



## **SAFETY RULES**

**These are rules that all riders are expected to follow on club rides.**

### **Bicycle Safety Principles**

The following four principles are key to having a safe individual or group ride:

1. **Communications**

Communicate information and your intentions to other road users both verbally and with hand signals, e.g. stopping, turning, etc. Let others know what you are doing, and what you are going to do.

2. **Predictability**

Follow the rules of the road and obey traffic regulations so that other road users can predict your intentions, e.g. avoid sidewalk cycling, wrong way riding on the road, and move to the right as much as practical when being passed or if there is an oncoming vehicle.

3. **Manoeuvrability**

Give yourself adequate space from the curb, the edge of pavement, and parked cars to be able to move around hazards such as debris, potholes, glass, and car doors that may open. In the city and urban areas, ride 1 m from the curb and parked cars. In the country, ride 1/3 to 1/4 m from the edge of pavement.

4. **Visibility**

See and be seen. If people can't see you, they can't avoid you.

### **Group Riding Skills**

Riding in a group adds a new dimension to the joys of cycling, where you can socialize and share common delights in riding a bike. But you also want to keep yourself and your fellow cyclists safe. Applying the following skills that support the above safety principles can greatly reduce risks and help ensure a safe and enjoyable ride.

1. **Hazards**

If you are at the front of a group, riders behind can't see the roadway directly in front of you. Pass back information (to the last cyclist) on road hazards, e.g. pot holes, glass, gravel, tracks, pedestrians, car up, etc. If you are at the back of a group, pass up information (to the front cyclist) from the back, e.g. car back, or rider in need of assistance.

2. Passing on the Left

Always pass on the left of an individual or group, never on the right. Before moving out, shoulder check, signal, do one more life saver shoulder check, and then call out “passing on left”. Then, shoulder check again before moving back into line.

3. Independent Decisions

Avoid the “herd” mentality where cyclists follow the leading bikes. What may be safe for cyclists at the front, may not be safe for others. Use independent decision making by formulating your own assessment based on conditions as they occur to you.

4. Riding Single File on the Right and Riding Double

On busy roads in rural or urban areas, riding over the crest of a hill or on sharp curves, all riders should ride in single file on the right side of the road. Riding single file is recommended at all times. In areas where roads are low volume and not busy, you may ride double, but be sure to get into single file for oncoming or passing vehicles. Have a system for singling up, e.g. one person slows up, while one person sprints ahead.

5. Rider Separation

Keep 1 or 2 bike lengths between cyclists to build in reaction time and manoeuvrability for any sudden stops. Do not overlap your front wheel with the back wheel of another rider. On busy roads, build in a 10 to 15 second break between groups of 5 or 6 riders to allow vehicles space to pull-in when passing, and use phased left turns to help avoid bunch-ups. On low volume traffic roads, if a group of riders gets split up at a junction or stop light, the riders who have gone through should slow or stop off the road and wait for the other riders in the group to rejoin them before proceeding.

6. Drafting

Drafting is not recommended due to possible front and back wheel contact, which may result in a collision. If done properly, drafting will reduce energy consumption by 20-30%. Draft only behind competent riders that you know, and not behind strangers or new riders. You should always let the cyclists ahead know you are behind them.

7. Stopping and Pull-Over Spots

Sudden stops should be avoided at all times, but if absolutely necessary yell “stopping” or “slowing.” If you need to pull over and stop, be sure that you are well off the road in a safe visible location. Keep clear of pedestrians, cyclists, and traffic.

### **Individual and Group Riding**

These safety tips apply equally to both individual and group riding:

1. Lateral Moves

Shoulder check before changing lanes, turning, or making any lateral moves, and then use hand signals and verbal call-outs. Shoulder check one more time to make sure it is safe to move.

2. See and Be Seen

Wear bright clothing and have a good road position. Ride in a straight line out from the curb or the edge of pavement so that you can be seen by other road users. Look ahead so that you can anticipate hazards. At night (from one-half hour before sunset to one-half hour after sunrise) and in bad weather conditions (when items are not clearly discernible at a distance of 150 m or less) use lights and reflectors.

3. Eye Contact

Seeing others and making sure they see you is a form of communication, so try to make eye contact with other road users to confirm both your intentions and theirs, especially at intersections.

