



RIDING WITH VELOCITY

Ride Guidelines
and Etiquette

THANKS TO ALL THE CYCLING CLUBS WHO HAVE SET
HIGH STANDARDS IN THEIR OWN RIDE GUIDELINES





At Velocity Cycling Club (“VCC”) we promote safe and fun cycling. That requires the input of all participants on every ride. We hope that this document will provide useful information for both new and experienced riders, whether you have ridden with VCC for years or just starting your first year.

We acknowledge the contributions of our Ride Captains who, ride in and ride out, schedule and manage each of our rides ensuring that the rides are done safely and are enjoyable.

Without the support of our sponsors we would not be able to do what we do and we are always thankful for their contributions towards the success of the club.

Should any member have any questions or additional suggestions please feel free to contact any of the board members or discuss the matter with any of the Ride Captains.

OUR TOP 10

While it is difficult to narrow this document down to **10 key points**, if we had to choose, here are our top picks to focus on when riding with VCC:

1. We ride as a team.
2. Respect and follow the Ride Captain's instructions.
3. Ensure your bike is road ready and you are stocked & prepared for minor repairs.
4. Day or night, ride with working front and back lights.
5. Know and use your voice calls and hand signals.
6. Have your membership card with emergency contact details accessible for each ride.
7. Spirited riding ≠ reckless riding.
8. Never overlap wheels or “half-wheel” at the front or from behind.
9. Remember the 8 second countdown rule at traffic lights for small to medium sized groups. Extend this time for larger groups.
10. Never cross the yellow line unless safe to do so and to avoid an accident.

INSIDE


Ride Captain responsibilities	1
Expectations of group ride etiquette	2
Mandatory items required for each ride	2
Crash protocol	3
Group riding	4
Group rotation	5
Wet weather riding	6
Inclement weather policy	6
Rolling speeds	7
During a ride	8
Descending	8
Spirited sections	9
Passing	9
No half-wheeling	9
Spitting/mucus shooting	9
Approaching traffic signals	10
Train and subway tracks	10
Climbing	10
Voice and hand signals	10 – 15
Gravel riding	16



COVID-19 Cautionary Note

At the time of releasing this document, COVID-19 is a progressing pandemic and significantly impacted all aspects of our lives beyond our cycling activities

VCC is governed under the rules of the Ontario Cycling Association. Their direction and rulings on COVID-19 will determine the basis for any restarts and restrictions. Members will always have the final decision whether they participate but they will be expected to follow the additional safety and etiquette rules that are applied at each stage of the pandemic.

Due to the significance and evolving nature of this virus we ask that all riders consult our website under the [COVID-19 tab](#)  for the latest updates.

RIDE CAPTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

All our members are familiar with the pre-planning that our Ride Captains do to confirm rides, advise if inclement weather is approaching or unsafe to ride in. However, they do much more than this.

PRIOR AND DURING A RIDE

- Confirm that all participants are members or have appropriately approved waiver for that day's ride.
- Ensure the group is no larger than 18, otherwise necessitating the need to split the group.
- Clearly communicating the ride expectations of the day (speed, route, rotation) and ensuring they are followed.
- Introducing new riders.
- Mentoring and correcting mistakes.
- Promoting safe riding throughout the ride (tight to the right, proper group spacing, no half wheeling, when to take a lane and go single file to name, just to name a few).
- Ensuring that re-grouping locations are well understood and no rider is dropped without consent or escort as appropriate.
- Knowing and enacting the crash protocol if required.
- Reporting reportable incidents to the board and the OCA.
- The Ride Captain is the sole voice of the group in an altercation with a driver or engagement with law enforcement.

Without our Ride Captains, there are no club rides, so please be supportive of their efforts.



EXPECTATIONS OF GROUP RIDE ETIQUETTE

Let's all do our part to contribute to the enjoyment of VCC's rides.

- Every rider contributes to the safety and enjoyment of any ride.
- Comply and support the Ride Captain's instructions.
- Riders need to be predictable, hold their line and not brake suddenly unless there is an emergency ahead.
- It is not a race. Be courteous to other riders if they want to pass.
- Defuse any situation that is escalating.
- Help less experienced riders.
- Be courteous with drivers and make eye contact. Allow cars to pass when safe.
- Never cross the yellow line unless safe to do so and to avoid an accident.



