

SAFELY RIDING IN A GROUP

By Karen Rainford, GVR Cycling member

These rules are based on safety training from the MN Red Ribbon Ride at www.redribbonride.org, and are used to help hundreds of riders on the same route interact safely and share a common set of expectations. You'll notice that many riders around Green Valley use some or all of these common safety and group riding techniques. This list is not all-inclusive. It's broken down into three areas.

- A: Personal Safety
- B: Rules of the Road
- C: Clear Communications

A. Personal Safety

Riding safely starts before you leave the house and continues until you're safely home.

1. Make certain **your bike fits you properly**. If you're not sure, have your local bike shop conduct a bike fitting for you.
2. Make sure **your bike is in good working order** Buy a spare tube so someone can help you change it if you get a flat on the road. Make sure you know how much air pressure is needed for each of your tires. Test to make sure your tires are freely rolling and that your brakes are working.
3. **Wear sunglasses** whenever possible. Not only do they keep the sun from distracting you, but they also keep wind and bugs from interfering with your ability to keep your eyes on the road.
4. **Wear your helmet** at all times when on your bicycle. This includes riding in parking lots. Most group ride leaders insist that everyone wears a helmet.
5. **Wear bright clothing** while riding, even during the day. Dress in layers, and plan ahead for how you'll safely carry your jacket if you need to take it off during the ride.
6. **Never wear headphones or ear buds** while on your bike. The use of cell phones, iPods, mp3 players, radios, walkie talkies, handheld cameras or video cameras, or any other electronic device is prohibited while riding. Speakers of any kind are also prohibited.
7. **Control your bicycle:** Ride predictably and keep at least one hand on the handlebars at all times. Stay alert at all times. Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
8. **Rides are alcohol- and drug-free events.** Do not consume alcohol or use recreational drugs.
9. **Eat before you feel hungry and drink before you feel thirsty.** Always bring a snack, like a power bar, sandwich or trail mix. Bring at least one bottle of water and drink every time the group stops. Remind others to drink, too.
10. **Use extra caution when riding in the rain.** Roads become slick as thin sheets of oil, gas and grease form on the surface. Allow for increased braking distance. Also, road paint and fallen leaves become extra slippery during rains. Slow down, especially when going down hills. Vision

and visibility drop drastically when skies are dark and sodden. Cars won't be able to see you as well. Be awake and aware.

11. **Consider making a biking checklist** that you can re-use for every ride. My checklist includes: bike, spare tube, tools, helmet, bikebag, mirror, sunglasses, clear/yellow glasses, chapstick, sunscreen, gloves, jacket, tail light, bike shoes, water, snack, driver's licence/ID, credit card, cash, kleenex, bandana, pump.
12. **Be especially vigilant when cycling downhill.** It's not the time to take a hand off your handlebars to grab a drink or fiddle with your bike. Increased speeds mean you'll need increased stability and watchfulness for hazards on the road.
13. **Tell someone before leaving a ride.** If you decide to veer off from the group, make sure you tell the leader or another rider. Oftentimes, groups stop at designated points and wait for everyone to catch up and catch their breath.

B. Rules of the Road

To ensure that your ride experience continues to be amazing you will need to be vigilant and deliberately conscious of your surroundings and some of the perils that come with riding a bicycle. **Safety** starts with each us taking responsibility not only for ourselves but for our fellow cyclists. Each rider is responsible for understanding how to ride safely in AZ. You can find the rules at: <https://www.azdps.gov/safety/bicycle>

1. **Bicycles need to follow all traffic rules.** Obey all traffic laws, traffic signals and signs. Ride as far to the right as is safely possible. Ride defensively, predictably and stay alert. Assume car drivers cannot see you. Cycle with traffic, never against it. When moving from one lane to another, always yield to traffic.
2. **Stop at all stop signs and stoplights without exception.** When you are riding in a group, you must make a complete stop, ceasing all forward motion and placing one foot on the ground before proceeding. You can gather at red lights, take the full lane, and proceed together.
3. **Ride single file** and leave at least one bike length between you and the rider in front of you. No drafting. No pacelines. On sleepy neighborhood streets, you may be able to ride two abreast, but make sure you are separated by at least 6 feet, and yield to faster bikes or cars.
4. **Communicate your intentions.** Use verbal alerts to point out potential vehicle hazards. Use hand signals to indicate right turn, left turn, stopping or slowing. Alert others to potential hazards by pointing and/or calling out **in a loud, outside voice.**
5. **Look behind you before passing to make sure it is clear.** Pass when it is safe to do so and pass only on the left. When passing, call out loudly, "On your left!"
6. **Emergency Procedures:** If an accident occurs requiring emergency medical services, call 911 immediately and direct traffic around the scene. Get the Riders' name and wait for

