

# BON TON ROULET SAFETY HANDBOOK



(Adapted from the KNBC Bike Club Safety Handbook,  
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## GROUP RIDING HAS SOME SAFETY CHALLENGES SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU!!!

### INTRO

PLEASE remember that a bicycle is a vehicle under New York State Law . This means you are responsible to obey all traffic laws as other road users.

Here are some safety practices and procedures – to help get you safely back to the start point:

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### 1. CHECK YOUR BIKE

Ensure your bike is in safe operating condition:

- check the brakes (working with no frayed cables);
- check the gears to ensure they are shifting properly;
- clean and lubricate your chain;
- ensure your tires are properly inflated ensure any 'bike accessories' (kick stands, racks, panniers etc) are securely fastened;
- ensure nothing is hanging loose (including clothing) that could become tangled in the gears, brakes or wheel; and

## 2. CHECK YOUR CLOTHING/EQUIPMENT

- Do you have:
- A bell or horn on your bike ( New York State Law)
- A properly fitted ( and fastened) helmet
- a mounted red rear reflector and front white light (for riding at night);
- water bottle(s);
- spare tube;
- basic bike tool kit (for changing tires);
- proper shoes – no flip flops or sandals; and
- DO NOT WEAR HEAD PHONES or BOTH EAR BUDS ( NYS Law)

## 3. RIDING DOUBLE FILE

- When riding in New York – it is legal to ride double file - but - ONLY WHEN SAFE TO DO SO - and - only on non busy roads - never on pathways;
- NEVER ride double over a crest of a hill;
- Use courtesy and common sense;
- Single up when approaching or overtaking a car, or when a car is coming behind; ( NYS Law) and
- Have a system for singling up; and communicate it verbally and via signals.

Please note - there is no laid down system for moving back in (reverting to single file), i.e. - in front or in back of the 'inside' cyclist. COMMUNICATION HOWEVER - of the chosen action is essential - and - it is critical that the outside rider confirm it is indeed safe (sufficient room to move back in) so that he or she will not be causing a domino effect pile-up - BEFORE - he or she makes the move.

## 4. CLIMBING/DECENDING

- When travelling uphill (and down) - keep several bike lengths apart (to prevent crashes due to sudden mechanical failures (i.e. problems with chains and derailleurs); and
- NEVER ride double over a crest of a hill.

### How to Ride Efficiently on Hills

- When riding up a long hill, the best technique is to shift to lower gears to maintain pedal speed as long as you can;
- Sitting with a fast cadence is more efficient than standing with a lower one - it takes less energy;
- Standing uses more energy but is usually faster;
- as you slow down, shift to a lighter gear to maintain a steady cadence (pedal speed), don't wait until you run out of momentum or feel pain in your legs before you shift;
- Shift down one gear at a time to keep cadence constant and avoid losing momentum;
- Step in pedal systems or clips and straps allow you to pull on up stroke as well as push on the down stroke – distributes work to all available muscle groups;
- Try a "sit-stand-sit-stand" routine for long difficult climbs alternate - sitting and standing (every 10 or 15 strokes) to give large muscle groups a periodic rest;
- When changing from standing to sitting, keep the pedal pressure constant to avoid "roll back" effect.

## 5. WIND

- Treat the wind like a long, steady grade – focus on your spin and technique;
- Keep the body low – maintaining an aerodynamic body position can reduce wind resistance by up to one half;
- Dropped bars allow you to take the most advantage of a low body position;
- Headwinds drain energy and reduce your speed. Keep this in mind when planning a day's route and/or turnaround point; and
- In a strong, steady headwind or crosswind, a pace line or drafting will help everyone enjoy themselves by allowing the group to share the work.

## 6. GROUP SIZE AND SPACING

- If the group is large - break it up (to enable cars to pass more readily);
- Keep at least 3 feet between bikes (unless drafting);
- Although part of a group – think independently;
- While the way may have been 'clear' for the person ahead of you – you may no longer have sufficient time to make it through the intersection – ALWAYS look for yourself to ensure the way is indeed still safe.