MANDATORY ITEMS REQUIRED FOR EACH RIDE

- ✓ CSA approved helmet.
- ✓ Working front (white) and back (red) lights.
- ✓ Strongly recommended to have a working bicycle computer – to help maintain a consistent pace.
- ✓ Your VCC membership card and easily found emergency contact details.
- ✓ Arrive on time and ready to ride. Ensure your bike is functioning properly.
- ✓ Bring appropriate amounts of water and food for the duration of the ride.
- ✓ Always travel with a spare tire tube, pump or CO₂ cartridges and repair tools.
- ✓ Know your hand signals and call out responsibilities.
- ✓ Follow the rules of the road as if you were driving a car.



Wearing ear buds during club rides is not permitted.

Failure to comply with the requirements may lead to a refusal to ride with the group that day.

CRASH PROTOCOL

While all riders participate in safe riding protocol, accidents can happen. In most cases falls or accidents only require minimal first aid attention.

In the event of a more serious incident the Ride Captain will be the lead decision maker on actions required.

In all cases remain calm, take your time and defuse the situation. Immediately move all bikes as far right as is safe to avoid traffic.

VCC RIDER TIP

- ✓ Always carry your emergency contact information!
- ✓ If serious, call 911 immediately.



SERIOUS INCIDENT

- Call 911 immediately reporting the accident details and your location.
- Stabilize but do not move the rider. Ensure other ride participants assist in directing/slowing traffic.
- Leave serious medical care to the professionals.
- Contact the rider's emergency contact.
- If a hospital visit is required it is preferred that one VCC member attend with the injured rider. Arrangements will be made to transport your bikes.

OTHER INCIDENTS

- Check injured areas and assess if a concussion has occurred.
- Check your bike. Don't try to ride it until you have checked: 1) the frame and fork for cracks, 2) the wheels are spinning normally and no spokes are missing and 3) the brakes and gears (both derailleurs) are still working properly.
- Ride Captain will assess if a rider should be picked up rather than continuing on with the ride ("If in doubt, sit them out").

The Ride Captain is responsible for completing and submitting the OCA Accident Report Form within 48 hours of an accident including reporting to the Board President. Remember, taking photos of the area serves as a useful record of the incident.

Lastly, sharing the experience and learning from it is imperative to avoid repeating.

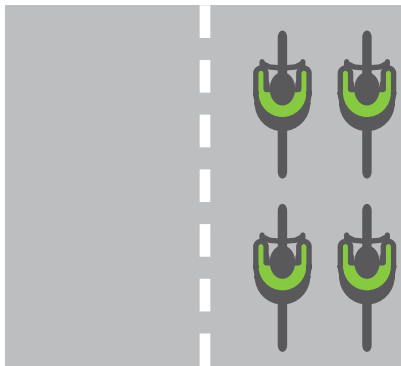
GROUP RIDING

Group riding has multiple benefits including increased visibility, reduced effort and of course, sociability.

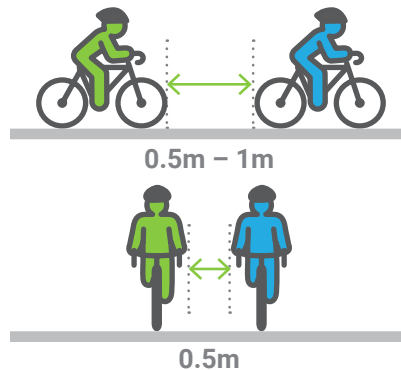
Group riding can also introduce risk due to the proximity to other riders. Knowing your responsibilities will ensure these risks are reduced to a minimum.

Any rider who is inexperienced in group riding should let the Ride Captain know at the start of the ride so that they can benefit from additional attention for the safety of all participating.

For group riding please follow these guidelines:



We follow the “**tight to the right**” approach.



Riders are expected to ride 0.5 to 1 metre behind the bike in front of them (farther in wet weather) and 0.5 metre from the bike beside them.



Never half-wheel.



Riders must remain **predictable** and avoid sudden increases in speed.



Only when there is an **emergency** should a rider stop suddenly.



Knowing and using your hand **signals and voice call outs** is essential to safe group riding.

