

## Suggestions for Group Rides New England Riders

The following guide is intended to cover the fundamentals of group riding. It is by no means a definitive source of information on the subject. For every group riding suggestion there are numerous exceptions. Learning to be a better rider or a better group rider is a continuous process that can take a lifetime. And as always, there is no substitute for good judgment.

***Notice:*** *NER is not an organization. Ride leaders are not trained experts at planning or leading group rides but rather just fellow riders who want to share their love of the road with other motorcyclists. As always, each rider is responsible for themselves and the operation of their motorcycle. "Ride your own ride" and "ride within your capabilities" are more than sayings. If you are ever uncomfortable on any ride for any reason, talk to the ride leader or drop out of the ride. You are responsible for your safety.*

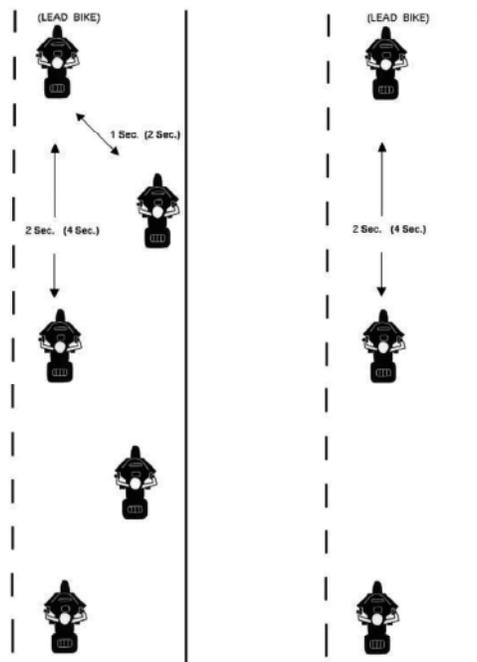
**Enjoy the ride and the friends you make along the way.**



## Suggestions for Group Rides New England Riders

1. Why ride in a group? Simply stated, because it is fun to be in a group of motorcycles on the road. Experiencing the ride with others and socializing during the rest, fuel and food stops builds a camaraderie that is unique with motorcyclists. It also provides safety advantages. A group is more visible (it has “mass”) and is predictable to other vehicles vs. a solo rider. In case of mechanical problems or an accident, there is another biker there to help. But mostly, it’s a lot of fun! (Note: if you are new to group riding tell the ride leader.)
2. New riders usually like to get a few thousand miles of experience before taking part in a group ride. Ask yourself if you are comfortable and in control of the motorcycle? Can you negotiate curves at posted speed limits, maintain your lane of travel and stop rapidly? When you’re ready, come join in the fun of group riding.
3. On time and ready – Plan to arrive at the designated ride start location with a full tank of gas. Arrive early enough to rest and use the facilities. Attend the pre-ride meeting and be ready to ride at the designated start time.
4. Formation
  - a. Staggered formation - it is advocated by multiple sources as the norm - not because it is comfortable but because it offers the best group safety.
    - i. Spacing – the standard timing is two seconds to the bike in front of you and one second to the bike in the adjacent lane. It provides space and time for avoidance maneuvers, crating a "mass" that is easily seen by other vehicle drivers and keeps the group compact. It is important to keep a tight formation in areas where there are other vehicles. When in rural areas, a more relaxed spacing is fine. It gives riders more time to look around and enjoy the scenery. However, remain close enough to see and pass on hand signals. To determine if your spacing is right, watch the bike in front of you pass an object and then count “one thousand one, one thousand two.” You should reach the same object when you say two.

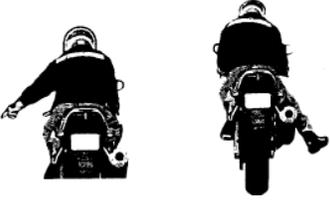
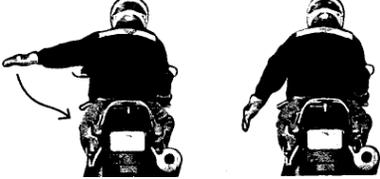
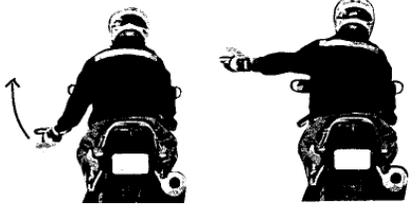
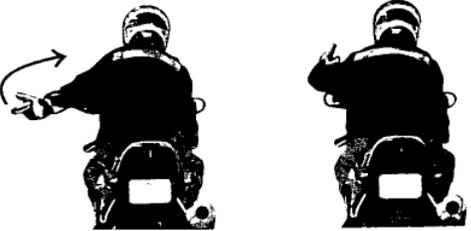
### Staggered Formation      Single File Formation