4. Shifting Gears

To help with manoeuvrability and to ride in a straight line, use your gears to shift down when approaching a stop sign/signal. This will allow you to start up smoothly with no wobbling.

5. Narrow or Obstructed Lanes

The Highway Traffic Act allows you to occupy any part of the lane when your safety warrants it. If a lane is obstructed (e.g. parked vehicles, construction work) or it does not have enough space to share with motor vehicles (less than 1 m between you and the curb and between you and passing vehicles) you can take the whole lane by riding in the middle, to prevent cars from passing in too narrow a space. Be sure to shoulder check, signal, and shoulder check again before moving to the centre of the lane, and do the same when the obstruction or narrow lane ends when moving back to 1 m from the curb.

6. Intersections and Destination Positioning

Lane positioning is important at intersections to give other road users an indication of your intentions. Position your bicycle similar to that of a motor vehicle in terms of lane choice (i.e. if turn lanes are available and you are turning right, get in the right hand turn lane; if turning left, the left hand turning lane; and if going straight through, stay in the right most through lane). In two-way traffic if there are no turning lanes, position your bike 1 m from the curb for right turns and through movements. For all left turns, be sure to shoulder check, signal, and shoulder check again before moving out from the right side of the lane, then at the turn location you can be off-set to the left of the lane (for a normal or wide lane) or take the middle if in a narrow lane. Use a mirror to supplement your shoulder checks.

7. Attitude

Road rage and confrontation can compromise your safety and that of the group. Be cooperative and courteous and support road safety and positive negotiations in traffic. Above all have fun.

## Safety Equipment

Before a ride make sure that you have the proper safety equipment and that your bike is in good operating condition by checking the following items:

1. Bike Fit

Ensure that your bicycle fits your size. Straddle the cross bar with both feet on the ground. For a road bike, there should be one to two inches between you and the frame. Handlebars, seat, wheels, gears and brakes can all be fine-tuned for comfort and will all affect your safety and how often you ride. If in doubt, take your bike to a specialty bike retailer for adjustments.

2. Equipment Required by Law

Lights, reflectors, reflective tape, a bell or horn, and a working rear brake are all required by law to help cyclists be visible, communicate to other road and trail users and come to a safe stop. Most bikes now also have front brakes that provide 70% to 80% of the braking power. Both front and rear cable-operated brakes are mandatory in the club. Aero bars (tri bars) can be fitted to a bike, but for safety reasons cannot be used in club rides.

3. Helmets

Certified bicycle helmets are mandatory for everyone in the club and legally required if a cyclist is 17 years of age and under. Helmets reduce injuries, but it is your cycling skills that prevent accidents from happening. Wear a helmet that is the correct size and fits properly by doing the “2-4-1 salute”.

- 2 - two fingers above your eyebrows to the base of the helmet
- 4 - four fingers make a V (two on each hand) at the bottom of each ear to position the strap tabs
- 1 - one finger under the strap beneath your chin

4. Personal Equipment and Attire

Carry a spare tube, pump, and tools on every ride. Ensure you have adequate water, snacks, and money to purchase more, if necessary. Be prepared for the weather by carrying raingear, sunscreen, clips for long pants, etc. Carry a good bike lock and use it to help prevent theft.

5. Bike Check

Do the “ABC Quick Check” to ensure that your bike is working properly and is safe to ride.

- A → Air (Check the tire air pressure and wheels.)
- B → Brakes and Bars (Check the brakes and handle bars.)
- C → Cranks and Chain (Check the pedal cranks and chain.)
- Quick → Ensure the quick releases are secure
- Check → Do a final check by dropping the bike one inch to listen for rattles or looseness

**Sources:**

- CAN-BIKE Canada
- Bike Niagara
- Ontario Highway Traffic Act
- Cycling Skills - Ontario’s Guide to Safe Cycling (Ministry of Transportation)
- Cycling and the Law: Principles of Safe Cycling - Sgt. Scott Elliot - NRP (Freewheelers website)

## CYCLING AND THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC ACT (HTA) - 2015

All of the above bicycle safety principles, skills, and operating rules have been regulated in some form under the Ontario HTA or are mentioned in the Ministry of Transportation *Cycling Skills* booklet for adults or *Young Cyclist's Guide* for children.

Under the HTA, a bicycle is considered a vehicle and has a legal right to be on roadways, except where prohibited. Therefore, as a cyclist you have the same rights and responsibilities as other road users. All the rules that apply to vehicles regarding stops signs, red lights, direction of travel etc. apply to cyclists.