GROUP ROTATION

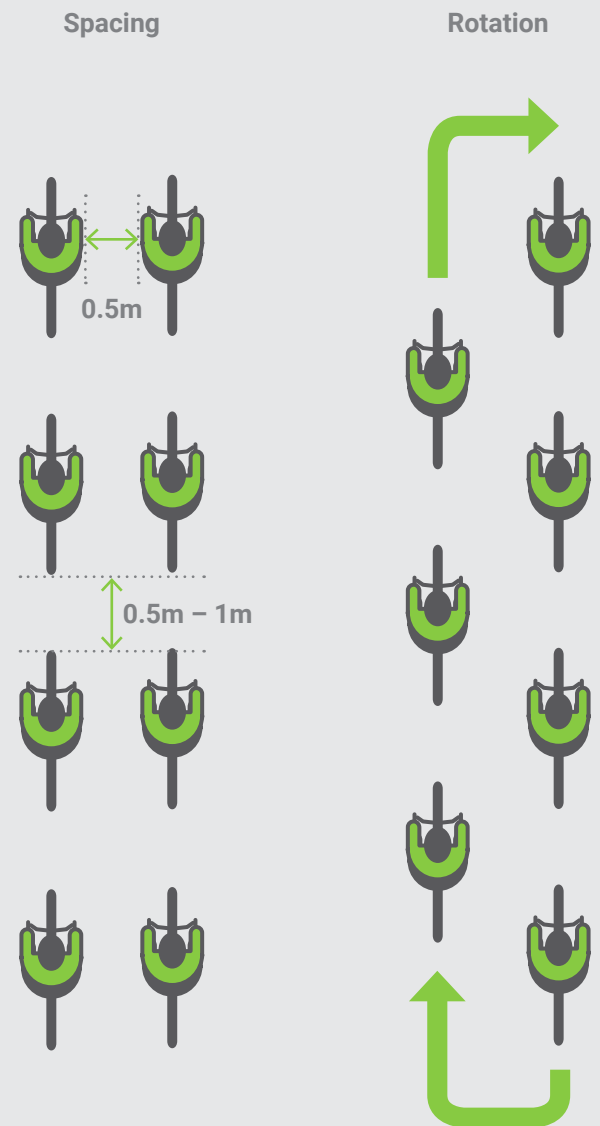
Given that the majority of our rides commence in the city we follow the “social pace line” approach to group riding.

This rotation has been confirmed as the safest for the areas we ride in which often have vehicle traffic.

- We ride two abreast when safe to do so, with bars 0.5 metres apart and 0.5 to 1 metre spacing between wheels.
- The front left rider initiates the rotation after a reasonable period in that position (1 – 5 min). Timing depends on road terrain, winds and the rider’s abilities.
- We rotate clockwise to minimize exposure to traffic.
- We rotate one rider at a time (i.e. front left goes to front right, second left goes to front left and right front drops back to second right and so on).
- The front right rider should call “**clear**” when the left front rider is far enough in front to change positions safely.
- Movements should be continued at pace, be fluid and quick accelerations should be avoided. **Do not surge.**
- Don’t disrupt the rotation because of conversations by not moving forward. Drop back if necessary, or better, finish your conversation at the next rotation or at the break.

VCC RIDER TIP

It is permissible for slower riders to remain at the back of the group for the full duration for recovery. Alternately, you may choose to join the rotation and when you reach the second pairing from the front, simply indicate to the rider on your right that you wish to move over.



WET WEATHER RIDING

Despite the improvements in bike technology, riding in wet weather requires additional safety procedures as road surfaces become slippery, especially where there is debris.

The Ride Captain will assess if the ride should be cancelled due to unsafe conditions.

Our riders are expected to follow these additional safety actions to reduce the likelihood of an accident when riding in wet weather:

- Increase the gap between riders to 2 to 3 metres.
- Be aware of braking distances increasing in wet weather.
- Reduce your speed.
- Avoid lane paint which becomes extremely slippery when wet.
- Each individual must assess their comfort for riding in the conditions present.
- The group may consider pulling over and waiting out the worst of the weather.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Inclement weather can be the result of weather extremes such as heavy rain and winds and temperatures that are either too hot/humid or too cold.

The Ride Captains will assess the weather forecast in advance of any ride and communicate via the club e-mail whether they determine the ride should be cancelled or not.

VCC RIDER TIP

- ✓ Increase the gap.
- ✓ Avoid lane paint.
- ✓ Pull over and wait the weather out.




