

Ride Leader Guidelines

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Why lead? To share the love of bicycling.

As a certified Cascade Ride Leader, you can inspire others to climb aboard two wheels, motivate them to achieve success, and excite them about bicycling, all while enjoying the outdoor beauty of the great Pacific Northwest and beyond. Active Ride Leaders have shared success stories of novices who can barely shift gears on one of their first outings then blossoming into avid and sometimes intrepid cyclists later in the season. Ride Leaders who show them how on well-led Cascade Free Group Rides can build their bicycling confidence.

As a certified Cascade Ride Leader, you get to choose and design the route, select the pace, and determine the stops. It's a perfect way to select the best possible bicycle outing to suit your talents and to share a great ride with others on your favorite roads to your favorite destinations, at your comfortable pace.

As a certified Cascade Ride Leader, you will meet new people who are eager to learn new routes, and with whom you can share some of your personal interests. It's like you're hosting a party at your favorite venue – one that others may not even know exists! Your volunteer effort as a Ride Leader expands the pool of potential riding partners, grows friendships, and even attracts others to consider volunteering as well.

Leading rides is not necessarily just about riding a route. Some Ride Leaders have created theme rides to include local railroad history, antiquing events, yard sale soirees, overnight bikepacking, bistro and bakery bonanzas, “kidical mass” events, and a multitude of other unique outings revolving around cycling.

And as a certified Cascade Ride Leader, you are contributing to the community while creating an opportunity for you to ride yourself.

We asked our riders: What do you like about Cascade Ride Leaders?

They responded -- A good Ride Leader:

- Welcomes all
- Knows the route
- Shows concern about the riders
- Emphasizes safety
- Promotes Cascade Bicycle Club

Rides Committee

The Cascade Rides Committee is composed of volunteer Ride Leaders who meet monthly to discuss issues affecting the Free Group Rides. This committee sets policies and procedures for the Free Group Rides program. Cascade's Free Group Rides Program Manager provides direct oversight to the Committee. Cascade's Senior Director for Events and Ride, provides executive oversight to the FGR Committee's proceedings.

Ride Leaders who have questions regarding a particular Free Group Rides policy or practice should contact the committee at ridescommittee@cascade.org

Ride Leader Code of Conduct

The Cascade Bicycle Club Rides Committee has established a [Code of Conduct](#) for all volunteer Ride Leaders. The Club expects all of its Ride Leaders to follow this code, embracing the spirit of bicycling for all, while ensuring safe, high-quality riding events which engage all participants.

As a Cascade Bicycle Club Ride Leader, I will:

- Represent Cascade Bicycle Club with professionalism, dignity, and pride.
- Conduct myself in a respectful manner, exhibit good sporting conduct, and be a positive role model.
- Promote and support Cascade Bicycle Club's Free Group Rides Program.
- Promote inclusion by encouraging all, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, or sexual orientation.

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- Work cooperatively as a part of a team with Cascade Bicycle Club staff and other volunteers.
- Display respect and courtesy for club staff, other volunteers, program participants, visitors, clients, and property.
- Keep personal opinions and actions separate from those made as a representative of this organization.
- Avoid conduct, both on and off duty, that would jeopardize the program's effectiveness.
- Not promote any commercial activity or event on any Cascade ride, nor solicit donations or signatures for other organizations/events on any Cascade ride.
- Respect and follow Cascade Bicycle Clubs policies (Code of Ethics, Privacy Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, and Volunteer Code of Conduct) and procedures, including event registration.
- Keep Cascade Bicycle Club Rides Committee and/or staff, as appropriate, informed of concerns and problems I notice during any Cascade ride or event in which I participate.

GETTING STARTED

What kind of ride do you want to lead?

Planning a successful group ride requires a few decisions prior to selecting a particular route. The following items should be considered in order to prepare for a group ride that suits your desires and abilities:

Pace. What pace are you comfortable leading? While you may be content riding at one particular pace on your own, leading a group takes additional energy. So perhaps a slower pace than what you ride individually will make the ride more enjoyable.

Type of ride. Do you want to focus on training, or perhaps attracting new riders, or just making your ride a social event? Other options include cycle touring, racing, family & kids, women's rides, sightseeing or just recreation.

Time of day. Think about what time the ride should start. If it's an after-work ride, keep in mind that most riders won't be able to make a start earlier than 6 p.m. Be aware that a

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Saturday ride starting at 10 a.m. or later tends to draw a larger crowd than a ride starting earlier.

Season of the year. How hot or cold will it be at the finish (or start) of your ride? Is it likely to rain during your event? And what's the available amount of daylight? For many, riding in a cold, damp rain in darkness is not much fun.

Distance. Early in the cycling season, or during rainy months, shorter rides may attract more riders. In mid-summer, when people tend to feel more active, longer rides may be more appealing. You should also consider how much of the day will your take, just a couple of hours, or a whole day's outing?

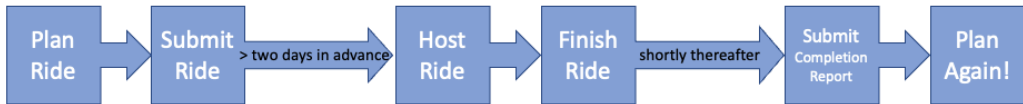
Other Events. Check to make sure you don't have a start location or route conflict with other events. For example, you wouldn't likely be happy with the results if you were to try to lead a ride from Gasworks Park the same day the Fremont Summer Solstice Parade ends there. Other sources of schedule conflict could include riding across the Montlake or University bridges in early May on the opening day of boating season (when both bridges are up for many hours), or around Lake Washington the first weekend of August during the Seafair boat races.

Conflict with a Cascade Club event. Your route should neither share any of the same route, nor cross the path of one of the club's major events. Please check the [calendar for dates of all major rides](#) starting with the Chilly Hilly (February) though to the end of the event season (September).

What are the basic steps for leading a ride?

- Determine the type of ride you want to lead
- Select a route and pace for your ride
- Submit the ride for listing on the Cascade calendar, at least two working days in advance of the event
- Show up ready to ride in advance of your ride start time.
- Check attendance on the registration, either online or paper copy (if you printed it)
- Welcome and count riders
- Give SMART talk
- Ride the ride -- be safe and have fun!