- ii. Stay in your lane. If riding in staggered formation think of the road as being split into three lanes - left, center, and right with riders in the left and right lanes. Drifting out of your lane takes away the time and space safety cushion. Safety always comes first however, so if you need to maneuver to avoid a hazard, etc., resume your normal staggered-formation position when it's safe to do so.
    - iii. Keeping a group all together - it is important for the group's safety, and it's fun to be in a bunch of bikes going down the road. However, there are worse things than a group getting split up. Use common sense and don't take extra risk for the sake of keeping the group together. (i.e. excessive speed to catch up, not providing a space for other vehicles to exit on a highway, cutting off another vehicle, etc.) Ride with your head.
    - iv. Keep scanning; don't fixate on the bike in front of you. The longer the ride duration the more important this becomes.
  - b. Single file - if the leader knows the road very well he/she may call for single file if they think that is best for the group. Most riders realize that on a narrow road single file is appropriate - or they stretch out their spacing - or both. Single file also works well on entering and exiting limited access highways. It provides the space and time between bikes that can be needed when negotiating a merge with traffic.
  - c. Side by side formation at stop signs & lights - come to a stop, two bikes abreast. This helps in getting a group of bikes through a stop as it allows two riders to look for cross traffic at the same time. Start up in the same staggered sequence that you were riding starting with the lead bike pulling out first. (Rolling stops at stop signs and right-turns-on-red are illegal and are discouraged. Each rider needs ample time before proceeding through the intersection.)
  - d. Cornering in a group
    - i. In general, try to stay in your formation lane, as it provides the greatest safety cushion for all riders. When the road narrows, go to single file formation and chose the cornering line that you feel is appropriate. Certainly, "spirited" riding calls for single file, much greater spacing between bikes and an outside-inside-outside cornering line.
    - ii. At intersections – when pulling out from an intersection try to maintain spacing and if reasonable, staggered formation. Accelerate at a reasonable pace and try to avoid slowing down as that causes others to have to brake while in a turn
  - e. When a bike drops out of the formation - the remaining riders should re-orient themselves into the standard staggered formation starting first with the bike following the departed rider - using their turn signals and then changing lanes. The following riders will do the same in turn.
5. Blocking and other bad ideas - A group of bikes does not have any special rights on the road. Although thoughtful drivers will sometimes yield to a group of bikes and allow them to pass through an intersection as a group - it is not a right. In addition, blocking a lane of traffic (sometimes done while a group gets underway) is not only illegal but also dangerous. If a group is well organized and everyone knows where they are going they can get into formation while underway.

6. Hand signals – unless all bikes have radio communication, using hand signals is a good way to communicate while underway. Pointing out hazards and indicating upcoming turns are particularly useful in conducting safe group rides.

### Suggested Hand Signals

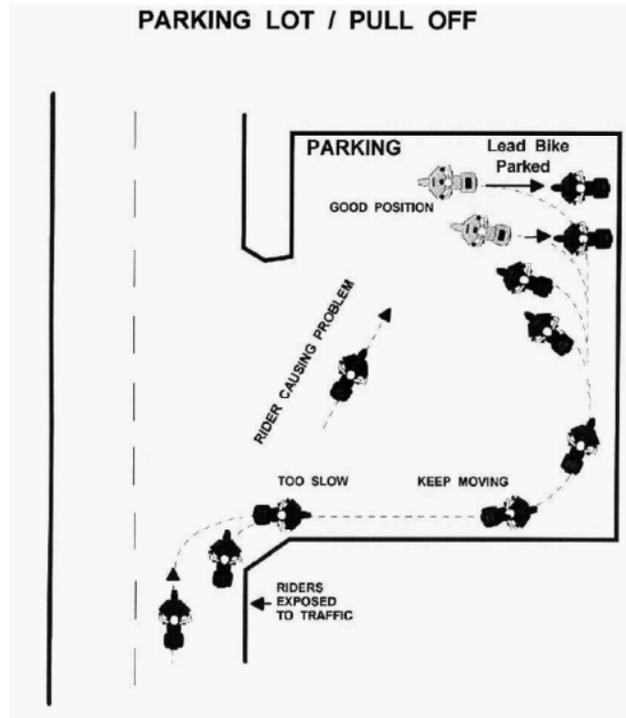
<p><b>Left Turn</b> – arm out straight</p> 	<p><b>Right Turn</b> – arm bent up</p> 	<p><b>Road Hazards</b> – point with hand (left) or foot (right)</p> 	<p><b>Moving Hazard on right</b> – finger pointing, hand over head</p> 
<p><b>Single File</b> – arm &amp; finger straight up</p> 	<p><b>Staggered Formation</b> – arm &amp; two fingers straight up</p> 	<p><b>Slow Down</b> – palm down, move extended arm up and down</p> 	<p><b>Speed up</b> – palm up, move extended arm up and down</p> 
<p><b>Need Fuel</b> – pointing to gas tank</p> 	<p><b>Need Refreshment</b> – thumb to mouth</p> 	<p><b>Turn Signal on</b> – open and close hand over head</p> 	<p><b>Tighten formation to standard 2 sec. &amp; 1 sec.</b> – arm extended with sweeping motion forward</p> 