Bill 31, Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act (Making Ontario's Roads Safer), effective September 1, 2015, made the following key improvements to bicycle safety:

- All drivers of motor vehicles are required to maintain a minimum distance of 1 m, where practical, when passing cyclists on highways;
- Persons who improperly open or leave the doors of motor vehicles open on highways face increased penalties (commonly known as "dooring");
- The fine for non-compliance with bicycle light, reflector, and reflective requirements will increase; and
- Cyclists are permitted to use lamps that produce intermittent flashes of red light.

The following sections of the HTA apply specifically to cyclists or have particular relevance to cycling. This is not an exclusive list but rather an abbreviated list of the regulations that are more pertinent to the activity of a club cycling. Wording is summarized, abridged, and some italicised notes are provided for interpretative purposes. The full wording of these particular sections of the HTA can be read by accessing the entire HTA. Contraventions of these laws/regulations can incur set fines in the range of \$60 to \$1000.

### **HTA 62 (17 & 17.1) Lights, Reflectors and Flashing Red Lights on Bicycles**

Lights or reflectors and reflective material are required on bicycles at night (from one-half hour before sunset to one-half hour after sunrise) and in bad weather (when items on the highway are not clearly discernible at a distance of 150 m or less). On the bike's front, a white or amber light is required plus white reflective material on the front forks. On the rear, a red light or a red reflector is required plus red reflective material. Reflective material on the front and rear must cover a surface of not less than 250 mm in length and 25 mm in width.

A bicycle may carry a lighted lamp on its rear that produces intermittent flashes of red light at any time. This flashing red light could be instead of or in addition to the lighted lamp displaying a red light or reflector.

### **HTA 64 (3) Brakes on Bicycles**

A bike must have at least one brake system acting on the rear wheel that will enable the rider to make the braked wheel skid on dry, level, and clean pavement. (*Note the Niagara Freewheelers Club Safety Rules require a bicycle to be fitted with two cable operated brakes.*)

### **HTA 75 (5) Alarm Bell to be Sounded**

A bicycle shall be equipped with an alarm bell, gong or horn, which shall be kept in good working order and sounded whenever it is reasonably necessary to notify pedestrians or others of its approach.

### **HTA 78.1 (1) Hand-held devices prohibited. Wireless communication devices (e.g. cell phones)**

No person shall drive a motor vehicle on a highway while holding or using a hand-held wireless communication device or other prescribed device that is capable of receiving or transmitting telephone communications, electronic data, mail or text messages. *While this regulation does not pertain to bicycles, you can still be charged under HTA 130, Careless Driving, if using a hand-held cell phone or communication device results in operating a bicycle without reasonable care and attention. Anything that prevents having both hands on the handle bars and both eyes on the surrounding terrain can be hazardous. Therefore, hand held-devices like cell phones should not be used while riding. Although hands-free mode is legal and less distracting, it is recommended that calls be taken after coming to a stop on a safe section of the roadside or trail.*

### **HTA 104 (2.1) Bicycle Helmets**

No person shall ride or operate a bicycle on a highway unless the person is wearing a bicycle helmet that complies with the regulations and the chin strap of the helmet is securely fastened under the chin. The regulations require an approved bicycle helmet and the application of this law is to cyclists under the age of eighteen. *The Club makes wearing an approved bicycle helmet mandatory on all club rides.*

### **HTA 130 (1) Careless Driving**

Every person is guilty of the offence of driving carelessly who drives a vehicle or street car on a highway without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons using the highway. *This regulation includes bicycles and is a catch all that could include such actions as improper cell phone use and can result in very stiff penalties depending on the severity of the offense and damage (i.e. personal injury and death), including fines up to \$50,000 and prison terms.*

### **HTA 140 (1 & 6) 144 (29) Pedestrian Crossovers - Duties of Cyclist and Riding in Crosswalks Prohibited**

A cyclist must yield or stop for pedestrians at a crosswalk, and shall not proceed into the crossover until the pedestrian is no longer on the roadway. No person shall ride a bicycle across a roadway within a pedestrian crossover.

### **HTA 142 (1) & (5) Signaling Turns and Use of Right Hand and Arm**

Before turning, a cyclist must look behind (i.e. shoulder check) to see that the movement can be made safely. Cyclists can use their right arm to signal a right turn.