- Submit the completion report (online)



Selecting a route

General considerations

A safe route should be the most important consideration. Remember, a route that may be acceptable for one or two riders may not be favorable for a large group. For example, an urban, downtown route during times of heavy auto traffic congestion may be too dangerous for a large group of novice riders.

Check to make sure you don't have route conflicts. For example, watch out for big events like marathons, parades, or other Cascade events.

While you may be familiar with your route, road conditions frequently change. If possible, you should try to pre-ride or pre-drive your route a few days before the event so you can make a first-hand check. Sometimes, especially in winter, park restrooms are closed and water fountains are turned off, so checking on those, if you plan to use one, is also important.

If you have been on the route, but not recently, you may want to go over it again to ensure that nothing has changed significantly, such as roadwork or detours.

If you are using a new route, it's even more important to ride it in advance, preferably on a bicycle.

Consider food, water, and restroom breaks. It's always good to mention where you plan to take rest breaks in your ride description.

Most area trails have posted speed limits, many at 15 mph, some at 10 mph. Always observe these limits. Sometimes the best option is to avoid multi-use trails when possible, especially on sunny weekend days when all sorts of other users will be present.

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In general, trails aren't built for speed and can have heavy traffic of children, runners, dogs and walkers. Also, avoid riding on sidewalks. While it may be legal to do so in some areas, most pedestrians are not expecting a group of cyclists as they amble on sidewalks.

Wherever you go, remember to respect private property and ride only in places where bicycles are welcome.

As a best practice, including a navigable route in your ride posting is highly desired. Also, a route link is required on your ride post if your regroup frequency is other than "Stay together".

Starting locations

Choose a starting point that people can find easily and that has ample parking. If possible, the starting point should have a nearby restroom. Please be considerate of other users of parking areas. Don't overload a parking lot, commercial area or town center. Be aware of parking time limits or fees and note these in your ride description. Be courteous to park users, and recommend alternate parking locations when starting from a place that has limited user parking (such as Log Boom Park in Kenmore). Starting rides at schools is not recommended, unless you have specific permission from the school to do so. Starting a ride at Gene Coulon Park in Renton is only allowed if you give specific instructions NOT to park in the lot there.

Using an existing route

The best choice for a route is often one that you've ridden and enjoyed. If you have ridden the route with another ride leader, it's a courtesy to check with them to see if they would mind you using their unique route. Feel free to add your own variations. Just because you're borrowing someone else's route doesn't mean that you can't give it your own touch. Some popular ride routes are available in the [Ride Leader Library](#).

Designing your own route

If you decide to design your own route, listed below are a few suggestions. (These suggestions generally apply to slower rides with novice riders. If you're leading faster, more-experienced riders, adjust accordingly.)

- Safety is the deciding factor for all route-related decisions. If you can't find a safe way to get somewhere, don't go there. Keep in mind that riding with a group is much different from riding by yourself.
- Route should be appropriate for a large group of riders who don't know each other.
- Avoid intersections that are too close to a hill or a curve if the opposing traffic isn't required to stop. You want your riders to have an ample view of oncoming traffic and vice versa.
- Avoid streets that are too narrow for cars to pass unless you'll only be traveling there for a short distance. For example, some streets with medians only have enough room for one lane of traffic in each direction. Some streets with traffic diverters only have enough room for one lane of traffic.
- Avoid crossing busy streets except at controlled intersections (those with stop signs or stop lights).
- Avoid heavily traveled, multi-lane roads whenever possible. If you find yourself with no good alternatives, at least try to avoid making left turns. Even with the best of riders, getting a group safely across two lanes of traffic so they can make the turn can be difficult. It is even more challenging for inexperienced riders.
- In general, avoid taking a group on sidewalks. On occasion, a short stretch of sidewalk is clearly the safest, best way to get from point A to point B.
- Unless you're leading a mountain or gravel bike ride, avoid difficult riding surfaces whenever possible. Examples of these include rough or rutted roads, cobblestones, bridges with metal decks, railroad tracks, dirt, gravel, grass, stairs, and so on.
- Try to avoid surprises. For example, a route on which there's a steep uphill just after a turn. If you can't avoid the problem, try to warn everyone during the ride, possibly at a stop immediately before you get to that location.
- In the city, "dead end" and "local traffic only" signs often apply only to cars.
- Bicycles may use bus-only lanes, but remember, delaying a bus inconveniences multiple transit users. Be courteous.
- If you know a ride leader who has led rides in the area where you want to go, call and ask for suggestions on roads to use/avoid, good places for mid-ride snacks, scenic overlooks, and other relevant details.
- When considering a route through neighborhood parks, or on unpaved trails, or through other potentially sensitive natural areas, please adhere to the following additional guidelines:
 - In general, only use roads and paths designed for shared use (60 inches

in width or wider).

- If there is an alternative routing to avoid paths which may be congested with pedestrians and other users, consider routing around that area. Please note: a park pathway that is fine for a solo cyclist may be inappropriate for a larger group.
- Do not route off-road/off-path or in environmentally sensitive or natural areas such as wetlands, streams, meadows, newly forested sites or steep slopes where bicycle use could cause damage to plants, soils, streams or natural elements.
- Bicycling is restricted to paved surfaces only in the Washington Park Arboretum, Discovery Park, and Schmitz Park.
- Sensitive natural areas have been damaged by excessive bicycle use and must be protected. In Seattle these areas include: Ravenna, Carkeek, Woodland Park, Seward, Schmitz, Washington Park Arboretum, Waterfront Trail, Camp Long, Discovery Park, and Interlaken Park.

Using ride mapping software

Many Ride Leaders design routes and create cue sheets using bicycle-friendly mapping sites such as ridewithgps.com and mapmyride.com. Both of these sites offer free access to basic mapping programs. Cascade Bicycle Club has a special discount offered on premium ridewithgps.com accounts. The most current access token code can be found at the bottom of [this page here](#). Instructions on how to enter this code can be found [here](#).

Cascade occasionally offers Ride Leaders classes on how to use ridewithgps.com, and many helpful hints on how to use this website are [click here](#).

NOTE: A navigable route (link) is required to be included on any Free Group Ride posting that has a regroup frequency other than “Stay Together”.

