RC must be certain the route and distance is compatible with the club's abilities, see that rides leave at or near the designated times. The RC will appoint Tail Riders and Corner Guards/Blockers. The RC will maintain a speed that will allow the riders to stay together.

Wing Man and Assistant Road Captain:

The Wing Man is chosen by the Road Captain. This person rides right behind the Road Captain and assists the Road Captain. The Wing Man helps with managing the ride and is second in command. The Wing Man can set Corner Guards and continues leading the ride in the event of the Road Captain's inability to lead the ride. The Assistant Road Captain is a title earned through training and approved by the Road Captain. The Assistant Road Captain can lead official club rides assigned by the Road Captain.

Tail Rider:

The Tail Rider is a kind of safety officer and is third in command. The Tail Rider naturally takes up the rear of the formation. The Tail rider also takes note of rider problems and riding behavior and reports to the Road Captain. The Tail Rider comes to the front of the formation at stops to report any observations. Tail rider will hold back when approaching Corner Guards signaling them with a horn, wave, or blinking light, to let them know it is OK for them to fall back in line. The Tail rider does not stop if someone breaks down. In case of a breakdown, the Tail Rider will indicate to an assistant TR or the last bike in line to leave formation and pass the formation and contact the RC. Or, employ the honking method to stop the ride.

Corner Guard / Blocker:

The Road Captain will choose who will be a Corner Guard / Blocker before the ride. The RC may designate a specific place for the Corner Guard to stop, locate near the specified place to insure the proper direction. Leave your turn signal on to indicate the direction of travel of the group. Corner Guards must stay at the assigned spot until the Tail-rider signals you to leave the mark, and then do so when it is safe to pull into traffic and fall in line with the group just ahead of the Tail Rider. If you leave your spot before the Tail Rider arrives, you will ruin the ride for all those following. After returning to the formation, return to your original space in line as soon as it is safe to pass the line. BLOCKERS, as directed by the RC, will enter an intersection and stop. You will halt oncoming traffic, allowing the club to proceed safely. AFTER the Tail rider passes through the intersection, the Blockers will resume their place in the formation. Corner Guards and Blockers are rarely used.

Rider:

Always repeat the hand signal started by the road captain so even the last rider knows the signal. Show up for rides in time for the pre-ride meeting with a full tank and a mechanically sound bike. If you have special medical problems you MUST tell the Road Captain. As a rider with this club, you are responsible to behave in a general socially accepted manner. If you drink too much and you are obviously impaired, at the least, you will be sent to the rear, at worst you will be told (not asked) to leave the formation. If you find it hard to keep your space in line, go to the rear. If you feel the need to race up and down the formation or weave in and out of line, group riding is not for you and you will be told to leave. Personal confrontations should be dealt with privately and away from the club. If you can't do that, it becomes the Road Captain's business and the RC will resolve the situation in a necessary manner.

