

Bunch Riding – Skills and Tips

Why Ride Together?

There are numerous advantages in riding in a bunch with other riders (in a peleton) over riding solo or with other riders not in a bunch:

- Reduced effort, higher speed. Well organized bunches can ride further and faster than solo riders or non-organized groups. You can expend up to 30% 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. Alone, if you double your speed you increase wind resistance 8 times. Riding at 45 kph is twice as hard as at 32kph. Shelter behind other riders in a well-organized bunch and this drag is reduced considerably. Rotating or sharing the lead means that the effort of breaking the wind (no not that wind) at the front of the group is shared amongst the whole group. This allows the whole group to travel at the same speed with less effort or to travel at a higher speed for the same effort.
- Someone to talk to. Riding in a group is much more sociable. In a well-organized bunch you can travel closer to other riders and, since you are expending less energy, you can talk to others more easily because you are not puffing as hard.
- More visible. A well-organized group can help to improve safety by making the group more visible especially from behind.
- Discipline. The discipline of riding in a well-organized bunch means your efforts are better controlled and makes it easier to stay focussed.

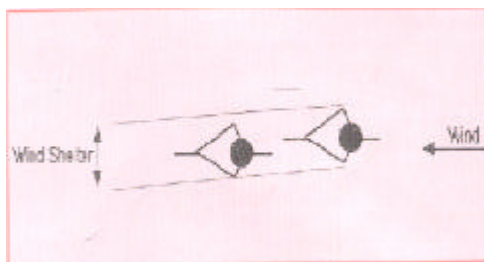
To make bunch riding work successfully, each member must be committed to the bunch or team. If done incorrectly, bunch riding can be hazardous for riders and other road users. When done successfully it is efficient, safe and highly satisfying.

How It Works- Starting Out

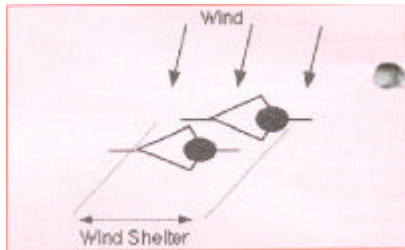
Start by practising with one other rider. Choose a flat quiet location and ride at a comfortable speed. While the lead rider maintains a smooth rhythm, try riding about one wheel length behind and slightly to one side. Don't stare at the wheel ahead, or you may become uncoordinated. Move your gaze from the wheel to the legs of the rider in front, then over their shoulder to the road ahead and back to the wheel.

When ready, the lead rider signals a change and moves slightly to the right, this is your cue to gently ease to the lead. As lead rider it's your job to scan the road ahead, call and point out obstacles. As you improve you will be able to ride closer together.

Paired Riding

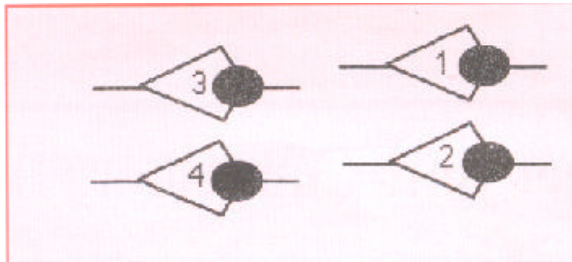


Into a head wind. Sit behind the lead rider and slightly to one side.



Into a side wind ride close together with your brake levers close to the lead riders hips.

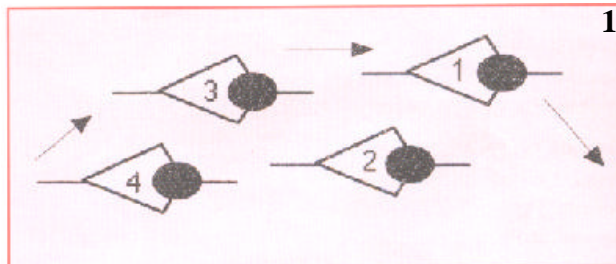
Group Riding and Changing the Lead



If road and traffic conditions favour riding two abreast, practise riding side by side about 30-40 cm apart

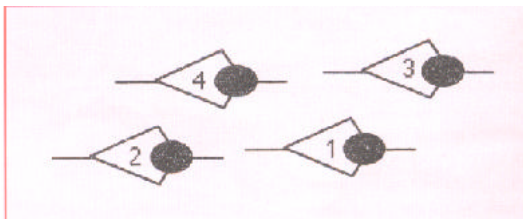
Changing the Lead.

To change the lead without going four wide use this technique:



1. The leading pair calls out “Change”

2. Rider Two eases slightly as Rider One gently moves to the outside front position.



3. Rider Four moves to the rear inside position and you have a brand new person to chat with!

When descending, open up the distance between bikes to a couple of lengths and continue pedalling. Cyclists don't like having to ride constantly under brakes.

When approaching a climb be careful, as riders tend to throw their bikes back as they stand on the pedals.

Remember to communicate with your partners: this includes the rear riders who need to inform riders to go single file if traffic is building behind or if large vehicles need to pass.

There are variations to this but this is good starting point and can varied as you become more experienced.

Rules for Bunch Riding

- 1. Be predictable with all actions.** Avoid sudden braking and changes of direction. Try to maintain a steady straight line. Remember that there are riders following closely behind. To slow down, gradually move out into the wind and slot back into position in the bunch. By putting your hands on the hoods on your brakes you can “sit up” and put more of your body in the wind to slow down slightly without using your brakes.
- 2. Point and call out any hazards on the road ahead.** The front riders are the eyes for the whole bunch. Those within the bunch cannot see the road ahead clearly so it is critical that those in front signal any hazards including slower riders, open car doors, parked cars, potholes and debris, drain grates etc.
- 3. Stay to the left when in front.** This leaves room for other riders and traffic to pass on the right. Always try to pass other riders on the right whenever possible.
- 4. Don't overlap wheels.** To avoid touching wheels when a rider in front veers unexpectedly, make sure no part of your front wheel overlaps the rear wheel of riders in front of you. It is easy to touch wheels in the event of a slight direction change or a gust of wind.
- 5. Avoid following the person in front too closely when climbing hills.** When rising out of the seat a cyclist often loses momentum causing sudden deceleration. This can catch the following rider by surprise and result in a fall due to a wheel touch.
- 6. Stay calm if contact is made with other riders.** If you stay relaxed in the upper body is easier to absorb any bumps from riders next to you.

Better Riding Tips

- 1. Avoid leaving gaps when following wheels.** Maximize your energy savings by staying close to the rider in front. Cyclists save about 30% of their energy at high speed by following a wheel.
- 2. Pedal downhill when at the front of the bunch.** Cyclists don't like descending constantly under brakes.
- 3. Be smooth with turns at the front of the group.** Avoid surges as this tends to break the group up. The group will travel quicker when turns are completed smoothly.