Making a fun, unique ride

Consider choosing a theme for your ride. If you live for sweets, lead a ride that takes in several bakeries or candy shops. If you're fascinated with defunct streetcar lines, lead a ride to Ballard by way of the Counterbalance, and stop along the way to point out where the streetcars once traveled.

Key into special events. For example, you might want to lead a ride to Folklife or Bumbershoot, to the bicycle races at the Marymoor Velodrome, to a street fair or community festival, to a music festival, to a small-town event, or to some similar gathering. Make your group aware of whether there is a return to start time or they are on their own to return.

Have fun with the ride description. People will be more inclined to show up for a ride whose description captures their imagination.

Do something out of the ordinary. Ride through back alleys, cross wooden bridges, meander through parks, stop at yard sales and interesting houses, and visit public art, historical venues, trolls, and viewpoints.

If something interesting happened, you could also write as a guest contributor for [Cascade's Blog!](#)

Entering your ride on the Cascade.org website

For detailed information on how to post your ride on the Cascade website, a multi-page document is provided here: [How to Post a Ride.](#)

Cascade's no-discrimination policy

All Cascade rides are open to everyone who is able and willing to participate safely and cooperatively. In your ride description, you can specify who a ride is primarily intended for, but you can't specify who the ride isn't for. For example, you can specify that your ride is a Norwegian-themed ride, but you can't specify that it's a Norwegians-only ride or that it's a no-Swedes ride.

This no-discrimination policy does not prevent you from asking a rider to leave a ride based on the rider's abilities, equipment, or actions on that ride or on previous rides.

Women and Non-Binary Only rides There is a special category of Free Group Rides designated as Women & Non-Binary Only. These rides are specifically for self-identifying women and non-binary individuals. Ride Leaders seeking to post these W&NB rides require additional certification. To learn more, contact cbcrides@cascade.org or

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Commercial activities

Cascade rides are non-commercial, so you can't try to sell anything on your ride. However, you may start the ride from your place of business, especially if you own a bakery! Cascade rides should not be used to promote personal political activities, collect signatures, or promote fundraising not related to Cascade Bicycle Club. You should also be clear about any non-bicycle riding activities planned in your ride description.

Fielding email and phone calls from prospective riders

Riders may contact you with questions prior to your ride. Typically, those inquiring will want to know whether they can handle your ride. How you answer this question depends on the difficulty of the ride and on your preference as a ride leader.

If the ride is difficult, you'll obviously want to be clear with those inquiring about the distance, the speed, the number and size of hills, and so on.

If the ride is less physically demanding, you have more discretion. For a slow, short, social ride, you may want to encourage the prospective riders. After all, everyone needs to start somewhere. If you take this approach, you must be prepared to wait patiently at the top of every hill for the sightseers. Your reward is the chance to meet delightful people who don't happen to be great cyclists and to make occasional riders into better, stronger, more enthusiastic cyclists.

If you're not prepared to wait for everyone who needs to be waited for, by all means make that clear to anyone who inquires. Convincing folks that they can handle your ride and then dropping them on the ride is a great way to discourage them from ever joining a Cascade ride again!

Riding with minors

From time to time, you may get a query from a parent who wants to bring one or more children along. The club doesn't forbid children on rides, but a parent must sign the [liability waiver](#) for anyone under age 18 if they are not accompanying their minor on the

ride.

Be cautious about encouraging parents to bring children along on a ride. Parents don't always have a realistic perception of how far or how fast their children are able to ride, or how safely the children are able to ride in a group.

In all cases, the Ride Leader must be contacted 24 hours ahead of time and parents must obtain the leader's permission for the minor to participate. It's at the ride leader's discretion to allow minors on the ride.

Children 15 and under must have advance permission of the ride leader and be accompanied by parent or legal guardian OR must have parent/legal guardian designating a guardian for them on the ride.

Youth ages 16-17 may ride without a parent or guardian with advance permission of the ride leader AND a signed parental consent form which must be given to the ride leader at the start of the ride.

	Does a parent need to contact RL ahead of time?	Does a parent have to ride with a minor?	Can a parent designate an adult to ride with a minor instead?	Does a parent have to present a parent consent form?
Under 15	YES	YES	YES	YES
16-17	YES	NO	YES*	YES
Above 18	NO	N/A	N/A	N/A

*This is not required, but is certainly acceptable.

What you should bring to the ride

See the "Day-of-ride checklist" at the end of this booklet.

You should be ready to ride in advance of your ride's designated start time. This means you should arrive in advance in order to have time to get your own bike ready. It's a great practice to be ready to roll early and greet others as they arrive at the start.

- Have your bike ready to roll and remember to bring your helmet.

- Print out or have phone access to your ride's registration list, which includes riders' contact information.
- If you advertised that you would provide, offer copies of the map/cue sheet.
- Carry blank copies of the CBC Incident Report form.
- Bring a couple of pens.
- Don't forget your water.

You may also want to bring:

- Food for yourself
- Basic tools: a portable bike pump, an extra tube or patch kit, and tire levers.
- A basic first-aid kit. See "What to carry in a first-aid kit" later in this booklet.
- A bike lock (especially if you plan indoor stops, like at a restaurant or museum)
- A rag, individual towelette, or something of the sort for cleaning up after roadside repairs.
- An appropriate mask or face covering.

If you need to cancel a ride:

In some situations (usually bad weather) a ride needs to be canceled. A Ride Leader is not required to go to the ride start point if:

- There is a regional weather occurrence (widespread snow, ice, or strong winds) severe enough to make travel to the start difficult or dangerous, OR:
- It's clearly stated in the ride description you will not be at the start in the event of adverse weather or other unforeseen circumstances (see example below), AND,
- The cancellation of the ride must be posted on Cascade ride posting AT LEAST TWO HOURS prior to ride start time.
- Once you cancel the ride, you must email the current registrants informing them that the ride is canceled. To do this, go to your ride on the calendar: select the blue chevron on the left side > select Registrations > select Email registrants > select Create email > then compose your message.
- Additionally, the Ride Leader must monitor phone/email until ride start time, just to make sure that all would-be participants get the word regarding cancellation.

