

SESSION 3

Riding as a Group

LEVEL

1

Introduction & Aims

- Riders can ride safely as a group or as part of a 'snake'.

Type of Location

Quiet urban or rural location or a shared use path.

Demonstration/ Discussion

Walk through singling out and pairing. Walk through the procedure for negotiating a junction as a snake.

Activities

Practice singling out and pairing. Practice negotiating junctions and small roundabouts as a snake.

Coaching & Safety

- Review Risk Assessment for location.
- Ensure everyone is clear about his or her role when riding as part of a snake.
- Riders should ride with brakes covered.

Session Review

What went well? What will riders

LEVEL

2

- Riders can ride as part of a group on the road.
- They can demonstrate good communications, and riding etiquette.

Quiet urban or rural roads before riding in busier locations.

Walk through the drill for singling out and changing front riders.

Explain the terms for singling out and going back into pairs. Describe the terms to indicate traffic in front and to the rear and the signals and warnings about road hazards.

- Review Risk Assessment for location.
- Enforce legal maximum of two abreast.
- Ensure riders understand Highway Code for NI, Rules of the Road for R of I.
- Riders should ride with brakes covered.

LEVEL

3

- Riders can “follow a wheel”, change riding formation, take account of wind direction and position to get maximum shelter.

Rural or urban roads.

Walk through the drills for changing formation. Demonstrate safe positioning.

Practice riding round a circuit so that group are required to change formation as the direction of the wind varies. Explain when different formations will be required.

- Review Risk Assessment of location.
- Ride legally and with respect for other road users.
- Riders should ride with brakes covered.

practice for next time? Point the way ahead to the next session.

Snaking

The first technique described is called snaking. Snaking is more appropriate to beginner groups and requires two leaders. Snaking is a technique which assists the management of a group on-road. Large groups can be managed through busy junctions. The leaders should have practiced riding the selected route and the group should be clearly briefed as to what is expected of them.

- Two leaders are required, one at the front, the other at the back of the group.
- The order of the group is determined before setting off and a no overtaking rule is established.
- A stronger rider is selected to ride in front of the rear leader.
- Riders are told not to proceed simply because the person in front has but should use their own judgment. If they want/need to stop they can.

The key to safety is keeping the group together and there are two situations where the group may split.

- Whilst negotiating a junction, part of the group has to give way.
- A vehicle overtaking the “snake” has to pull in before the overtake is complete. This is more likely with large groups.

The aim is to have other road users treat the “snake” as a single entity. The leaders will ride as though they were riding as a pair but with a “snake” of riders between them. The primary position is the default position for “snaking”.

Front Leader:

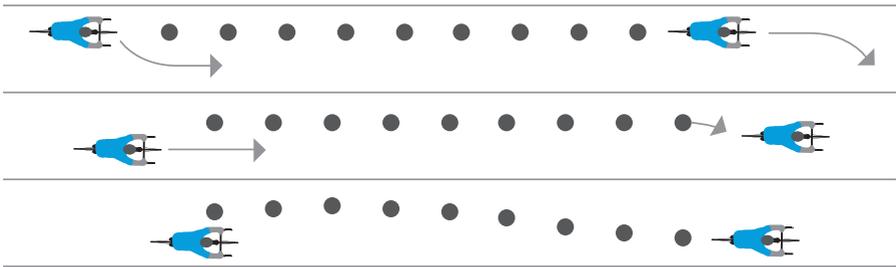
- Rides slowly, looking back to maintain visual contact with rear leader.
- Stops if any rider needs to stop.
- Gives instructions although in practice this will be restricted to the front two or three riders.

Rear Leader:

- Uses better observation position to manage and communicate with riders.
- Moves from default position at rear of group when appropriate. This is why a strong rider should be chosen to ride at the back of the group.
- Ensures riders are appropriately positioned and do not overtake.
- Adjusts position to protect riders.
- Stops if any rider needs to stop.

Snaking Manoeuvres:

Moving the group to a lane to the right:



- Rear leader looks, signals and manoeuvres into the chosen lane, followed by the front leader and in sequence each of the riders starting with the trainee immediately behind the front leader.

Turning to the left or right:

- The rear leader comes forward to the stop or give way line, progressing down the left or right side of the trainees as appropriate. This can be done on the approach to the junction.
- When turning right major to minor the rear leader will wait in the oncoming lane remaining vigilant for oncoming traffic until all riders are across.
- Riders can be seen safely across the junction from a position of good visibility.
- You do not have authority to direct traffic but in practice drivers are often co-operative to you halting traffic to move a group of children. In this situation the rear leader will look for a gap in the traffic which will allow the whole group to move out.
- You need to be able to stop the group if someone with right of way wishes to continue.