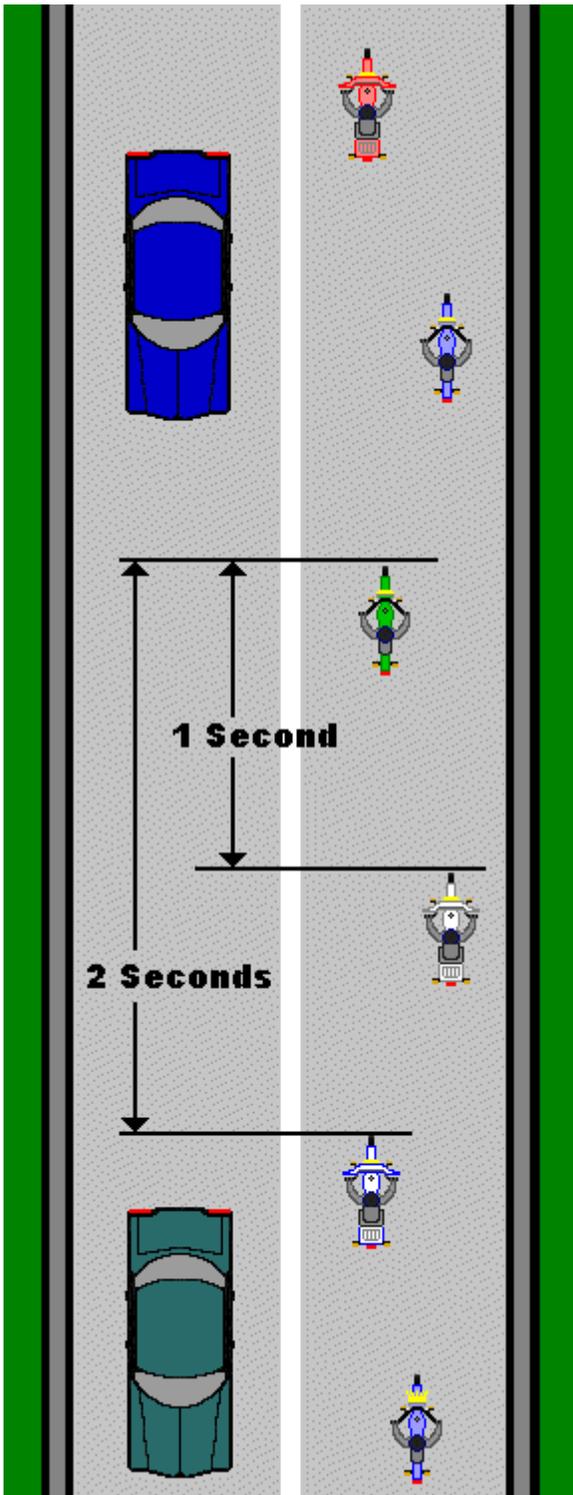
Riding in Formation

Our group rides are in a staggered formation.

As you can see from the illustration, the RC is at the front of the group. On major highways such as Interstates, US Highways, and State Highways, it is safer for a group to maintain a well-disciplined formation.