If you have not made a weather decision within two hours of the ride start time, you must go to the start, even if you then decide to cancel the ride.

Here's the wording we recommend to include in your ride description:

Note: If weather conditions meet the weather cancellation criterion listed above or if there are unforeseen hazardous riding conditions or other unexpected events, the Ride Leader will cancel the ride and all registered riders will be sent a notification email. If the ride is canceled at least two hours before the start, Ride Leader(s) will not be at the start location. Please check before leaving for the ride.

NOTE:

If you need to cancel your ride for any reason, please complete the Ride Cancellation process on the Cascade website. If you need to cancel greater than 24 hours in advance of your ride, contact cbcrides@cascade.org

If you can't lead a ride due to illness or injury: It's OK to cancel a ride, and doing so early is better than at the last minute. If for some reason you can't lead, try to find a replacement ride leader, if you know another Ride Leader who may be available to attend your ride.

Your biggest responsibility is the safety of your ride. The Rides Committee will support you if you make a determination that a ride should be canceled due to risks related to frost, rain, excessive heat, hazardous air quality conditions, or any other environmental concerns,

At the beginning of the ride

Verify registrations, check on helmets, and get a count

Make sure all participants are listed on the registration page (including yourself!) All participants must register; make sure you have checked off their name.

Review the waiver form and make sure each has a listed phone number and emergency contact number (not 911).

A parent or legal guardian must sign the liability waiver of any rider under 18 years old. If
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you have doubts about whether the child will be able to safely complete the ride without holding up the group, you should discuss it with the parent. You may refuse to allow a child on the ride if you believe the child's participation would be unsafe or disruptive.

You should have access to the liability waiver with participants' names for the duration of your ride (hard copy or phone). At the end of the ride, complete the online Completion Report (tab at the top of your ride posting.)

Don't let anyone ride without a helmet. The club requires all riders to wear helmets on all rides. The use of earbuds or bluetooth speakers is prohibited on Cascade rides.

If an unregistered rider shows up, it may be possible for them to register on the spot, if the ride does not have a 2 or 4 hour registration cut-off time. If someone refuses to register, or insists on riding without a helmet, make it clear to other participants that the uncooperative rider is not part of the group. NOTE: Even though King County has no helmet requirement for cyclists, all Cascade rides and events require their use.

Count the riders in your group so you can determine if you have everyone at regrouping points and when departing rest stops.

Pre-ride announcements including SMART talk

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Introduction: Introduce yourself, and identify your sweeps, co-leaders, and other helpers. If the ride will be breaking into two or more groups, explain who will be leading each group. If the group is small, you may ask the riders to introduce themselves.

Welcome to new riders: Ask if there are any new-to-Cascade riders and, if so, welcome them to the group. Mention the benefits of Club membership.

Routes/maps/cue sheets: Ask if everyone has the route available on their device and/or has received the map or cue sheet if you are providing one.

Pace: Announce the pace and explain it (speed over flat ground, with no wind). If you don't intend to wait for slow riders, you should make this clear.

Regrouping: Indicate whether the riders will stay together, regroup at the top of hills, or

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regroup at a specified point. NOTE: A navigable route (link) is required to be included on any Free Group Ride posting that has a regroup frequency other than “Stay Together”.

The route: Briefly describe the ride, including food and rest stops, difficult hills, unusual or dangerous conditions, the first regrouping point, and hazards and tricky turns before that point.

Safety: Talk about safe riding, and remind riders that each person is responsible for his or her own safety.

Give SMART talk: All riders need to hear this in order to participate. (Sometimes, rides are planned where participants can join at a designated rally or stop point. That's OK, as long as those participants joining have registered online and are given a SMART talk at the designated location. Unregistered riders are not allowed to join rides in progress.)

Hand signals: Remind riders to use hand signals for turning or stopping. It's also a good idea to point out road hazards: fixed objects like posts and potholes, road debris, and railroad tracks.

Voice signals: Give riders a quick overview of voice signals: “Car up/back/left/right,” “On your left” to indicate that you're passing another rider or a pedestrian, “Glass/pothole/etc.” to indicate road hazards (combined with hand signals as appropriate). Emphasize that “Car back” means a car is coming from behind, so riders should start riding single file.

Discourage riders from calling out “Clear” at intersections to indicate that no cars are coming. “Clear” is a subjective and temporary condition, so riders should always look for themselves.

Keep the leader informed: Ask riders to pass the word if someone leaves or breaks down, and to notify you if they're planning to leave the ride before the end.

After-ride refreshments: If you're going somewhere after the ride for a meal or a snack and wish others to join you, let everyone know where the fun continues.

Questions? Ask if there are questions.

Leading the ride

Every ride is different, so it's impossible to anticipate everything you might encounter on a ride. Here's a list of items to consider.

Set a good example: Ride safely and remember that you represent the Cascade Bicycle Club.

Courtesy: Anticipate situations where your group may inconvenience others. For example, when you stop to regroup, be sure your riders aren't blocking the road or the sidewalk. When you re-enter the roadway, wait until there's a break in traffic, so drivers aren't forced to slow down for your group. At busy four-way stops, direct groups of 4-6 riders proceed as a "packet", yielding to other road users as appropriate.

Unsafe riders: Unsafe riders endanger everyone around them, ruin the experience for others on the ride, and give cyclists a bad image. If you're uncomfortable with a rider's actions, quietly and politely explain your concern. If the situation doesn't improve, ask the rider to leave your ride.

New riders: Check in with each of the new riders periodically to ensure that they're getting along all right and that they feel welcome.

Pace: Ride at or near the front to lead the way and set the pace at the advertised speed. Make sure riders know that, if they get way ahead, they are on their own. Your responsibility is to lead the ride you've advertised and to keep track of the people who are doing the same. Riders are free to pass the ride leader (see below).

Too-fast and too-slow riders: At the first regrouping point, if some riders are clearly too fast or too slow for the group, consider splitting into more than one group. You can also ask the fast or slow riders if they'd prefer to break off from the group or return to the starting point. If they choose to leave the group, try to ensure that they have a map or cue sheet, or that they know the area well enough to find their way. (This suggests that the first regrouping point should be relatively close to the starting point, so riders can find their way back to the start on their own, if necessary.) For faster riders, if they ride off the front, away from the leader, they are responsible for themselves and the ride leader will not "chase them down" if they miss a turn. If they do not know the route, riders who get ahead of the ride leader should be advised to stop where it is safe to do

so and wait for the rest of the group to catch up.