ROLLING SPEEDS

At VCC we offer road rides with a variety of rolling speeds so we can accommodate a wide range of cyclists within our club.

Our current rolling speeds by ride type are as follows:

- **Mixed-Social Rides** 24 – 28 kph
- **Tempo Rides** 28 – 30 kph
- **Lumen'eers (Autumn Only)** 25 – 28 kph
- **Peloton** 30 – 33 kph
- **Breakaway** 32+ kph

VCC RIDER TIP

- ✓ Visit our website: velocitycyclingclub.com  for a full description of our rides offered.
- ✓ Please see our [Gravel rides](#) section for more details on these rides.



DURING A RIDE

DESCENDING

While we are predominantly a city cycling club where the roads are relatively flat, rides do happen in Halton and Kleinberg areas where hills are more prevalent. Descents can be dangerous and should be treated with caution. VCC recommends the following practices be followed when encountering a steep descent:

- Descend at the speed with which you are comfortable (it is not a race). Faster riders should descend first when in a larger group.
- Move away from the right shoulder to increase your safety margin.
- Keep your vision focused far in front.
- Be aware of what is in front of you and potential hazards such as cross roads and turns.
- Brake early and pump your brakes if need be.
- Passing should be kept to a minimum and only occur on the left.
- Never cross the yellow line unless safe to do so and even then only to avoid an accident.
- Do not draft close behind other cyclists on steep descents. Give the front rider more room and space out for safety.
- Riders at the rear need to warn of vehicles coming up behind.

VCC RIDER TIP

- ✓ Descending is **not** a race.
- ✓ Keep your vision focused far in front of you.
- ✓ Do not draft on steep descents.



SPIRITED SECTIONS

There are spots on certain rides where the Ride Captain will announce that a “spirited” portion of the ride is upcoming. This is based on the safe assessment of that portion of the ride route (low traffic, no traffic lights, etc.) and they are short in duration.

Participating in a spirited section is optional and may or may not include the Ride Captain. A regrouping area will be announced for re-forming the group after this section.

When participating we recommend the following be observed:

- Spirited means “gradually increased pace.” It does not mean an all-out race or sprint.
- It is forbidden to have riders competing three abreast in an effort to be first. A spirited section requires patience and no sudden movements.
- Riders who are not participating must maintain a respectable pace to ensure the group does not become too spaced out.

All riders will meet at the regrouping area at the completion of this portion of the ride.



VCC RIDER TIP

- ✓ Spirited riding ≠ reckless riding.
- ✓ No half-wheeling.

PASSING

Passing only occurs on the left and only when safe to do so.

Riders passing should call out “**Passing on your left**” to alert the rider in front of them.

NO HALF-WHEELING

Half-wheeling is when your front wheel is overlapping the rear wheel of the bike in front of you. Rubbing wheels is very dangerous and has contributed to many accidents and close calls.

It is the responsibility of the rear rider to adjust their speed so as to not half wheel.

Riders at the front of a group need to maintain the same pace — keeping handlebars even on both flats and short inclines.

SPITTING/MUCUS SHOOTING

Respect for your fellow riders, especially those behind you, is paramount during group rides. Spitting and shooting mucus out of your nose at pace, while riders are behind you, is at best selfish and unsanitary. In reality, it is just downright gross.

We strongly recommend all cyclists bring along a handkerchief to attend to runny noses. If you forget yours, or feel the need to spit, please do the following:

- Wait until there is a rest stop, traffic light/stop sign or at a re-grouping location.
- Wait until you are at the rear of the group.
- In the rare instance when neither of the above is possible (ingesting a bug as an example) when safe, move to the left and expel.

APPROACHING TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Approaching traffic signals might be one of the most important safety measures that a group riding in the city faces. There are many variables to assess, including the volume of traffic on the road, how many lanes need to be crossed and the speed and size of the group.

More and more, motorists are running through red lights — necessitating additional caution for cyclists crossing at traffic lights. The additional requirement to have working lights and wear brightly-coloured clothing adds to the safe crossing at traffic lights.

The lead riders are responsible for assessing and deciding to stop — calling out “**lights... stopping**” or “**rolling**.” VCC uses the **8 second rule** on the traffic light countdown timer for medium to small sized groups. This must be extended for larger groups.