7. Group separation – it happens but it's OK, the group will not abandon you. At stop lights or signs, or in heavy traffic, it may not be possible for the group to stay all together. When safe, a good technique is for the group to continue but if they make a turn the last rider stays to the side of the road and waits for the rest of the group. It's like leaving bread crumbs to mark the route. A good graphic that demonstrates this is at <http://www.sunsethog.com/groupRiding.html>

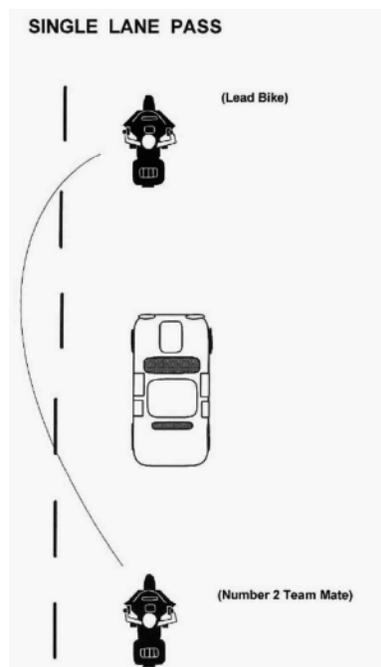
Remember, the group will pull over and wait for you when it is safe to do so.

Besides, you should have printed out a copy of the route prior to going on the ride or gotten a copy from the ride leader – so you could find your way to the next stop if needed.

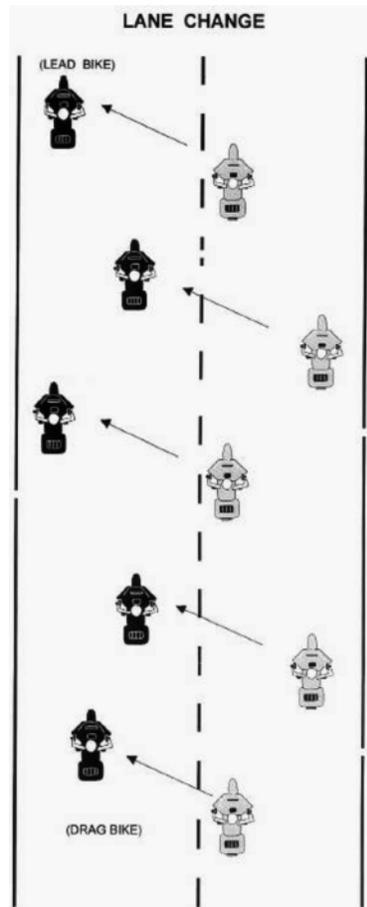
8. Exit promptly. When a group is leaving the road for a food/gas/rest stop it is important to keep the group moving into the parking area until ALL bikes have exited the roadway. This usually works best if the lead bike goes to the far end of the parking lot. Don't race into the parking lot but keep moving; don't leave the end of the group stopped in the roadway.



9. Passing – it can be done safely but should be initiated only when necessary
- Two lane roads – the ride leader accelerates and passes the vehicle first. Once he is past he will maintain a higher speed to create space for others to follow. Only then will the next bike pass the vehicle, again maintaining speed to create space for the following bike. Each bike will pass in turn one at a time until the whole group has reformed.



- b. Passing on highways and highway lane changing. If there is CB contact from the ride leader to the sweep rider he will typically request that the sweep secure the lane. Once that is done the ride leader will put on his turn signal, wait a few seconds, and then move to the open lane. Without a CB the ride leader will determine when there is enough room for the group to change lanes, put his turn signal on, wait a few seconds and then move to the open lane. The group looks, and then moves.