Keeping track of participants: You can't always keep track of all riders, but do the best you can. Assess how the riders at the back of the group are doing, and adjust the ride as appropriate. Try not to leave anyone behind or lose them. However, you're not obligated to go back and look for anyone. You may ask someone to ride at the back of the group to encourage and keep track of the slower riders. For more information, see "The benefits of having a sweep," below.

Regroup frequency: How often you stop to count heads and make sure everyone is managing the pace varies. If you have some slower riders who are consistently falling behind but you don't want to ask them to leave the group, or if you're leading one of those meandering in-city rides on which you turn every time you get to another intersection, you'll need to regroup pretty regularly. If you're riding on the same road for the next 20 miles with a bunch of self-sufficient racers, you may not need to regroup at all. Base your decision on the comfort of the slowest riders, not on the speed of the fastest.

Stop lights, stop signs, and crosswalks:

- It's the law to stop for red stop lights, school buses with active stop signs, railroad crossings with sign control, and pedestrians in marked and unmarked crosswalks.
- Cyclists in Washington State may treat stop signs as yield signs, if no other traffic or pedestrians are at the intersection.
- Don't stop too close to the intersection to wait for the group to catch up. Instead, proceed past the intersection and find a safe spot off the roadway.
- At a busy stop sign or stoplight, join the line of cars. Don't pass cars on the right. While it is legal for cyclists to queue in the right-turn-only lane if they are proceeding straight, this practice is not recommended. . Wait your turn in the queue. In many situations, passing on the right is prohibited, even for bikes.
- If you're leading a slow ride and only part of your group gets across at a stop light or stop sign, you may want to regroup at the first safe space or leave a "corner person" (see below) to provide direction and reassurance to the riders at the back end of the group.

Unforeseen problems: If you run into unforeseen problems -- new construction, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic, a closed bakery -- be creative. Change the route, take

shelter, or choose a different rest stop. Consider safety above all else and don't be afraid to ask for suggestions from your riders. They may know the area better than you do. However, as Ride Leader, you should only make changes you feel comfortable with. Don't do something that seems unwise.

Mid-ride announcements: At each regrouping point, announce the next regrouping point. Re-emphasize safety, especially related to upcoming conditions. For example, if you need to move into the left lane to make a turn, remind riders to look before they change lanes. If there's a steep uphill immediately after a turn, try to warn riders in advance. If you're getting onto a trail, remind riders to stay on the right half of the trail and to be considerate of other trail users.

Restroom & food stops: When it's time to start riding again, announce your departure enough in advance that everyone has time to stash their extra cookies, get their helmets and gloves on, and untangle their bikes from all of the other bikes leaning against the same tree. In addition, be alert for riders who have wandered off or are in the restroom.

Riding after dark: If you're riding after dark, slow down and keep the group together. A group of cyclists, each one properly lit with a headlight and rear reflector, is much more visible after dark than an individual rider. Red tail lights are recommended for evening rides; have riders put them in "steady" mode.

Leading from the front or the back of the group

You don't necessarily need to lead a ride from the front of the group. As long as you've provided the route or cue sheet, you may be able to serve your riders as well by leading from the back as you can from the front.

Some ride leaders spend the ride making their way back and forth between the front and the back of the group, checking to see that everyone is doing all right. Other ride leaders choose to spend the entire ride at the back of the group. This ensures that they'll eventually come upon anyone who has stopped for any reason.

If you choose not to lead from the front, here are a couple of things to watch out for:

- If it's a stay-together ride, remind everyone what the pace is and ask them to maintain that pace.

- If you want riders to stop in a particular location, be sure everyone understands where that location is.
- Remind riders to watch their navigation device or cue sheet carefully and stop if they have any doubts about which direction they should be going.

The benefits of having a sweep

If you lead from the front, you may want to have someone ride sweep, that is, ride at the back of the group. On most rides, the chief advantage of having a sweep is that the leader knows when everyone has arrived at a regrouping point (assuming no one in the middle of the group missed a turn). However, if you have unusually slow riders, mechanical problems, or an accident on your ride, a good sweep can be invaluable.

Another advantage of a sweep is using them to help negotiate moves across travel lanes in preparation for a left turn. Before moving left, the leader should slow down if needed to reduce gaps in the group. The sweep then checks that it is safe to move left and then does so when safe. Once sweep has "taken the lane", the ride leader moves left and riders should follow the leader. This maneuver also works well at roundabouts.

Using corner people to keep riders from getting lost

If you want to keep your group together during the ride, you may want to try using corner people. At the beginning of the ride, explain to your riders that, whenever you turn a corner, you'll ask the person closest to be the corner person. This person then stays at the corner and points riders in the proper direction until the sweep comes by. Be sure everyone knows to be on the lookout for corner people.

A few suggestions:

- Try to spread the duty around a little bit, so no one starts to feel put upon. Rather than designating corner people, you might also want to call out "Any volunteers for corner person?" Almost always, someone will call back "I'll take it."
- If you designate a corner person, make sure that person hears you and stops.
- Don't use corner people under unfavorable conditions. A cold rainy day is not the time to ask for a volunteer corner person.

Controlling pace lines

In general, the club discourages pace lines during free group rides because they can be dangerous, especially for novice riders inexperienced with pace lines. On some roadways it's better to stay in single file and not have a rider continuing to roll to the back, a characteristic of pace lines. However, if you're going to allow pace lines on your ride, here are some suggestions for safe pace line riding:

- Call out stops, hazards, and changes in direction loudly, clearly, and early.
- Don't allow riders to lead a pace line if they don't know the course, particularly on descents.
- Don't allow riders to ride in a pace line if they're using aero bars like those found on a time trial/triathlon bike. In a pace line, the ability to stop quickly is paramount, and when using aero bars, the rider cannot brake quickly.
- Be extra careful if you have single bicycles and tandems in the same pace line. A tandem with two riders weighs a lot more than a single bike and rider, so it isn't as maneuverable in an emergency.
- Limit pace lines to a reasonable length, preferably eight or fewer.