### **HTA 147 (1) & (2) Slow Vehicles to Travel on Right Side**

Any vehicle travelling on a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic shall, where practicable, be driven in the right-hand lane or as close as practicable to the right hand curb or edge of the roadway, except when preparing to turn left, passing and overtaking another vehicle, or if a bicycle is in a lane designated for travel in the opposite direction of traffic.

*(Note: For cyclists you must ride far enough out from the curb to maintain a straight line, clear of sewer grates, debris, potholes, and parked car doors. You may occupy any part of a lane when your safety warrants it. Never compromise your safety for the convenience of a motorist behind you.)*

**HTA 148 (4) Vehicles Meeting Bicycles**

Every person in charge of a vehicle on a highway meeting a person travelling on a bicycle shall allow the cyclist sufficient room on the roadway to pass.

**HTA 148 (6, 6.1 & 6.2) Bicycles Overtaken and 1 m Passing Distance**

Every person on a bicycle who is overtaken by a vehicle travelling at a greater speed shall turn out to the right and allow the vehicle to pass and the vehicle overtaking shall turn out to the left so far as may be necessary to avoid a collision.

Every person in charge of a motor vehicle on a highway who is overtaking a person travelling on a bicycle shall, as nearly as may be practicable, leave a distance of not less than 1 m between the bicycle and the motor vehicle and shall maintain that distance until safely past the bicycle.

The 1 m distance refers to the distance between the extreme right side of the motor vehicle and the extreme left side of the bicycle, including all projections and attachments.

**HTA 148 (8) Passing Vehicle Going in Same Direction...Only when it is Safe**

No person in charge of a vehicle shall pass or attempt to pass another vehicle going in the same direction on a highway unless the roadway is safely free from approaching or overtaking traffic.

**HTA 153 (1, 2, & 3) Highway Designated for One-way Traffic, Bicycles Excepted where Signed**

A lane on a highway designated for the use of one-way traffic only may be designated for the use of bicycle traffic in the opposite direction and, where such a designation is made, and signed, a person riding or operating a bicycle in that lane shall travel only in the direction designated for that lane.

**HTA 156 (1 & 3) Driving on Right-Hand Side, No U-turns and Bicycles Allowed on Shoulder**

Where a highway is divided into two separate roadways, all vehicles must be operated on the right-hand side, with no crossing to the other side except where a crossing is provided. A bicycle may be ridden or operated on the paved shoulder of the highway, if the bicycle remains on its side of the separation.

**HTA 160. Towing of Persons on Bicycles, etc., Prohibited**

No driver of a vehicle or street car shall permit any person riding, riding on or operating a bicycle, to attach the same, himself or herself to the vehicle or street car on a highway.

**HTA 165 (1) Opening of Doors of Motor Vehicles**

No person shall open the door of a motor vehicle on a highway without first taking due precautions to ensure that his or her act will not interfere with the movement of or endanger any other person or vehicle.

**HTA (12) Stopped School Buses**

Every driver or street car operator on a highway, when approaching from the rear a stopped school bus that has its overhead red signal-lights flashing, shall stop at least 20 m before reaching the bus and shall not proceed until the bus moves or the overhead red signal-lights have stopped flashing.

**HTA 178 (1) Clinging to Vehicles and Bicycle Passengers**

A person riding on or operating a bicycle shall not attach it, them, himself or herself to a vehicle or street car on a highway.

**HTA 178 (2) Bicycle Passengers**

No person riding or operating a bicycle designed for carrying one person only shall carry any other person thereon.

**HTA 179 (1 & 2) Dismounted Bicyclists Considered Pedestrians**

Where sidewalks are not provided on a highway, a pedestrian (or dismounted cyclist) walking along the highway shall walk on the left side thereof facing oncoming traffic and, when walking along the roadway, shall walk as close to the left edge thereof as possible. The above does not apply to a pedestrian walking a bicycle in circumstances where crossing to the left side of the highway would be unsafe.

**HTA 218 (1, 2 & 3) Cyclist to Identify Self**

A police officer who finds any person contravening this Act or any municipal by-law regulating traffic while in charge of a bicycle may require that person to stop and to provide identification of himself or herself. The cyclist is required to stop and identify himself or herself to the police officer and for the purposes of this section, giving one's correct name and address is sufficient identification.