



Santa Cruz Bicycle Advocate Committee Bicycle Paceline Basics and Guidelines

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The following are guidelines adopted by our group that will enable us to work and ride together, safely and steadily.

1. Single paceline. In Green Valley our pacelines are almost always single file with lead riders pulling off to the left after giving the suggested left arm signal. When a lead rider is ending his or her pull, they should accelerate 2 or 3 pedal strokes then pull off the front. This movement to the left should be crisp and safe.
2. No aero bars. They are not welcome in pacelines. The aero bar rider is less steady, and their hands are too far from brake levers. They are not safe for their owner nor for others in the paceline.
3. Suitable rear view mirrors are helpful and optional.
4. If you choose to stand off the saddle do not coast or slow down rather continue pedaling steadily.
5. The lead rider should:
 - a) ride at least 2-3 feet to the left of the edge of any paved roadway. In areas where there is a wide paved shoulder or bike lane the lead rider should ride in the middle of such a lane – not ride on or hugging the line dividing the motorized vehicles from the bicyclists.
 - b) ride straight, smoothly and at a consistent speed. Shift the line well in advance to avoid an upcoming hazard. Keep pedaling on a downhill so that the line will not have to brake.
 - c) never accelerate or slow down when assuming the front position. Gaps that form in a paceline waste the energy of the following riders as they must accelerate to close the gap. Prior to assuming the front position pay attention to your speed and just maintain that speed when the wind hits you at the front. If the speed of the paceline needs to be increased following the lead of a slower rider, wait until you have been pulling for a few seconds and then SLOWLY increase the speed. Preventing gaps from forming in the paceline is a key strategy
 - d) be responsible for indicating with hand and/or verbal signals all road hazards, upcoming cars, cyclists, pedestrians, RR tracks, necessary turns and slowing. Examples of such hand signals are:
 - use one finger to point at single items, like a rock. Also verbally announce the hazard.
 - use a shaking open hand for scattered hazards like glass or gravel. Also verbally announce the hazard.
 - use an open hand to the side to signify that the group is slowing down or stopping. You can also simply announce “slowing” or “stopping”.
 - wave your hand behind your back in a sideways pushing motion to signify a shift in the group due to an upcoming hazard like a slower rider, road sign, or obstacle.
 - use standard traffic hand signals to indicate left and right turns
 - keep in mind that a shout or hand signal may take several seconds to trickle down the paceline and hence should be done with plenty of early warning. Each rider should relay the sign back so that everyone is aware of it.
 - e) not take monster pulls and over exert oneself at the front. You may overexert yourself and prevent others from getting to the back for a welcome drink. Instead, take a shorter pull that maintains the speed, then drop off and slow down to recover as you move to the back. However, be careful not to slow down too much as you move to the back since you then might have to accelerate hard to maintain contact with the group or miss the group all together.

f) be the eyes of the paceline when approaching traffic lights, stop signs, and intersections. In large groups you may have to cross the intersection in multiple groups and then regroup afterward, with the lead group slowing until the other groups catch up. After turns and intersections allow riders to catch up before resuming paceline speed.

6. Riders within the paceline:

a) should ride a comfortable distance behind the wheel in front of you never overlapping the wheel in front of you. This distance is usually about 1 to 2 feet so that you will have adequate time for emergency steering and braking that will prevent your wheel from overlapping that of the rider in front of you.

b) should not fixate on the wheel in front of you. Look beyond the rider that is directly in front of you to see what is up the road.

c) should pedal smoothly and constantly to avoid surging. Do not apply your brakes harshly as this will cause you to back into the rider behind you. If you must brake do so gently. It is always better to either sit up or pull out of the paceline in order to increase your wind resistance and hence slow down. Use these same moves to slow down when going downhill. Also when going downhill increase the distance from the rider in front of you so that you will have a little more room for reaction time due to the higher speeds. Move back into the paceline as soon as it is safe to do so.

d) should ride in the drops or on the brake hoods where your hands are nearest the brake levers.

e) should never spit nor should one drink from a water bottle or fiddle with objects in jersey pockets. Water bottle handling within the paceline will always drop a riders speed, invariably cause some bike wobbling and be a distraction for riders behind. Rather riders should show up at the ride well hydrated, should drink at the rest stops, and drink when pulling off the front after having taken their turn pulling. It is also safer to drink when in the last position in the paceline.

f) should never handle a cell phone. Cell phone handling should only be done when to the side or off the back of the paceline.

g) should also be responsible for checking periodically for approaching traffic and calling out "Car back!" when traffic is approaching

h) if tiring, should also signal to those behind him that he/she is pulling out of the paceline in order to prevent a gap from forming

i) if there is a mechanical problem do not slam on the brakes. Rather, slowly and smoothly slide out of the paceline then decelerate before stopping at the side of the road. All riders should always stay completely out of the road when stopped or waiting.

j) if the group is traveling too fast for you, sit on the back. Then slow and fall further off the back when a paceline leader is returning to the back, allowing that leader to fall into the gap ahead of you. Communicate verbally with such a rider.