After the ride

After the ride, thank riders for coming and ask for comments or suggestions. Did riders enjoy the ride? Did they like the route? Is there anything you could have done differently? You should call any rider who was injured or lost during the ride.

Complete the Online Completion Report when you are finished with your ride. You can find that at the tab at the top of your ride listing on the Cascade.org website.

If you had an incident on your ride, please fill out the online incident report. Using the paper report form at the site of the incident allows you to take any notes that may be helpful in filling out the online form. If you have questions about the incident report process, email cbrides@cascade.org Please submit within 24 hours of ride completion.

If you had a major incident on your ride, email cbrides@cascade.org and let us know.

If a rider calls you to ask for the phone number of someone else on the ride, do not give out that information.

Handling injuries

Handling severe accidents – call 911

If there is any question about whether professional medical attention is necessary, call 911 immediately.

Important! If a rider has an accident and lands on his or her head, neck, or shoulders, you must consider the possibility of a neck or back injury.

If the person is conscious: Ask if the person has neck or back pain, weakness, or loss of limb function or sensation. If so, you should suspect spinal cord injury and have the person stay very still.

If the person is unconscious: You have no way to know what injury the person may have suffered, so do not move an unconscious person.

If an unconscious person regains consciousness before help arrives: Keep the person as still and quiet as possible. You may need to be firm. Someone who is in shock or suffering a concussion isn't the best judge of what to do at the moment. Be sympathetic but firm.

If the injured person is in a roadway, divert or stop traffic rather than move the person, and wait for help to arrive.

What to do if one of your riders has a crash and is seriously injured

Stay calm: Pause, take a deep breath, and survey the situation before you act.

If the injured rider is in the roadway, have other riders divert or stop traffic until you can determine if the person has a possible neck or back injury.

Get all other riders and their bicycles off the road.

Important! If you determine that the person has a possible neck or back injury, continue to divert or hold up traffic until help arrives. Do not move the person.

Determine if the person is injured seriously enough to require medical attention: The injured rider should get medical attention if he or she:

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Is bleeding heavily.
Has a head injury and lost consciousness, even briefly.
Can't remember what happened.
Has obvious pain when moving an injured limb.
Has trouble opening his or her jaw.

If you don't know much about first aid yourself, ask if anyone in your group does.

If the person has no obvious injuries, you still should pay careful attention to determine if the person is confused or disoriented, which could also indicate a head injury.

Again, if there is any question about whether professional medical attention is necessary, call 911 immediately.

Care for and reassure the injured rider until help arrives: Be helpful and remain positive, given the situation and the available materials. In particular, keep the person as warm and dry as possible. Regardless of the rider's condition, act calmly, speak in reassuring tones, and be sure that everyone around you does the same.

Make sure the person's contact information is available for the ambulance.

If possible, ask the ambulance crew to take the rider's bike. If the emergency responders won't do that, make arrangements to leave the bike somewhere safe to be collected.

Important! Be sure you know the rider's name and contact information so you can call later to check on their condition, return the rider's bike, and file the [Online Incident Report Form](#). If there has been a serious injury to any rider(s), you should contact cbcrides@cascde.org as soon as possible after the ride.

Other concerns in the event of a severe accident

In addition to taking care of the injured rider, you need to be concerned about the other riders and about the injured rider's bike and gear.

Continuing the ride: In some cases, you may need to continue the ride before the injured rider has recovered enough to start riding again or before the ambulance has arrived. For

example, if it's evening and you're running out of daylight, you'll need to get the other riders back to the starting point.

Do not leave an injured rider alone. If the other riders can find their way back to the starting point, you and someone who knows first aid should stay with the injured rider.

Who to notify in the event of an accident/incident

If an injured rider is taken to the hospital unconscious, and if the person provided an emergency contact phone number, call that number immediately and calmly explain what happened.

If the rider is conscious, he or she can decide whom to contact and when.

In general, incident reports should be completed:

1. any time a rider(s) is unable to complete the ride (crash, fatigue, or other medical need);
2. if there is material damage (broken bicycle or property damage);
3. if the rider(s) sustains an injury, however slight (including road rash, bruise, scrape, cut);
4. if the rider has fallen from their bicycle or crashes into a fixed or moving object, but continues with the ride. (Frequently "minor spills" end up with trips to urgent care following the ride, and it's not always clear if a rider has hit their head.)

As Ride Leader, you should complete the [Online Incident Report Form](#) within 24 hours of your ride. Additionally, you should follow up with the injured/affected rider(s) within 24 hours. When submitting the ride completion report, you will receive a prompt to complete the Incident Report if you check the box that there was an incident on your ride.

If there has been an incident, a witness can assist with filling out details on the Incident Report Form. (So it's important to have paper copies of the form with you.) Alternatively, a witness can make a voice recording on their mobile device, describing what they saw, and forward that to you.

Other Medical Issues

Hypothermia

If you're riding in cold or wet weather, keep an eye on all of your riders to ensure that no one is suffering from hypothermia. Mild hypothermia is characterized by shivering, and can be treated by getting the person out of the cold and into dry clothes. If there's nowhere to get out of the cold, try sharing body heat. More severe cases are characterized by confusion and lack of coordination; in this case you need to get the person to medical care.

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke

Heat exhaustion is characterized by pale, clammy skin, profuse perspiration, and extreme tiredness or weakness. The person may have a headache and may vomit. With heat exhaustion, the person's body temperature is approximately normal. The treatment for heat exhaustion is rest. If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

Heat stroke is far more dangerous. The body's temperature control system has stopped working, so the person doesn't sweat anymore. Body temperature may rise so far that brain damage may result.

The symptoms of heat stroke include hot, red skin; no perspiration; extremely high body temperature; dizziness; nausea; headache; rapid pulse; and confusion, disorientation, or unconsciousness. If heat stroke develops, the rider will need medical care, possibly including intravenous fluids.

Get the person out of the heat immediately, and cool their body quickly. Soak the person in cool but not cold water, or pour water over the body. Stop and observe the person for 10 minutes, then cool some more if the person's body temperature is still above 102°. If the person is alert, offer oral fluids, preferably water or sports drinks. Don't give the person coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverage.