When the light turns or the stop is completed and it's safe to proceed, the lead cyclists should advance in at a measured speed to allow the group to pick up speed together. Don't launch off the light and make everyone else scramble to catch up.

TRAIN AND SUBWAY TRACKS

Use your hand signal when approaching tracks. When crossing train tracks, reduce your speed and ride over the tracks perpendicular to avoid your wheel getting caught.

CLIMBING

Climbing is a significant differentiator between cyclists. As a result, climbs will result in the group becoming more fragmented. A group meeting area should be called out prior to any large climb to ensure the group re-forms effectively.

Helpful tips to ensure climbs are done as safe as possible includes:

- Faster riders should begin the climb first to reduce the amount of passing required. Slower climbers should remain “**tight to the right.**”
- Even though climbing is at slower speeds, be aware as some less experienced climbers can become erratic in their movements.
- When standing on the pedals, your bike naturally shoots backwards, so please announce “**Standing**” to warn those behind you.
- Passing, when necessary, should be limited to two riders wide.
- Once completed, the last rider should be afforded time to recover.



VOICE AND HAND SIGNALS

The nature of riding in a group means that if you are not on the front, you may not always see a hazard. A well-informed group using signals and calls correctly will ensure all riders remain safe on the road.

VCC RIDER TIP

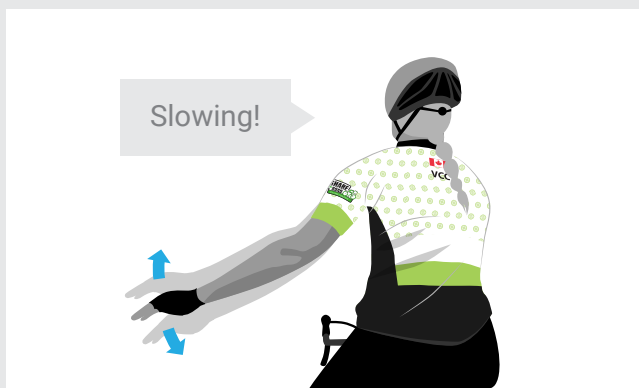
When riding in a larger group it is imperative that riders **“call through”** the signals to the remaining riders.

Hand signals are the most effective form of communication, since voice commands can be either startling, misheard, or lost altogether.

Signaling can differ between cycling clubs and jurisdictions, so familiarity with the signals and commands used by VCC is required for all riders.



SLOWING

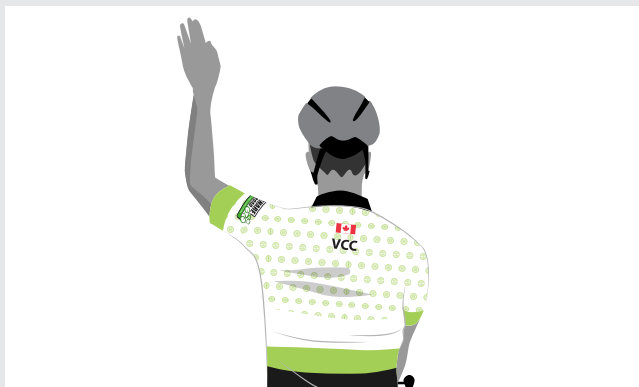


Use your outstretched arm with your palm-down and moving it up and down. Calling out **"slowing"** when a quicker response is required is recommended.

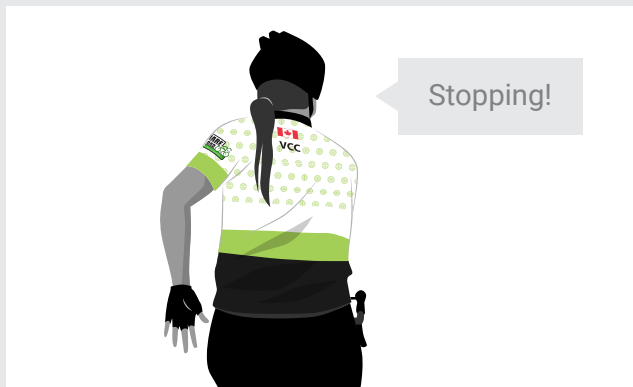


STOPPING

Stopping may require one of two hand signals.



- 1 With a large group ride, the front rider should raise either hand above their head to be visible to cyclists several positions behind.