Right turn, major to minor road: rear instructor undertakes the group and positions to protect the group from oncoming traffic:

Leaders should consider their best position to see everyone across safely. This could be one leader on either side of the junction.

- Riders should have clear instructions of where to wait to allow everyone to stop safely clear of the junction.
- For very large junctions the riders may have to cross in groups. The front leader should cross with as many of the riders as possible stopping where there is sufficient room for the whole party to regroup safely clear of the junction. The rear leader should send the others across when safe to do so finally following the last rider over.
- Remember it may be both safer and quicker to walk over certain junctions

Traffic light, zebra and pelican crossings:

- On approaching traffic lights, zebra crossings or pelican crossings the rear leader comes forward to control the riders should it be necessary to stop.
- When signaled to do so the rear leader will send the riders forward to join the front leader's group.

Group management:

- Moving a group by snaking can be time consuming and requires considerable effort to ensure control.
- If you encounter a traffic jam do not attempt to filter the group through it. Walking past the jam using the pavement may be an option.

Group Riding

When introducing riders to group riding it can be useful to walk through the procedures for singling out, pairing, changing position etc. Walk through each element and then get the riders to ride it.

Some importance guidance for safety:

- Riders must take responsibility for themselves and for the group.
- Good communication is vital, both verbal and hand signals. This is especially so with large groups, when it is windy or where there is traffic noise.
- Riders should cover their brakes but avoid sudden braking. Use of the rear brake to make minor adjustments to speed can provide a visual clue to following riders.
- Riders should use similar gearing.
- Riders should ride a safe distance behind and slightly to the side of the rider in front.
- Greater spacing should be employed when descending.

Riding within the shelter of a group can be energy efficient with savings of up to 40% possible. This also means that less fit or tiring riders can be accommodated within the group and minimise their energy expenditure.

Group riding is based on riding in pairs with the time spent with a rider alongside varying according to circumstances.

If a group of riders are riding in single file the lead rider will expend most energy. After completing a spell at the front the rider will swing off to the sheltered side, slow slightly and allow the group to overtake. When adjacent to the last rider in the line speed will be equalised to the group and as soon as the last rider is past the resting rider will swing over to the end of the line avoiding a gap opening.



Up and Over or Riding Through and Off

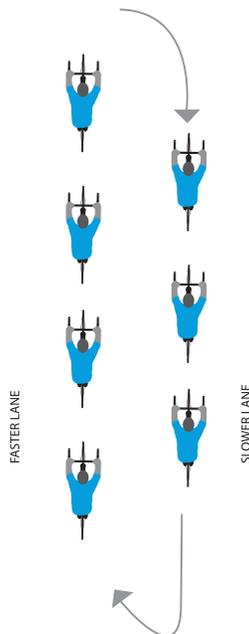
When riding in a paired formation changing the lead rider is achieved by one of the pair (usually the rider nearest the road centre) increasing their speed very slightly and moving over in front of the lead rider in the inner line. When in position at the head of the inner line the rider will ease back to the speed of that line.

Meantime the new lead rider in the outer line will move forward until riding alongside the inner line leader. At the rear of the group the last rider in the inner line will adjust their speed slightly and as a gap appears to their right, move over and join the outer line.

The key to smooth and efficient progress is to ensure that there are no sudden accelerations and that lead riders changing do not sprint through, opening up gaps.

The length of time at the front will vary. In a training or social situation it might be agreed to ride 500 metres or more at the front. In competition it might be less than 100 metres. When learning it might be 5-10 pedal turns.

Where possible the resting line should be sheltered from the wind. If the wind comes from the right, the working line would be on the right, the resting line on the left.



Singling Out

Riding in pairs might necessitate singling out to avoid conflict with traffic. Moving to single file will double the length of the group and may encourage drivers to overtake where it is not safe to do so. Decide what is safest for the group.

When the shout comes to single out the lead rider nearest to the kerb should speed up slightly with the lead rider on the outside slotting in behind. Other riders should follow suit. Unless unsafe to do so everyone should keep speed up, at least until the group is in single file.

To move back into pairs the leading riders position side by side with everyone slotting back into their original positions. It is vital that the lead riders proceed slowly as those at the back will have many bike lengths to make up.

When riding in pairs it is often necessary to look back and in this situation any instability can be risky. A good technique is for one of the pair to gently rest a hand on the shoulder of the other and with that added stability look back, often down the middle of the group.