Road rash

The person should clean the wound thoroughly, apply some antiseptic cream or ointment, and cover it with clean gauze. For open cuts or abrasions, the rider should seek

medical care if he or she hasn't had a tetanus immunization in the last five years.

What to carry in a first-aid kit

If you decide to carry a first-aid kit for the occasional minor injury, here are some suggestions on what to include:

- Large gauze squares for cleaning road rash or as protection from further harm.
- A roll of gauze for covering large areas of rash.
- Non-adherent sterile pads.
- Antiseptic cream or ointment.
- A roll of tape to secure bandages.
- Band-Aids® for small cuts and blisters.
- Second Skin for open blisters.
- Ibuprofen or Tylenol® to minimize swelling or general minor pain.
- Antihistamine, in case someone has an allergic reaction.
- Latex gloves.

Getting first-aid training

If you're interested, first-aid training is readily available. Fire departments and employers offer free CPR training. For information on more extensive training, you can call the Seattle/King County Red Cross, or your local Red Cross chapter.

Handling other problems

Riding in the rain

In a light rain, you can probably keep riding, but you need to be especially careful on white paint road markings, downhill, wet leaves, railroad tracks, and metal bridge decks.

In a rain that's heavy enough to affect visibility, you should consider stopping, moving off the roadway, and if possible, find shelter until the rain slows.

If the weather does not look good at the start, have some bailouts or shortcuts in mind.

Avoiding lightning

If you happen to encounter lightning, use the "Flash-To-Bang" method of measuring lightning distance. This is the amount of time that elapses between when you see the flash and when you hear the thunder. For each five-second count, lightning is one mile

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away, so at 25 seconds the lightning is five miles away. At a count of 15 seconds (three miles) take immediate defensive action:

- Where possible, find shelter in a building or in a fully enclosed metal vehicle such as a car, truck, or van with the windows closed.
- Avoid water.
- Avoid metal objects such as bicycles, electric wires, fences, machinery, railroad tracks, tent poles, and so on.
- Don't stop beneath small open-sided rain shelters or isolated trees.
- Avoid hilltops, open spaces, ditches, and depressions.
- If your hair is standing up, you have a tingling sensation, the count between flash and bang is less than five seconds, or lightning is striking nearby, you should:
- Remove all metal objects.
- Crouch down, and put your feet together and your hands on your knees.
- Avoid direct contact with other people.

Aggressive dogs

In areas where known aggressive dogs live, sometimes riders carry pepper spray, a portable fog horn/noise device, or a small baton. But these items need to be ready, at-hand. In lieu of tools to threaten or scare away dogs, there are a few important things that you can do to educate yourself on non-confrontational methods to deter overly aggressive dogs and avoid an attack situation. These methods include talking to the dogs using a calm and patient voice, using your body language to indicate that you are not afraid and that you are willing to defend yourself if you must, and not turning your back on them. If a dog looks like it is going to attack, the time for a calm gentle voice is over and you might want to try short and curt phrases such as "go home!" or "bad dog" or "no!" as these are all commands that the dog likely understands.

If all else fails, know that a bicycle can also be a weapon and a barrier and it is not unreasonable to hop off to hide behind your bicycle or use it as a battering ram as a last defense, especially if you are facing an uphill or don't have the momentum needed to escape the dog's proximity.

Aggressive motorists

If you have trouble with an aggressive driver, get everyone off the road, and wait until the driver goes away. Don't antagonize the driver in any way. If you can, discreetly take a photo of the vehicle license number and driver, and contact the police.

Dangerous riders in your group

If you have a careless rider in your group, and the person continues to be troublesome after you've spoken with him or her about being more careful, insist that the rider leave the group. If necessary, stop the group and wait until the rider leaves before you continue.

You are the Leader and safety of the group is paramount. Asking an unsafe rider to leave can be one of your most important safety decisions!

Mechanical problems

Ride leaders are not expected to fix things but if someone has mechanical problems here are some suggestions:

Check with your riders to see if anyone has the parts and the expertise to make the repair.

If there's a nearby bike shop, you might take the group on a detour. You could also suggest that the rider go alone, and provide instructions on how to rejoin the group later, if possible.

Suggest the bus. All buses in King County are equipped with bicycle racks, as are buses in many of the surrounding areas.

Some problems are not as severe as they might seem:

Broken spokes: Generally, if you don't have too far to travel, you can just ride with a broken spoke. If you can, remove the parts of the spoke, otherwise tie or tape the broken parts to adjacent spokes. If breaking the spoke also affects the true of the wheel, you may also need to loosen caliper brakes. Emphasize that the rider should avoid potholes as much as possible.

Broken chains: If someone has a chain tool along, you may be able to remove the bad link and put the chain back together. Because the chain will then be shorter, the rider should avoid using the combination of the large chain ring (in front) and the large cog (in back).

A hole in a tire: If you have a small hole in a tire, you can keep the inner tube from
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bulging out through the hole by slipping something inside the tire to cover the hole. A dollar bill works fine as does a nutrition bar wrapper, and a section cut from an old tire works even better, but it's just a temporary fix. You should replace the tire as soon as you can. If the hole is in the sidewall, take extra care because a sidewall cut can cause the tire to fall off the rim.

[Ride Leader Skills and Procedures](#)

Listed below are helpful tips and best practices for leading a ride

Tips for safe riding

Helmets

- Always wear an approved bicycle helmet. (Helmets are required on all Cascade rides and are required by law in some places.)

Traffic regulations

- Observe all traffic laws. Your bicycle is legally considered a vehicle, so you're subject to the same traffic laws as the drivers of motorized vehicles. (Special exception in Washington State is the "Safety Stop": Bicyclists may treat stop signs as yield signs when no others are present in the intersection.)
- Use hand and voice signals when turning or stopping.
- Ride with traffic. Motorists don't look for bicycles going the "wrong way."
- Don't wear headphones while you're cycling. It's dangerous and, in some places, illegal.
- When riding at night, state law requires you to have, at a minimum, a white front head lamp and a red rear reflector, each visible from a distance of 500 feet. It's also a good idea to have a red tail light or blinker and to wear reflective clothing and safety vests to increase visibility. Flashing headlights are illegal in Washington State.
- Motorists who stop when they are not required to do so and "wave the group through" may be causing a hazard. We should encourage leaders to signal to these extra nice drivers to move on so we can cross when it is our turn and it is safe to do so.

