



## **Coast Riders Motorcycle Club**

### **Group Ride Guidelines**

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# Coast Riders Group Riding Guidelines

The Coast Riders Motorcycle Club is committed to the promotion of safe motorcycle riding practices. Many of the Club's activities involve riding in groups. It is important for the comfort and safety of all riders that everyone in the group has a clear understanding of the procedures followed by the Club in its group rides.

The guidelines and procedures in this document are provided to Club members for the sole purpose of demonstrating a safe and approved (BC Safety Council) method of changing lanes or passing vehicles while riding in a staggered group formation. Each rider participating in a group ride does so at their own risk and they are responsible for ensuring their own safety and the safety of their passengers.

**Prime Directive #1: Never hit the bike in front!**

**Prime Directive #2: Ride your own ride!**

## Part One – The Formation

The Coast Riders Motorcycle Club has adopted the Staggered Formation as shown in Figure 1.

Lane positions are normally described as:

- #1 – Left wheel track
- #2 – Centre
- #3 – Right wheel track

The Leader usually takes the #1 position on the left side of the lane. This is the strong position, and gives a good view of traffic ahead and an unobstructed view of the left lane in the rear view mirror.

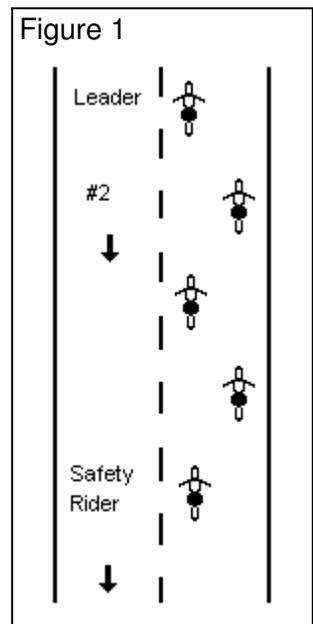
Number two rides on the #3 position on right side of the lane and behind the leader. Number three is behind and to the left of Number 2 in #1 lane position, with the rest of the bikes following suit. The Safety Rider (also known as: Sweep or Tail Gunner) brings up the rear.

The advantages of a staggered formation are:

- Tight formation between bikes to present the group as a cohesive unit to other road users.
- Good spacing between bikes directly in line.
- A full lane for each rider to dodge obstacles or to corner.

When moving to the left lane of a two lane divided highway each rider will maintain the same lane position. For example: If you were in the right half of the right lane you should now be in the right half of the left lane.

To alternate the lane position later the Leader signals “change lane position”, then moves to the #3 lane position. All other riders switch lane position to maintain the staggered formation. Again, this provides the leader with the strong position with the best views fore and aft.



## Spacing

The spacing maintained by each rider is measured in time rather than distance. This means that the gap will be greater at faster speeds, and tighter at slower speeds.

- The **'2-second rule'** means that in staggered formation there is a ONE second spacing between each bike, thus a TWO second spacing between bikes in the same track.
- IF your reaction time to an unexpected threat is 1 second or less (studies have shown this to be a reasonable expectation), and IF your motorcycle skills are as good or better than those of the next rider ahead of you, then whatever the motorcyclist ahead of you does you should be able to do without running into him. (Including a panic stop, a turn across your path, or both.)
- All else being equal, the "2-second rule" should constitute your fundamental safety margin while riding in a group if you use it as a minimum spacing distance.
- On an open, quiet road with little traffic, it is often more comfortable to ride in a looser formation. This allows riders to enjoy more of the scenery. You should maintain site of the bike in front of you and the bike behind you.
- In traffic or in town, a tight formation is less likely to be broken up by traffic, or changing traffic lights, and appears more as a single unit to other road users.

## Group Size

In the interest of safety and in consideration for other road users, a group will usually consist of five bikes. If there are 18 bikes at an event, they will form four groups of four or five bikes, each with a leader and a tail-gunner, preferably who are qualified (through our training) as a Coast Rider Road Captain.

If the total number of bikes is not divisible by 5, the decision to go with groups of four or six will depend upon the route to be ridden. In more congested areas, smaller groups are preferable.

## ***Part Two – The Participants***

What follows is a listing of the group riders' responsibilities and duties. Though you may not be a Group Leader or Tail-gunner, it is important to understand the role of each in a group ride, as well as your own responsibilities.

### **The Group Leader**

#### *PRE-RIDE*

The Leader should have a map or written directions of the proposed ride to refer to.