## 7. SEE – BE AWARE

- Be aware of your surroundings;
- Anticipate any problems or challenges;
- Plan accordingly;
- Riding in a group in traffic is not a time for zoning out or being inattentive.
- Stay alert, keep your eyes on the road ahead and ask the following questions:
  - Is the bus picking up 2 or 20? (Do I really have time to pass safely?)
  - Is the dog loose or secured?
  - Is the car really turning – or - has its signal been stuck on for the past 10 minutes?
  - Is the intersection really clear – or is someone running the red light?
- Watch out for and both shout it out (i.e. "hole") and point to the problem – thus alerting cyclists behind you and averting collisions and/or flat tires, i.e.:
  - wet leaves (especially if there is a puddle underneath);
  - big puddles;
  - changes in the road surface (i.e. pot holes);
  - glass;
  - fallen obstacles;
  - storm grates;
  - gravel, rocks or sand; and
  - railroad tracks (slow down, shoulder check, signal, move out and cross at right angles).

## 8. BE SEEN

- Wear bright colours;
- Always be visible in the motorist's line of vision;
- Choose the correct road position to remain visible;
- Give yourself 'wiggle room' of 3ft. from the edge of the road or curb;
- DO NOT hug the curb (gives no flexibility to avoid sudden obstacles and keeps you out of the peripheral vision of the motorist);
- Do NOT hug the median at intersections – you may tend to 'blend in' with the light fixtures or mail boxes. When stopped - hold your visible position of 3' or 1 m from the edge of the road or curb; and
- When turning – be in the center of the lane and move quickly and safely through the intersection.

## 9. BE PREDICABLE

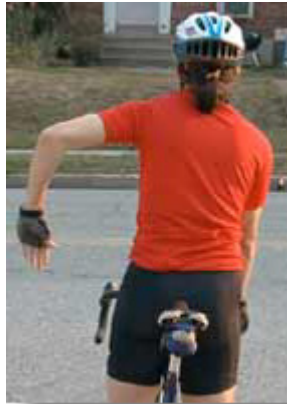
- Always ride predictably;
- Riding in a consistently straight line within one to three feet from the edge of the road;
- DO NOT meander or swerve in and out;
- Pick an imaginary straight line, parallel to the edge of the road (giving yourself ample wiggle room), and try to stay on it;
- Should you need to swerve to avoid an obstacle on the road (pot hole, glass debris etc), both shout it out (i.e. "hole") and point to the problem (and shoulder check to confirm the maneuver is safe), thus alerting cyclists and motorists behind you; and
- Should you need to slow, turn or stop - SIGNAL accordingly – to alert cyclists and motorists behind and avoid collisions.

## 10. SIGNAL

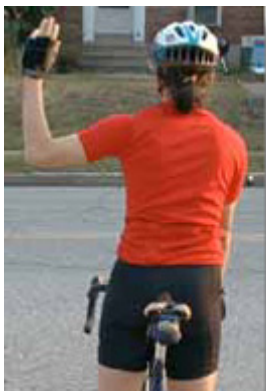
- It is imperative to communicate your intention to stop, change lanes, turn, and/or generally maneuver around traffic, obstacles, construction etc.;
- Use an open palm with spread fingers for maximum visibility;
- Shoulder check BEFORE signalling, while maintaining straight line riding;
- Return your hands to your handlebars when crossing or turning at an intersection;
- As shown below – there are two methods to signal “right turning”.
- The decision of which to use is situational: Ask yourself “on what side of me is the intended audience” (i.e. is there traffic merging from the right) and signal accordingly.
- Point and/or call out obstacles (esp glass) on the road for the benefit of those behind you. DO NOT signal however if it is too dangerous to take your hands off the handle bars (i.e. railway tracks); and
- When passing other cyclists, always pass on their left side, and call out "On your left!" so they know that you are coming and are not startled.



