

The Signpost Rule

Nothing is more frustrating than taking the time and effort out of your day to come to a group ride, only to be dropped a few minutes into the ride. Perhaps you didn't make it through that red light or had some mechanical difficulty. Now you're riding alone asking yourself why you bothered anyway.

The Signposting Rule is a means of having a group ride that ensures that no riders are unintentionally dropped. The rule goes something like this. Each rider is responsible to make sure that the rider Behind them doesn't get lost or dropped. They do this by waiting for the next rider whenever there is a turn, traffic light, or any other type of road condition that could cause a rider to be lost. The first rider becomes a Signpost of sorts which is why it's called the Signpost Rule. Once the next rider is in sight and understands where to go, the first rider can continue on their way, and the next rider takes their turn in being a signpost for the rider after them.

If a rider is slower, or has some difficulty, they don't have to worry about getting dropped. The next rider in front of them will wait until they catch up. At worse you may have a long chain of riders that stretches out for a long distance. If everyone in the group uses this rule, the group will be "self regulating" in its overall speed. Other bicycle clubs have successfully used this rule as a way to have "no drop" group rides. This also encourages group riders to obey traffic laws and signals as the rider in front of them will wait if they have to stop.

Questions:

What do I do if I have to leave the ride?

In most cases you will be with other people so you can let someone else know that you are leaving. When no one is riding near you, if possible, you need to let the person in front of you know that you are leaving. If you cannot catch up to that person, then wait until the person behind you catches up and let them know. At that point that rider then "takes your place" in the ride and continues on.

When should I wait for the next person?

In general, you should wait whenever there is a possibility that they might get lost. Typically this happens at turns and intersections.

Am I going to have to stop at every turn?

No, you just need to glance back to see if you can see the next person behind you and that they can see you making the turn. You only need to stop if you can't see the person behind you.

I keep having to wait too long.

If this happens you may be riding too fast for the group. Consider slowing down so that you can let others catch up, and you can ride with them. After all, you came to a group ride so that you can ride with other people. If it seems like the group is constantly having to wait, you may want to ask the ride leader at the next grouping point if the group should be split into two groups.

The group is getting stretched out very far.

The ride leader should be stopping the entire group at certain points. If the group is getting stretched out too far, that means the ride needs to go at a slower pace. Otherwise a lot of riders will be spending a lot of time riding at a fast pace, only to wait. Or perhaps the group needs to be split into two groups.

How do I know which rider I need to wait for?

In reality you don't really know who the rider is behind you. That's because they might decide to leave the group, or someone could pass them at anytime. But you don't really need to know. Just wait to make sure that you see the next rider behind you, and that you're sure that they see you and know where to continue.

When is the Signposting Rule in effect?

The ride leader should announce at the start of the ride if the group ride will be operated using this rule. If in doubt, ask.

What if the person in front of me doesn't wait?

Although the person in front of you should wait, it's bound to happen from time to time that something unplanned, or confusing will happen which will "break the chain". When this happens, don't get bent out of shape about it. The ride leader will typically tell the group where the next grouping point is further in the ride. If you are familiar with the route, you can continue on to that point. If you're not familiar with the route, then you should wait for the next rider to catch up to you. Hopefully they will know where to continue. If this repeated happens with a particular person, you may want to politely remind them that they should be waiting for the rider behind them. (But remember that you can't always be sure exactly WHO is in front of you, because of riders passing each other). Note: If you are that person who isn't following this rule, remember that it takes everyone in the group to cooperate to have a group ride. One day you may be in the situation where you depend on someone to wait for you. If you consistently disregard doing this, other riders will not want to ride with you.