Confer with other group Leaders to determine:

- Group sizes ( $5 \pm 1$ )
- Destination
- Route
- Rest, lunch & gas stops

Call a brief meeting of your group to:

- Provide basic instruction on group riding. Anyone not familiar with CR Group Riding Procedures may be asked to ride at the back of the group until they are comfortable with the procedures.
- Assign "Number 2" and "Safety"
- Review hand signals with new riders.

Line up the group prior to moving out

- Move into an open area and stop
- The rest of the group should line up in formation
- When everyone is ready and gives "thumbs up" the Leader proceeds.

#### *THE RIDE*

- If the group becomes separated at an intersection, the Leader will slow down to allow the others to catch up, or stop on the side of the road when it is safe to do so. As the lagging bikes approach, they should be prepared for the lead bikes to pull out in front of them to reform the group.
- If a rider drops out due to a problem, the Leader should find a safe place to pull the group off of the road. The Safety Rider will stop with the disabled bike. After a short interval waiting for the others to catch up, the Leader will go back to investigate. The rest of the group should stay put until the Leader and Safety decide what to do.
- If the group opens up on an extended country road, the Leader should stop before making any turn off the road being travelled or at any major intersection. This allows the group to re-form, and prevents anyone from getting lost.

## Number Two

Number Two's job is to:

- Stay behind the leader in the opposite half of the lane.
- Set the spacing appropriate to the road, traffic and speed conditions.
- Signal and move to a single file formation if conditions warrant:
  - Poor pavement on edge of road
  - Narrow section
  - Cyclists, pedestrians or horse riders
  - Parked or stopped vehicles
- Watch for obstacles on the road and point them out to those following.

## Safety Rider / Tail-gunner / Sweep

The Safety is the second busiest rider in the group. The duties include:

- Keep an eye on the other riders, watching for loose luggage, problems with bikes etc.
- When a lane change is signaled by the leader, the Safety may be the first to change the lane, holding back traffic. (See **Lane Changes** below.)
- When a rider drops out of formation due to a malfunction, or other problem, the Safety Rider should ensure that this rider is safely off of the road and help that rider with the problem. Once the problem is resolved, catch up to the waiting group.

## All Other Riders in the Group

Everyone else has responsibilities too. They are to:

- Arrive alert & well rested.
- Arrive on-time at the departure point with a full tank of gas and ready to go.
- Pay attention during the Pre-Ride meeting to ensure you understand the day's itinerary.
- Inform the Leader & Safety beforehand if you intend to leave the group during the ride.
- During the ride, maintain your lane position.
- Take advantage of rest stops and gas stops to avoid unnecessary extra stops later. Be ready to go when the rest stop is over.
- Stay with your group until each leg is over. If you want to change groups, inform both Leaders.
- Be prepared to discuss situations that occurred during the ride. Accept constructive criticism with good humor. If you are uncomfortable with another rider in your group, discuss the situation with the Group Leader at the earliest opportunity.
- Enjoy yourself.
- **Ride your own ride within your own skill and comfort boundaries.**

## Part Three – The Maneuvers

A lane change on a highway can be dangerous and frustrating for riders and other road users. The Leader will decide which of the following two procedures to follow, based on traffic conditions. If Group riders follow the Leader's actions, it will be clear which procedure is in effect.

### Lane Changes #1 – Light Traffic

Refer to *Figure 2* below for a step by step lane change from the right lane to the passing lane on a busy four lane highway.

