



PASSING RIDERS SAFELY and COURTEOUSLY

How to pass and how to be passed, safely, courteously and predictably is a valuable skill and requires conscious focus. If each rider practices these lessons constantly, it will greatly improve the rider's cycling experience and safety for the rest of their cycling life. While this note is long, it's important.

Marshall Cohen, one of Ready2Roll Cycling's founders, sent some observations/feedback from our rides to share.

Take it away Marshall...

Safety Tip – When Passing Riders:

"As one of the past organizers of Ready2Roll Cycling, I have the pleasure to join in and ride in the weekly rides.

I am always paying attention to how our riders approach others and observe rider etiquette. What I have seen over the years occasionally is a rider will approach another rider in front of them and although I am not close enough to hear if they communicate “approaching,” “passing on the left,” etc., what I do see is that the rider DOES NOT look back behind them

and instead just moves left to pass. In fact, rather than pass these riders just a few feet to their left, these riders have moved way out into the left side of the lane of the roadway where a vehicle would travel or even go into oncoming traffic. On a few occasions, the vehicles approaching from the rear had to dramatically slow down until the rider made their way back over to the shoulder to complete their pass. All of these issues can be disastrous!

When you are passing another rider, obviously communicate that you are approaching and passing on their left. Then, look over your left shoulder (letting go of the handlebar with the left hand just for a moment) and be absolutely sure that no riders or vehicles are approaching and you have enough room and time to safely complete your pass. Then, once you have established you are safe to proceed to pass, DO NOT ride way out into the roadway but rather keep a safe distance just a few feet to the left of the rider you are passing. When I hear a rider behind me indicating that they want to pass me, I always move over to my right, making it that much easier for them to pass safely, without having to venture into the middle of the traffic lane. They appreciate this very much and often will say “thank you.” At Ready2Roll Cycling, we are a community of such responsive and caring individuals, and it is our responsibility to implement excellent rider etiquette that helps to ensure everyone’s safety.”

It is important to point out that although you in fact might have the “right of way” to share the road and that a bike is a vehicle and allowed on the roadway too, not all drivers respect such laws or are even paying attention. Further, remember, “the car will ALWAYS Win.” You simply NEVER want to obstruct vehicle traffic when passing cyclists – NEVER! Soon, we will see farm vehicles and horse trailers. etc. These vehicles stop slowly and are difficult to steer. We absolutely don’t want riders too far in the lane of traffic where they might create a hazard.

Passing - The Impact of a Headwind

This should be obvious but riding into a stiff headwind can have a definite impact on passing.

- First of all, if you catch up with another rider, or group of riders, and it's taking almost all your energy to stay with them, trying to pass with a strong headwind is probably pointless.
- It's better to keep a safe distance back, and if some of your group are feeling more refreshed and able to maintain a faster pace to make a clean pass, then let them go

but make sure they don't break your group up powering into the wind at a pace the group can't maintain.

- Second, the ability to communicate to riders ahead will likely be severely limited until you are close. We recommend literally "barking" out "Riders Approaching" as you are getting close- It's important to be really loud. The riders ahead likely won't understand but they should at least hear the noise and be aware someone is approaching. Then call out as you approach 1-2 more times so they can hear the voices getting louder and sense how close you are getting. This takes practice but be aware that you may really surprise riders ahead if riding into a stiff wind unless you take extra measures to alert them. Bells can be useful here.

We expect to see you all practicing these tips - they make a huge difference in how much we all enjoy the ride. We also expect to hear a LOT of communicating and "Thank You's" out on the roads this week and for the rest of the series!

Here are a few more related thoughts on this topic:

- If a group is training together, cycling etiquette says to let the slowest rider set the pace
- The ride is supposed to be fun and it is definitely more fun with a group of friends
- Friends DON'T let friends ride alone!

To sum up: the keys to safe/courteous passing are:

- **Consistent, predictable riding** - no one is making any sudden or unannounced changes or moves.
- **Effective communication** - every rider is speaking clearly, concisely, on point, and loud, and every rider is alert and listening and prepared to effectively respond, as appropriate, when communicated to. Use as few words as possible but enough to get the message across.
- **Learning the Art of Anticipation** - riders analyze the situation as they approach and anticipate risks and take measures ahead, to avoid the risk.
- **Patience** - Wait until all conditions are safe, clear and don't rush/force a pass.
- **Passers are Primarily Responsible for making a safe pass** - the passee needs to be alert of their surroundings, consistent and predictable, hold their speed and riding line and move over/go single file but the Passer has the responsibility to

ensure it is safe to pass and there is room, no approaching traffic, and that the riders being passed are aware.

- **Never pass** when a car is coming from any direction. Just wait. This is not a race.

Details on the art of passing courteously and safely

The passer should:

- Call "Rider approaching" as you get close (within 10-20 yards)
- Check the road behind to ensure no approaching vehicles
- Move over to allow enough room, speed up just a little and start the pass
- Call "Passing on the left" as you pull up to the rider
(Several riders I spoke to said they call out "Left". This is too short - it doesn't effectively get attention or inform riders ahead)
- Adjust your volume for the weather - if it's calm, you don't need to shout, if it's windy, you will really need to raise your voice.
- Call "Thank you" as you move past the rider (on the left).
- Allow plenty of room before pulling back over to the right

The passee should:

- Be aware of approaching riders (listen, NO headphones and music speakers at reasonable volume!)
- Acknowledge calls to pass - saying "Thank You" or a left hand thumbs-up is a GREAT way to do this!
- Maintain a steady predictable speed and hold your line - don't suddenly slow down or speed up as you are being passed and don't jerk your handlebars.

Multiple Riders Passing

The process for multiple riders passing is similar with a few extra variations...

The group of passers should do all the above plus:

- The leader of the passing group calls "Riders Up!" to communicate internally as they approach...

...they also typically spread out slightly to allow extra reaction time, if something unexpected occurs.

- Double check for approaching traffic - allow more room for multiple riders to pass
- Consolidate to single file if not already there
- The lead rider should call: "Passing on left, seven riders" or something similar to let the passees know what to expect
- The middle rider(s) should say: "Thanks" and/or: "Four more riders coming" to inform the riders being passed
- The last rider should call: "Last rider, Thank you" so the group knows you are all passed.
- Allow extra room before pulling back in, so your line doesn't cut off the passees.

Maintain a steady speed, don't speed up or slow down until the entire group has passed the slower cyclists. Groups of riders may feel pressured to pass when it is not safe in order to avoid falling behind - don't succumb to the pressure to pass if vehicles are approaching.

The passees being passed by a group should do all the above plus:

- Smoothly consolidate to single file when a group approaches. If there is a lead rider, he/she should call "Single file". It is illegal for people to ride more than two abreast. So, slower cyclists should move right to form a single line.
- Listen for the first and last passer. Acknowledge them with a thank you. You will make more cycling friends by being polite and courteous.

PLEASE save this note and refer back to it as it will make a lot more sense as you get more experienced. We will be focusing and providing feedback on passing quite a bit early in the season because it takes us several weeks to master. Once you "get it", you will find that you are a much safer rider and you will enjoy riding even more as well as impressing all the other riders you encounter with your safe, courteous and predictable riding.

OK, that's it for today's tip. Be Safe!

Thanks for your support!

Sybren & Kathryn

Ready2Roll Cycling

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