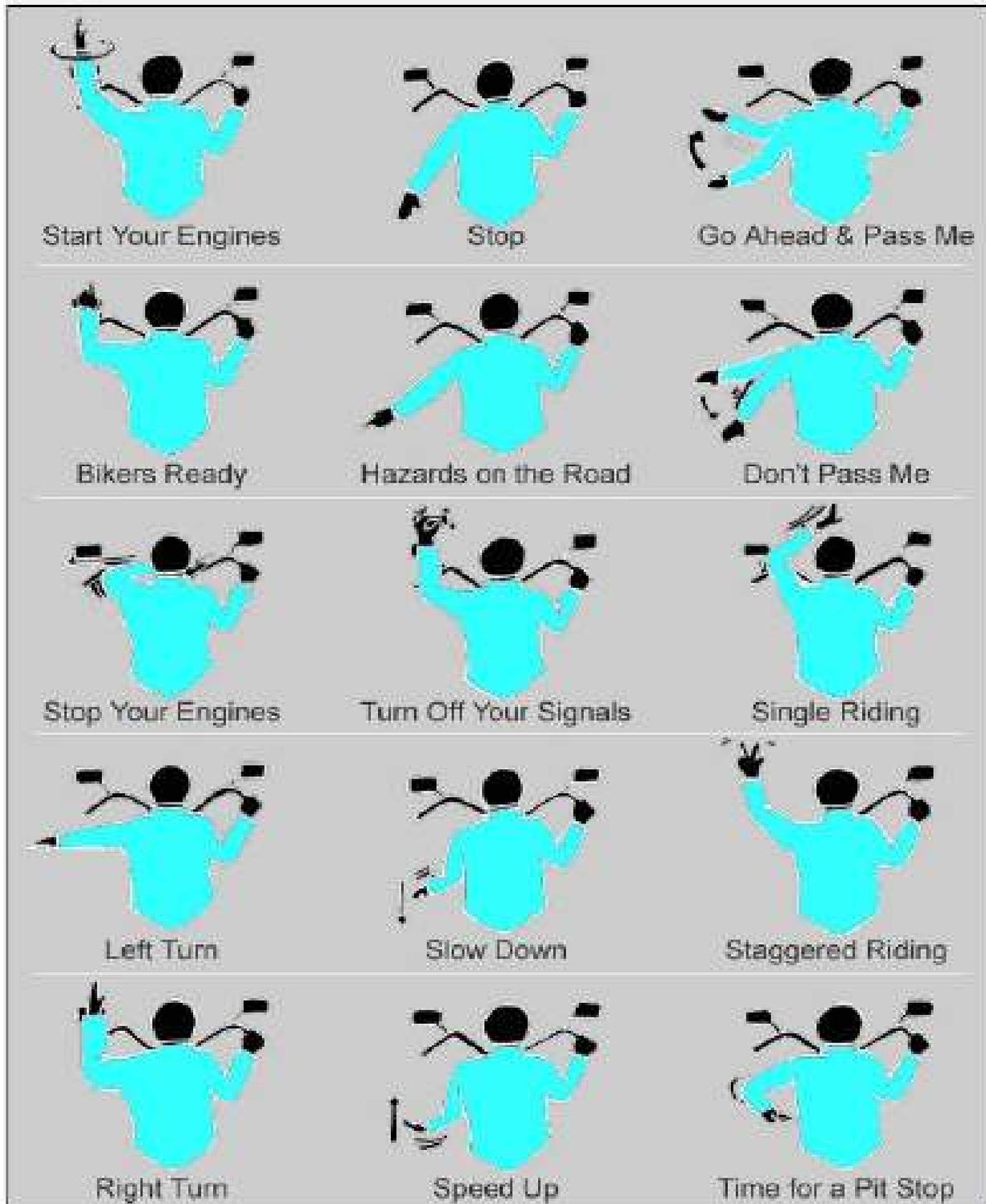
When not to ride in formation

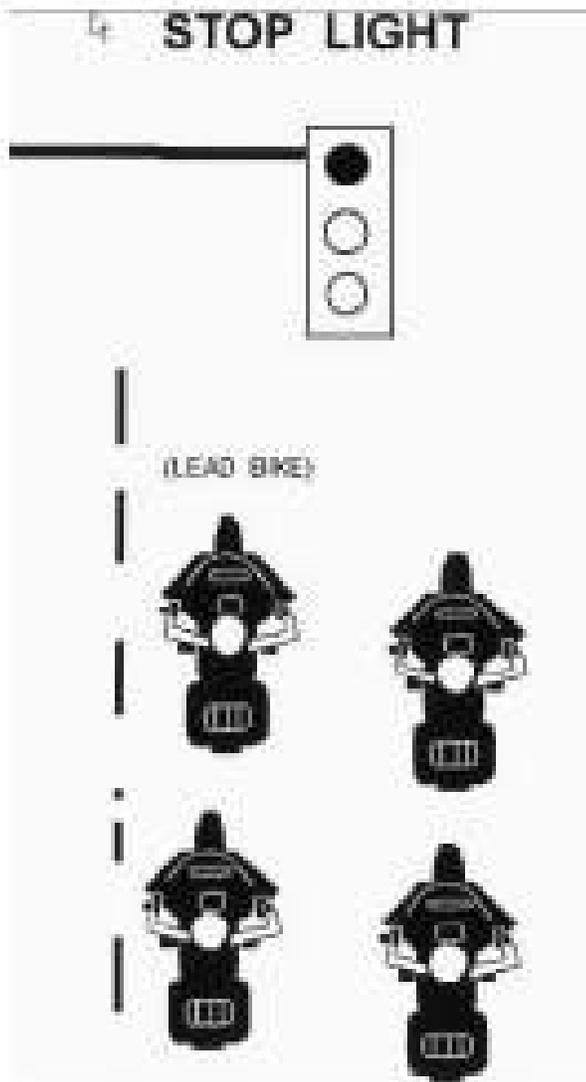
- If the RC signals for a single file line
- When going through curves, in formation, widen the gap between you and the bike in front of you, go through the curve. Reform after the turn or series of turns.
- In rural areas, on country roads, ride at your own pace. Formation riding is not needed. The RC waits at strategic places for the group to come back together.



Hand Signals

When riding, it is important for riders to communicate to others. Turn signals work great for their purpose, but for a number of other things, you need to use hand signals. If you see the RC giving a hand signal, you should repeat it, so that the riders behind you can see as well. It is particularly important if there is something on the road you need to avoid.





Stopping at Stop Signs and Lights

When we stop at an intersection controlled by a stop sign or a red light, we compress the formation by closing forward and stopping next to each other.

As we pull away from a stop sign with uncontrolled cross traffic, we move "4" bikes or more at a time. Reforming the group upon clearing the intersection.

At a Green light we move as soon as possible, telescoping out into formation while trying not to fragment the group.

Sometimes, at a 4 way stop sign intersection, the Road Captain will assign "Blockers" to stop in the middle of the cross lanes, stopping the cars until the Tail Rider goes through. A Blocker is a position recruited by the Road Captain from the experienced riders. They are seldom used.

Remember! Group Riding is a TEAM EFFORT

Most Common Questions

If the rider in front of me is riding too slowly, can I pass them?

The best time to change position is when the group stops at a stop sign.

If we are on a big road and in formation, and someone has left enough space that multiple cars or trucks can get in our line, try signaling this person to close up. If that doesn't work, signal the bikes behind you, move into the next lane, passing "Slow Poke". The Tail Rider will stay behind the slow rider.

On Rural Roads, wait for a stop sign pull up to the RC to get repositioned. NEVER blast past the group to get from the back of the group to the front. If you are having a problem with another person's driving, please let the RC know.

Some cars have split the group. Should I pass them?

If it is safe and legal to do so, pass the cars. Don't worry too much about being separated, as the RC will wait for the group at the next stop sign, or turn.

I'm having a problem with another rider, or need a restroom (or tree), gas, bike problem, ect.?

Tell the Road Captain or Wing Man or Tail Rider ASAP. The RC stops frequently, honk, yell or ride to the front at these stops and tell us what's up. If you decide to wait and just "talk about him/her later" you could endanger others.

I need to pull over and can't wait. How do I tell the RC?

Honk your horn, flash your bright lights, use the "pit stop" hand signal to others near you. Do these things all at once. Everyone around you should start honking and blinking until everyone on the ride is doing it. The RC will see this and pull over at the very next relatively safe place. It better be VERY important! This is like pulling a fire alarm.

General Tips on Group Riding

SHOW UP ON TIME (15-30min. early)!!

ON TIME IS NOT 5 MINUTES BEFORE THE RIDE!!

- Show up to the ride with a FULL TANK of gas.
- Keep to the 1-2 second rule when following others
- Alert the people behind you to hazards on the road