Ride Leader Best Practice.

For our club to be a success we need people willing to step up.

Although the ethos of group riding exists on all club rides, this guidance has been written primarily for ride leaders of any entry level club ride. Ride leaders may have their own idea of how rides should be ridden. This list is designed to standardise the club's entry level rides so all new members ride to the same standards.

* Non-Members – Non-members may participate on a club ride if it is for a trial on no more than 3 occasions before deciding to join or not. If you want to organise a ride and invite non-members and members you’re welcome to do so but if you publish it on Spond then please make it clear on Spond that this is a private ride and not a club ride but there is an open invitation to Tyneside Vagabonds members.
* Our adult group rides are open to anyone over the age of 18, under this age you must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian or in loco parentis

This looks more daunting than it actually is….most is just common sense. Please don’t let this put you off volunteering.

Before the day

* Plan a café stop, consider contacting with a café and inform them of the group arriving that day.
* Plan a route. Entry-level rides should be 25-30 miles max @ 12-13 mph. Suggested routes are available on [ridewithgps/find](https://ridewithgps.com/find#search/0/search%5Boffset%5D=0&search%5Bstart_distance%5D=50&search%5Bstart_location%5D=&search%5Bkeywords%5D=TVCC&search%5Blength_min%5D=0&search%5Blength_max%5D=500&search%5Belevation_min%5D=0&search%5Belevation_max%5D=10000&search%5Bsort_by%5D). A risk assessment should be made based on the ability of those riding.
* Advertise the ride on Spond in advance including any additional information, this will encourage more riders to come along in the knowledge of what to expect on the ride.
* It is the ride leader’s responsibility to check the weather forecast the day before the ride and to make an informed decision as to whether the ride will go ahead. Strong winds or the risk of frost / ice may be a reason to cancel a club ride.
* If a ride leader deems it unsafe for a group then they should post on Spond to notify club members that the ride is cancelled. Any club members who still wish to ride will do so as a private (non-club) ride and at their own risk.

On the day

* Review the weather forecast / road conditions on the day as above. A risk assessment for a group ride should be ongoing, including once the ride has started (for example if the roads prove to be icy). The ride leader can cancel a club ride at any point including after it has started, though clearly in such circumstances every attempt should be made to safely return to the starting point.
* Arrive in plenty of time and welcome any new members Arrive 10-15 minutes before the ride is due to start. Keep a lookout for anyone looking ‘lost’ and introduce yourself as the ride leader - the membership secretary will normally advise the ride leader in advance of any new members expected to turn up but it is always possible someone will just turn up on the day.
* Welcome any new members and explain to them what will happen on the ride.
  + The pace/ speed of the ride.
  + That the group stays together with no-one left behind.
  + That new members are welcome to try out up to three club rides before deciding if they would like to join the club.
* Carry out a headcount. Groups should not exceed 12-14 riders. This makes a group easier to control and is considerate of other road users. If there are more than 14 riders then the group will need to split. A Ride Leader can decide to take a smaller group if they wish.
* Ensure that any under 18’s remain in a group with their parent. Both groups can use the same route and café stop but keep the groups well separated to allow traffic to pass safely.
* Where multiple groups of different speeds are setting off from the same location, it makes sense for the fastest group(s) to set off first to reduce the likelihood of the groups meeting on the road.
* Appoint a reliable club rider to be the last rider in the group. This rider should be confident to shout up if the pace is too fast for someone, or if someone has a mechanical or other issue for which the group needs to wait. Alternatively appoint someone as a reliable pacemaker so that the ride leader can ride at the back.
* Assess the riders joining your group. All riders must have a roadworthy bike and be appropriately dressed for the expected condition.
* Brief the riders. Let the riders know which direction you are setting off in and that they should let the group know if they are struggling with the pace or have a mechanical issue.
* When setting off, ensure everyone is ready and the group is together.

During the ride

* Once you set off keep the pace nice and easy until everyone has warmed up, keep a close eye on newcomers. Aim to match the speed as advertised. The pace may vary slightly depending on weather or how hilly the ride is, but the slowest rider should always be catered for. If a rider pushes the pace, don't be afraid to ask the rider to slow down, and explain why. If they persist then don’t be afraid to ask them to move to the rear of the group (and indeed to suggest they move to a more capable group next time if they wish to ride at a faster speed).
* If a rider half-wheels you at the front of the group then do not respond by increasing your pace as the other rider will simply ride faster. Instead, ask them to ride level with your handlebars.
* If a rider is struggling with the pace remember - anyone can have a bad day! Get the rider to sit in second or third wheel in the group – it is easier to keep a tired rider in the group when they are placed towards the front, whilst sheltered by other riders, and the pace on an uphill gradient can be matched to them.
* Make sure that the pace of the group on any uphill is kept low – it is better to keep the group together on a hill than to have to wait at the top. If a rider does get dropped on a hill then it is better to stop for them than to let them try to chase back on to the group – if they were dropped on a hill then they aren’t going to be able to ride fast enough on their own to catch the group after the hill.
* If the rider really is not going to be able to keep up with a reasonable speed for the group, then in consultation with the rider consider leaving an experienced rider to ride back with them. It is impossible to state here how to handle every permutation that may occur.
* Talk to new riders make them feel welcome. Talk to them about how to ride in a group - following a wheel to benefit from the slipstream of the rider in front, pointing out hazards, not riding in the gutter etc. Set an example by acting responsibly as an identifiable member of the club, being aware that other club members will copy your behaviour
* On rare occasions, a new rider may not have the physical ability to cope with the slowest paced club rides. It is important to inform these people at the end of a ride that they need to get their fitness up to a standard that will allow them to ride at this pace and then come back for another club ride. Historically riders have accepted this feedback and then returned a few weeks later to successfully take part in club rides and join the club. If this conversation does not take place then the rider will turn up for more club rides whilst unable to ride at the necessary pace for the ride to be enjoyable for others.

In Summary

We know this can be daunting, if you need help with the first few just ask. You will find the group very forgiving and will just be happy to be on the bike.

Keep the pace as advertised, get to a café, get home and have fun!