Hazards

- Make eye contact with drivers so you know that they've seen you.
- Cross railroad tracks at a 90° angle.

- Look ahead for road hazards (glass, potholes, wide cracks, metal grates, gravel, and so on), and point them out to other riders. This is extra important when the road is wet.
- Check for traffic yourself. Scan the road in front of you, behind you, and around you.
- Watch for car doors opening in your path. Ride at least 3 feet from parked cars.
- Use voice and hand signals to communicate with other riders, especially when you're riding close together.

Courtesy

- Take a full lane when safety dictates. If you're delaying five or more vehicles, pull off the road at the next turnout to allow them to pass when safe to do so.
- If you stop for any reason, move yourself and your bicycle completely off the road or trail.
- On multi-use trails and sidewalks, yield to pedestrians. Slow down when other people are present, and slow to a walking pace if safety dictates.
- Pass on the left, and use a bell or your voice to alert others that you're passing

More tips

- When there's traffic behind you, ride single-file so cars can pass
- In some cases where there is limited or no shoulder, large groups should be split into smaller packets of riders so motorists can "leap-frog" past the whole group. This improves safety and reduces motorists' stress.
- Limit pace lines to eight or fewer
- Before every ride, make sure your bike is in good condition ([ABC Quick check](#))
- Bring a pump, spare tube, patch kit, tire irons, and a full water bottle
- Eat before you're hungry, drink before you're thirsty

Best practices for leading a Free Group Ride.

- Have fun! If you are tense, your riders will be too.
- The Ride Leader's primary responsibility is the safety and well-being of the group on the road.
- Obey all traffic laws. Bicycles are vehicles.
- Observe your group to ensure all riders are adhering to SMART riding practices.
- Ride approximately 18 inches from edge of roadway (or further from edge as is safe) to allow for space to veer right to avoid hazards
- Do not block right or left turn lanes if proceeding straight at an intersection. (While it is legal in Washington State for cyclists to queue in a right turn lane when proceeding straight, this practice is not recommended.)
- Avoid sudden movements or rapid slow-downs. Remember you have a train behind you.
- Be smooth. Accelerate and decelerate gradually.
- Use your speedometer to check your pace. Do so frequently.
- Riders will follow you anywhere you go, sometimes not looking to see if it's safe.
- Don't force a quick turn if not safe, rather stop or continue and turn back around.
- Riders watch what you do – reinforce & model good behavior.
- Acknowledge 'car back' and other communication by repeating calls to the entire group – each rider should pass the call to the rider behind them.
- When stopping to address the group, move to the middle so everyone can hear.
- Stop the group and warn them of special hazards or situations (steep descent, congested area, etc.)
- A friendly wave to courteous drivers helps – be an ambassador for Cascade and for all cyclists.
- Trail etiquette:
 - Slow group way down when passing walkers, especially if they have children.
 - Watch out for dogs, especially unleashed ones and long leads. Other animals, such as rabbits and squirrels may also be a hazard.
 - Pass as far left as is safe.
 - Cyclists must yield to pedestrians on trails.
 - Limit speed to posted limits and never in excess of 15mph.

- Sidewalks may be used and should be used if safety is a question – note some places may restrict sidewalk use in congested areas (downtown etc.)
- Don't get distracted by other riders – if you have to, ask them to move back or stop talking. You are not being rude. Your responsibility is group safety.
- Riders will try to talk to you at the worst times, so keep focused on leading.
- 4-way stops – Don't everyone go at once if there is traffic. Rather, proceed in groups of 4 or 5 at a time, taking turns with the cars.
- Yield to pedestrians in intersections and crosswalks (marked and unmarked).
- Stop at stop lights when riding on the shoulder at a T-intersection. – Yes, stop.
- Be careful of door zones and right hooks – often it is good to move the group into the traffic lane, out of the bike lane to go behind cars and proceed through intersections prior to returning to the bike lane.
- Discourage anyone yelling 'clear'; everyone should look for themselves.
- Use curves in route to look back at the group and check on them.
- **Smaller groups** are easier for traffic to pass – watch for a big string of riders, and break the group into smaller packets (6 or fewer riders) and create a hole (3 or 4 car lengths) to allow traffic to 'leapfrog'. Tell the group ahead of time this might happen.
- Be aware of holding up traffic and use turnouts to pull over and let traffic pass when safe to do so. (Do not delay 5 or more vehicles.)
- Don't let the fast riders push you into a faster pace. Remember, there could be a rider who is just hanging on.
- Flats/Mechanicals – Specify in your ride description and brief if you are going to assist and wait as a group. It's not required for you to hold the group for a rider's flat tire. Rather, it's a judgment call. As a minimum, find out if the rider has what's needed for a fix. Ask for another rider to wait with the person, if possible. Try to avoid leaving someone out in the middle of nowhere by themselves. Make sure they know the route or have a cue sheet.
- Use hand and voice signals (fixed object, loose object, tracks, pedestrians, movement and braking)
- Start out slowly from stop to avoid the "accordion effect".
- Riders should not ride around cars to get to group at light. This practice just makes motorists mad and they have to pass the group again.
- Gaps will naturally form, but be aware if too large a gap forms, you may need to slow a little to get riders closer together (soft pedaling).
- Always remember it's your ride. Don't let the 'know it all' override your best judgment.

Day of Ride Checklist

What to bring

- Your own bike and helmet
- Copies of the CBC Incident Report (for recording info, if necessary)
- A couple of pens
- Food and full water bottles
- Basic tools, pump and tire gauge, extra tube, patch kit, and tire levers
- Rudimentary first-aid kit
- Bike computer to monitor your pace
- Cell phone

Stuff to check on

- Does everyone have a helmet?
- Has everyone registered for the ride? (It's required.)
- How many riders do you have?

The pre-ride announcement

- Introductions
- Welcome new riders and mention Club benefits.
- Distance and pace of the ride
- Whether the ride will stay together and, if not, where the first regroup or planned rest stop will be
- The route
- SMART talk
- Keep the ride leader informed
- Questions?
- Have fun!