emergency personnel to arrive. Do not move an injured person if they are unable to move themselves.

7. **Be courteous and respectful of others.** Be patient and kind. Not everyone has the same skills as you when it comes to riding a bike.

C. Clear Communications

Experienced group riders expect you to share information and communicate clearly using hand signals and voice signals. Even when you're riding alone, you'll find that communicating makes you safer around cars and other cyclists you encounter.



The **3 hand signals** above are *required by law*. WE go the extra mile in safety signals by using our hands and vocal cords to do the following:

- Point out **road obstacles** i.e. rocks, gravel, broken glass, drainage grates, and pot holes.
- Using your right arm to point, and then call out, **car right** when you see an automobile exiting from a driveway or intersection.
- Always use your arms as pointers and your voice to draw attention to any impending obstacles.
- Always make left turns from the appropriate left-turn lane.

The following **Call Out signals** are *mandatory* for all cyclists. Never think that someone else is loud enough for the cyclist in front of you to hear them, always add your voice and "pay it forward or backward" -- depending on the situation at hand. For example, when coming to a stop with 9 fellow cyclists, ALL 10 cyclists should be calling out, **Stopping!** This keeps everyone *alert* and being alert is "**smart cycling**".

- "**Car back**" -- used when you hear a car approaching from your rear. When you hear a fellow cyclist saying "Car back" you must also say it so the cyclist in front of you can hear it, and on up the line.
- "**Car up**" -- used when riding on a narrow roadway and you have a car approaching you.
- "**On Your Left**" -- used EVERY TIME you pass another cyclist. Always check behind you before passing and call out your intention BEFORE you are alongside the cyclist you are overtaking. NEVER pass another cyclist when a car is approaching from behind you. If you are being passed by another cyclist please move as far right as is SAFELY possible. You must pass in single file,

never in tandem or more -- this is very unsafe as you will be crowding into the oncoming traffic lane.

- **"Door"** -- used when riding along parked cars. Watch all cars that are parked and if you see someone in the driver's seat call out "Door" to signal to the cyclists behind you that a car door could open at anytime. Always be on the lookout for a person in the driver's seat of any parked car you may pass. Parked drivers are notorious for swinging their doors open suddenly or pulling out into traffic without checking for bicyclists.
- **"Glass" or "pothole" or "bump" or "trash" or "branch"**. When you notice an obstacle or something on the road that you and other riders should avoid, point at it, and call it out to warn the rider behind you.
- **"Tracks"** -- used when approaching railroad tracks. Always cross railroad tracks at a 90-degree angle to avoid getting your tires trapped in the tracks.
- **"Slowing"** -- used when slowing to make a stop or beginning to pull off the road to stop. If you can safely take one hand off the handlebars, point your hand down with your palm facing the drivers/riders behind you.
- **"Stopping"** -- used after you call out slowing and are ready to come to a full stop. If you are stopping to rest or stretch or even, god forbid, change a flat, it is crucial that you pull completely off the bicycle lane of traffic.
- **"Rolling"** -- used after you have made a complete stop and are ready to start riding again. You can also say "Clear for me" when crossing a road, but do not say "Clear" because you can't predict safety for other cyclists. If someone ahead of you says "Clear", just ignore it and make your own decision about conditions in the intersection.
- **"Right Turn"** -- used when making a right turn in conjunction with the appropriate arm turn signal.
- **"Left Turn"** -- used when making a left turn in conjunction with the appropriate arm turn signal.
- **"Merging"** -- used when you have been stopped and are getting ready to rejoin the bike lane of traffic.