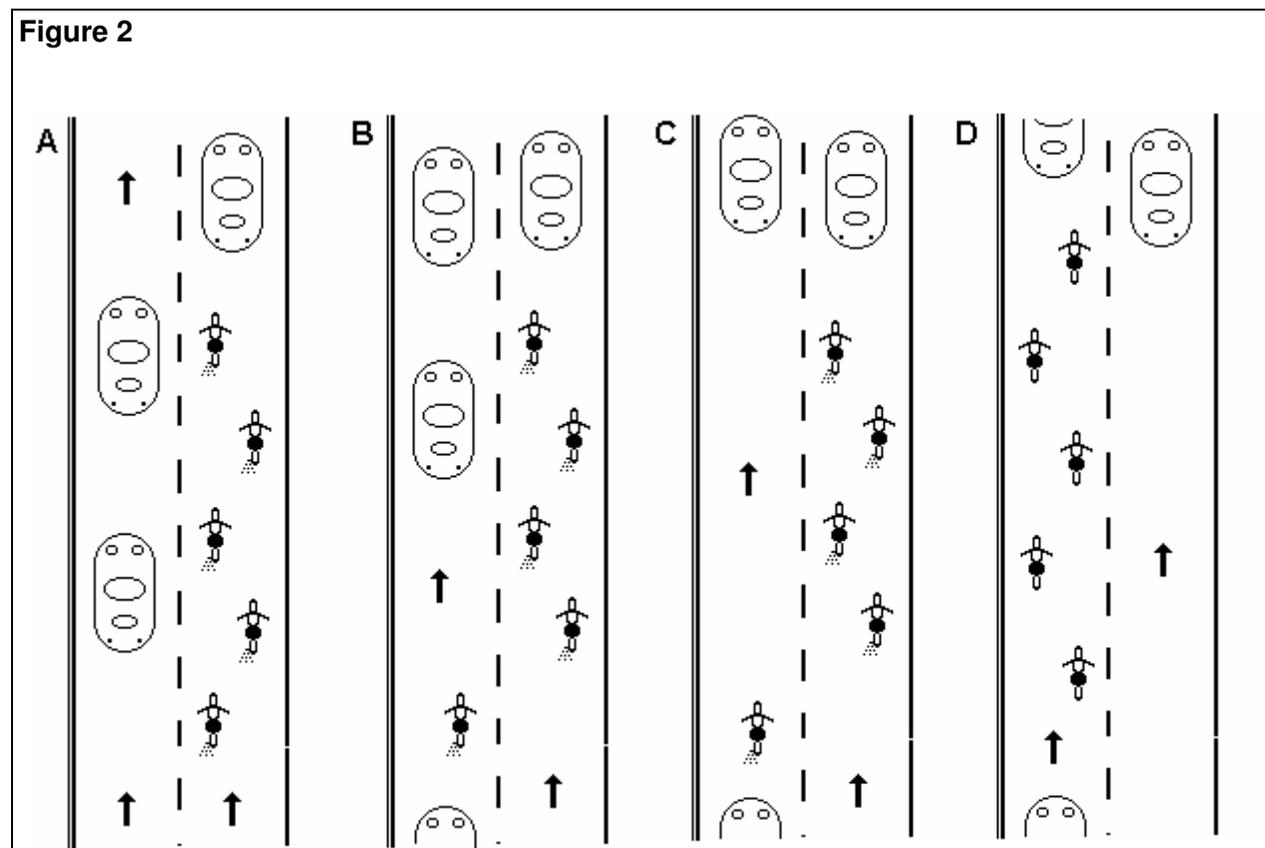
**In figure 2-A**, the Leader initiates a change to the left lane to get around the slow vehicle, signals left on but does **NOT** make the change.

All the other riders see the leader's signal and also turn on their left turn signals. They do **NOT** change position at this time.

**In figure 2-B**, the Safety Rider waits until there is a large enough gap in the left lane traffic to safely move over, then moves to the left lane in a position behind and to the left of the group.

**In figure 2-C**, the faster traffic in the left lane has cleared the area next to the group. When the leader judges the last car is ahead, the Leader moves into the right lane taking position in the #3 lane position and accelerates to the speed of the passing lane traffic.

The other riders determine if it is safe to change lane, and follow the Leader, maintaining the staggered formation based on the lane position of the Leader.



**Figure 2-D** shows the completed lane change.

A change from the left to the right lane works in exactly the opposite way.