10. Rubber band effect – as groups become longer there is a tendency for the riders in the rear of the group to experience a “whip saw” effect with large openings between bikes. Close up the formation when it can be done safely. Do not speed or take extra risks.
11. Weather – be prepared for all of the climate conditions you may encounter. A cool rain in the middle of summer will feel extremely cold at highway speeds if the rider gets soaked because they are without rain gear. Also, the group may only stop to put rain gear on and then continue the ride. Be prepared.
12. Leaving the group – let the sweep & ride leader know if you plan on leaving the group during a rest stop prior to your departure. The sweep may suggest you ride in front of him to avoid disrupting the group’s formation when you leave.
13. Ride your own ride & ride within your capabilities. Someone else may be leading the ride but they are NOT responsible for your safety – you are. Furthermore, guidelines for group riding should be ignored when they don’t make sense or jeopardize you safety. Determining this is and acting prudently is each rider’s individual responsibility at all times.

14. Using a CB for added safety – In group rides the primary reason to use the CB is to help move the group safely. It is advisable for all who have a CB to stay on the channel designated by the ride leader so they know what is going on. Here is an example of an actual conversation between a ride leader and sweep.

Lead: Left turn at the light

Sweep: Thank you (the thank you is just a confirmation of hearing the sender - it is assumed that all other CB users got the message)

Lead: road kill center of lane

Sweep: thank you

Lead: very tight right turn

Sweep: thank you

Sweep: five bikes got caught at the light

Lead: thank you

Sweep: we are through the light but two cars are between us

Lead: thank you

Sweep: We are all together again (once we rejoin and are one continuous group)

Lead: thank you

Lead: bicycle on the right

Sweep: I didn't get that, say again please

Lead: bicycle on the right

Sweep: thank you.

Sweep: There is a big gap in the group. Please slow down 5 mph.

Lead: Slowing 5 mph

Sweep: We are all together again

Lead: thank you

Lead: turning right onto route 27

Sweep: thank you

Sweep: all made the turn, we are together

Lead: thank you.

Another exchange between the lead bike and sweep – this time on the highway. Ed is the lead bike & Bob is the sweep.

Ed: Bob secure lane one please (lanes are numbered from the left)

Bob looks and moves to lane 1, then lets Ed know he occupies the lane

Bob: lane secured

Ed: thank you

Ed puts his turn signal on and the group moves into the lane.

Bob: we are all in lane 1

Ed: thank you

Bob: Ed, the group is riding well together, very tight.

Ed: It looks that way from up here too.

**Note: unless all riders have a CB, hand signals should also be used for group riding safety.**

## Giving Credit to great organizations

Some of the information presented here has been drawn from the following publications. It is fortunate that so many fine organizations put their group riding information on the Internet so that all riders can benefit. It saves lives as it helps all motorcyclists ride safer. Additional information on group riding can be found at their web sites:

### **Sunset H.O.G., Beaverton, OR**

Dynamic graphic demonstrates some of the principles of good group riding practices.

<http://www.sunsethog.com/groupRiding.html>

### **GWRRA – Gold Wing Road Riders Association**

See “GWRRA RIDER ED SEMINAR MATERIALS” at the bottom of the page. There are materials on a multitude of riding related topics including group riding.

<http://www.gwrra.org/regional/ridered/seminars.html>

### **Sunshine Chapter H.O.G.**

“Suggestions for Safe Group Riding”

<http://www.magpie.com/nycmoto/packrules.html>

### **North Metro Chapter, Minnesota Wings**

“Common Sense Group Riding Rules”

<http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/downs/2207/gpride.html>

“Suggestions for a Group Ride Leader and Tail Gunner”

<http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/downs/2207/rideldr.html>

“The Group Trip”

<http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/downs/2207/gptrip.html>

### **The Motorcycle Safety Foundation**

This is THE organization for learning how to ride well with safety in mind.

<http://www.msf-usa.org/>

They also have numerous publications including a handbook call, “The MSF Guide to Group Riding” which can be ordered in packs of 10 at:

<https://store.msf-usa.org/Store/StoreItems.aspx?cid=4>

### **Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center**

“Introduction to Group Riding”

<http://www.dps.state.mn.us/mmsc/latest/MMSCHomeSecondary.asp?cid=5&mid=84&scat>

### **CarolinaMotorcycleEvents.com**

<http://www.carolinamcevents.com/articles/ridingguide.html>

### **The Master Strategy Group**

Request “Guidelines for Group Riding” be emailed to you. It has some different ideas

<http://www.msgroup.org/GUIDE.html>

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The New England Riders forum: <http://forums.delphiforums.com/NewEnglandRider/start>

New England Riders web site: [www.newenglandriders.org](http://www.newenglandriders.org)

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