**Left turn**



**Stop**



**Right turn**



**Also means right turn**

## 11. LEFT HAND TURNS

### Two lane street

Always turn left from the center or the left side of the lane;

- Shoulder check, signal, shoulder check, then move to the center or left side of the lane; and
- Yield to approaching traffic.

### One way street

- Always turn left from the center or the left side of the lane; and
- Shoulder check, signal shoulder check, proceed.

### Mechanics of the turn

- Signal prior to entering the intersection to communicate your intentions; and
- Make the turn with both hands on the handlebars for maximum control.

### Another Option - Pedestrian Turn

- Dismount and walk your bike across a crosswalk before the intersection;
- Do not ride through and block right turning vehicles; and
- Stop behind the stop line.

## 12. STRAIGHT LINE RIDING

When riding in a group or on your own – it is essential to ride in a predictable consistent straight line **within one to three feet** from the edge of the road – WITHOUT meandering or swerving in and out – which can be dangerous (and very annoying), to both cyclists and motorists behind. Riding predictably enables the cyclist behind you to follow you more safely, not having to constantly readjust speed and position to make room for you to come back in.

Straight line riding keeps you in the motorist's line of vision. Weaving in and out (esp around parked cars), is not unlike a child darting into traffic. Actually pick an imaginary line parallel to the edge of the road (giving yourself ample wiggle room should you need it), and try to stay on it.

## 13. DESTINATION POSITIONING

When stopped at an intersection (with the intention of continuing straight), DO NOT block the right turn lane. Take the position in the current lane of the lane you are moving to, and wait for the light to change either in front of, or behind the traffic also continuing straight.

## 14. TRUCKS

- Take extra care when entering intersections with trucks;
- Trucks have large blind spots and may not be able to see cyclists when making right-hand turns.
- When stopped at an intersection - position **before or after** the truck **never beside**.
- This position (**before or after**), keeps the cyclist out of the driver's blind spot and removes the cyclist from the hazard of being crushed by a right turning vehicle;
- Remain visible to the motorist allowing him the space to move should the truck pass too closely;
- Leave extra room behind to prevent a 'roll-back' collision. (Heavy loads can cause the truck to roll back);
- Trucks require a lot of space to stop – so ensure there is adequate distance for the truck to stop before pulling in front;
- Stay far enough back to be visible in the side view mirror;
- Gear down to reduce your 'wobble effect' when starting; and
- Do NOT rely on your bell or voice to alert the driver of your presence – respect the driver's limitations and keep a safe distance away.

Note: Trucks passing cyclists (in either direction) can create a gust of wind powerful enough to throw a cyclist off balance – when anticipating a large truck - stop pedalling and concentrate on keeping your front wheel straight.

## **15. ROAD HAZARDS**

### **Rail way tracks**

Ride over all tracks at a 90 degree angle to avoid catching or skidding your wheels. Pre-plan this maneuver by first shoulder checking to confirm it is safe to move out, single, shoulder check again and steer perpendicular to the tracks. It is also best to:

- Slow down;
- Stop peddling;
- Keep peddles horizontal to ground;
- Flex arms and legs to absorb the shock; and
- Keep both hands on the handle bars.

### **Sand and Gravel**

Hitting sand or gravel with road bike tires can be extremely dangerous.

- Slow down;
- Avoid sudden turning and try to go as straight as possible;
- Unclip one pedal to allow for quick recovery in the event of a skid; and
- Call out 'gravel' or 'sand' to warn other riders.

## **16. CYCLING AND THE LAW**

A bicycle is a vehicle under the New York State Law. This means that, as a bicyclist, you have the same rights and responsibilities to obey all traffic laws as other road users.

Some NYS laws regarding bicycling to be aware of:

- When being overtaken by a motor vehicle, you must ride single file
- Horns or bells that can be heard 100 ft away are required
- Bicycle accidents that involve physical injury are to be reported to police
- Wearing of headphones or ear buds in both ears is prohibited
- When overtaking or approaching a horse, keep a safe distance from the horse (This will happen in Amish country)