## Lane Changes #2 – Heavy Traffic

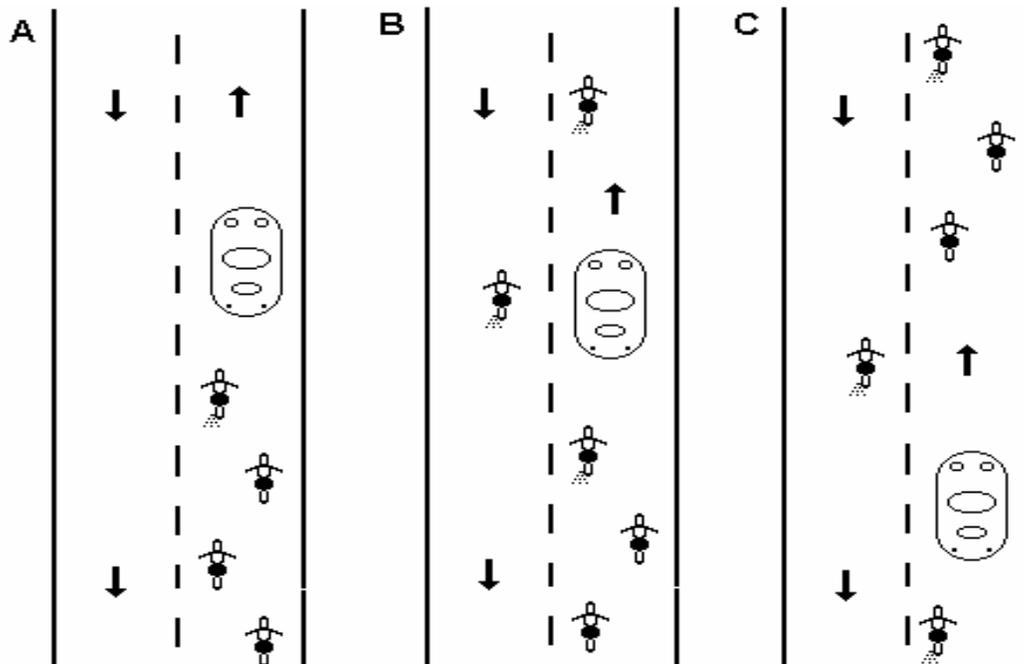
The wide gap required for a whole group to move is difficult to find in heavy traffic, and if it exists, it will be an invitation for other drivers to jump into it, perhaps while the group is moving.

In heavy traffic, a lane change may be completed by riders individually, as in “overtaking” below. Such a lane change may be required if the Group is leaving the freeway, or to get into the safer left lane when approaching merging traffic lanes.

## Overtaking

Passing on a two lane road should never be undertaken lightly. Each rider is responsible for their own pass. If traffic is heavy and passing lanes are short, each rider should pass individually when it is clear and safe to do so.

Figure 3



**In figure 3-A,** the Leader signals a pass, completes it and returns to formation.

**In figure 3-B,** Number Two signals and starts to pass.

**In figure 3-C,** the rest of the riders make their pass in turn.

**It is very important to keep your speed up after you have completed your pass to make room for the riders following.**

### *BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO*

Only if the group breaks into two obvious sub-groups and becomes separated for a substantial period of time should the “new Lead Bike” move from #3 lane position to #1.

This pattern may occur not only during a lane change, but also during a passing maneuver or when a group gets separated in traffic because of signal lights and traffic flow.

## Parking

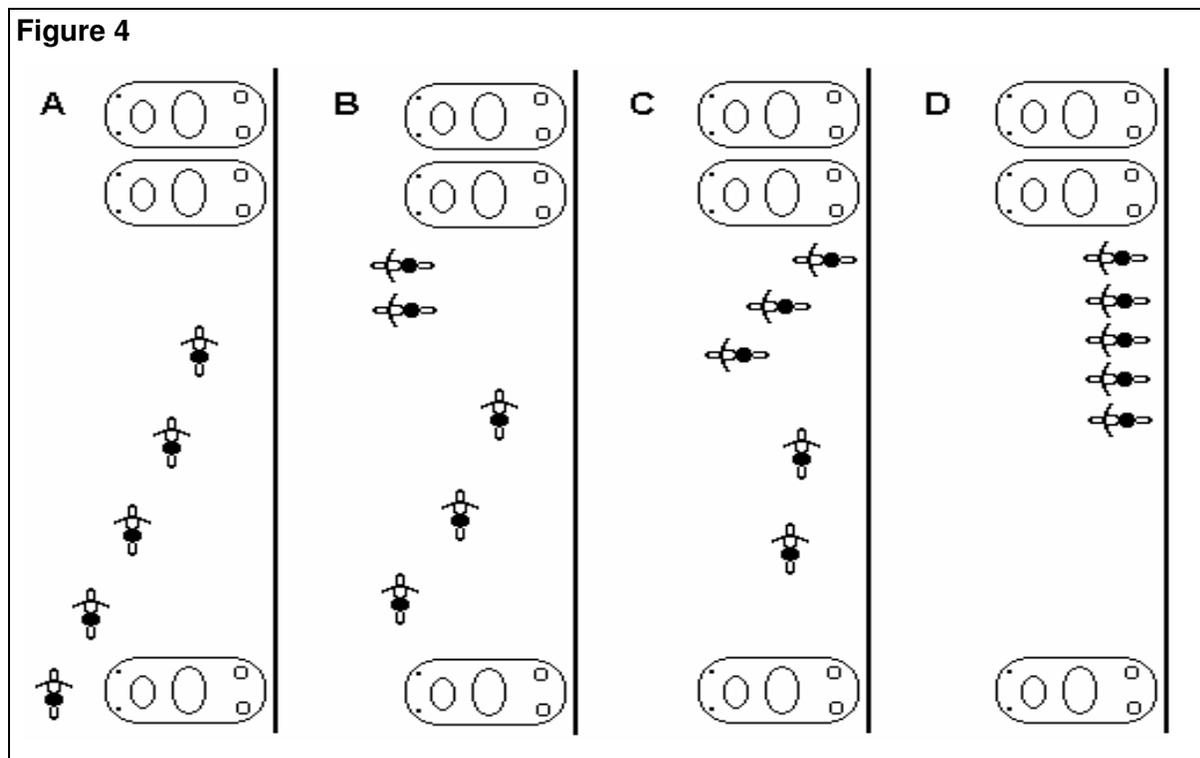
We have a guideline for parking for a variety of reasons:

- To avoid confusion and possible collisions.
- To keep the group together in the parking lot.
- By lining up in order, departures become easier.
- Take up less space in the parking area.
- Better public image.

When approaching a parking situation we follow these steps:

Change formation to a single file.

Allow the leader to look for a space big enough for the group. If there is more than one group, the Leader of the first group will try for a space large enough for all. If that isn't possible, then each group should try to stay together.



**In Figure 4-A** the Leader is pulling into a space with the group following single file.

The leader will complete the turn and stop ready to back into the space. Number Two will line up next to the Leader as in **Figure 4-B**.

The Leader backs into the space and as Number Three completes the turn, Number two will then back in as in **Figure 4-C**.

Each rider will back into the space as the next rider stops. This format prevents collisions (or near misses) as everyone knows the steps. The result is the bikes lined up in order, ready for a quick departure as in **Figure 4-D**. (The angle of the parking is determined by the Leader. Others should follow suit.)

If there is more than one group and room, the next group will repeat the process.

## Stop Signs

**Stop Signs** and **Four Way Stops** present their own kind of challenge in keeping a group together. The following steps are important at every stop.

- The Leader must come to a complete stop and wait for the rest of the group to completely stop before proceeding into traffic.
- At a Four Way Stop, riders #1 & #2 should stop abreast of each other and proceed together when it's their turn. Riders #3 & #4 should do the same followed by #5 (& #6).
- The leader should maintain a slower pace till the group is reassembled.
- In some cases, drivers may remain stopped and wave the group through. In that case proceed quickly with a wave to say "Thanks".

When turning left onto a busy highway, the Leader makes a judgment. In heavy traffic, the Leader calls for a one-at-a-time movement, telling Number 2, who passes it on to Number 3 and so on.

- The Leader waits for a gap and makes the turn, then pulls onto a safe place to wait for the group.
- Each Rider in turn will make the turn and pull off the road behind the Leader to wait for the others.
- Finally, when the Safety Rider is has joined the group, the Group will proceed when it is safe to do so.

## Roundabouts

The group should change to single file formation when approaching a roundabout, and negotiate the roundabout safely as individual riders.

# Hand Signals

The following are the commonly used hand signals that may be seen on a Coast Riders Group Ride

## Stop

Arm extended straight down, palm facing back



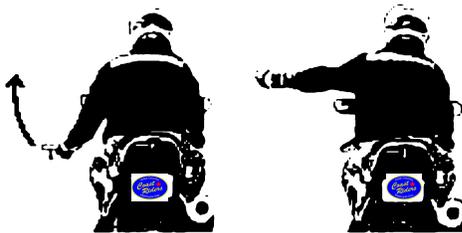
## Slow Down

Arm extended straight out, palm facing down



## Speed Up

Arm extended straight out, palm facing up



## Change Lane Position

Arm and index finger and thumb pointed straight up twisted back and forth



## Follow Me

Arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward



## You Lead / Come

Arm extended upward 45°, palm forward and pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front



## Single File

Arm and index finger pointed straight up



## Double File

Arm with index and middle fingers pointed straight up



## Hazard on the Road

On the left –  
point with  
left finger



On the right –  
point with  
right foot



## Turn Signal On

Open and close hand with fingers  
and thumb extended



## Pull Off

Arm positioned as for a right turn,  
forearm swung towards right shoulder