- 2 Riders behind or when in a smaller group should place either hand down showing their palm to the riders behind.

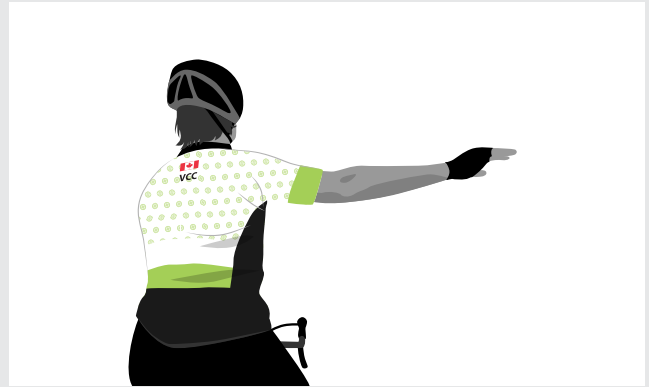
The call of **"Stopping"** may be appropriate if the nature of the stop is sudden or sharp, or if you haven't got the time to make the hand signal.

LEFT TURN



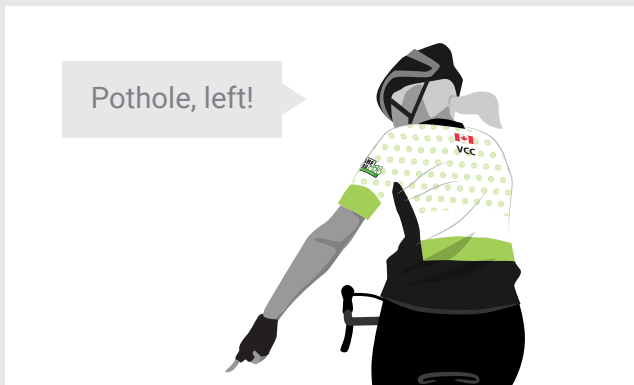
To signal a left turn, extend your left arm away from your body to shoulder height, parallel to the road.

RIGHT TURN



At VCC our preference on a right turn is to extend the right arm away from the body.

POTHOLE

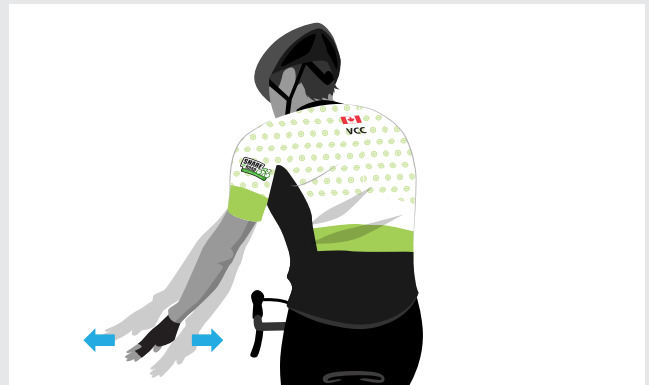


Potholes are particularly prevalent during the spring riding season and have the potential to cause a serious accident.

When in a group, point out a pothole or other obstacle that shouldn't be ridden over by extending your arm on the side of the obstruction and pointing at it.

If possible, alert others behind you by calling out **"pothole, left/middle/right."**

DEBRIS



Gravel, leaves and other loose debris on the road can cause you to lose traction, especially when at speed.

Indicate debris by putting your arm down and waving your hand back and forth.

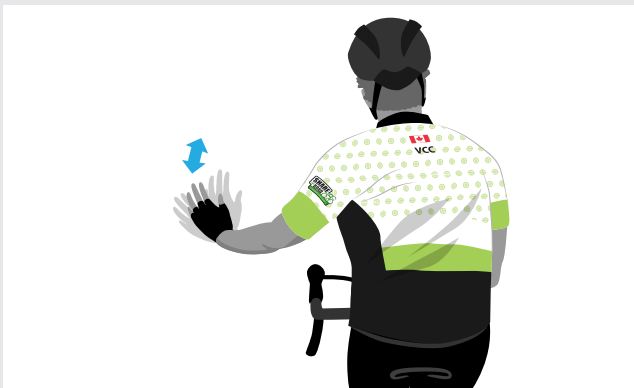
MOVING IN



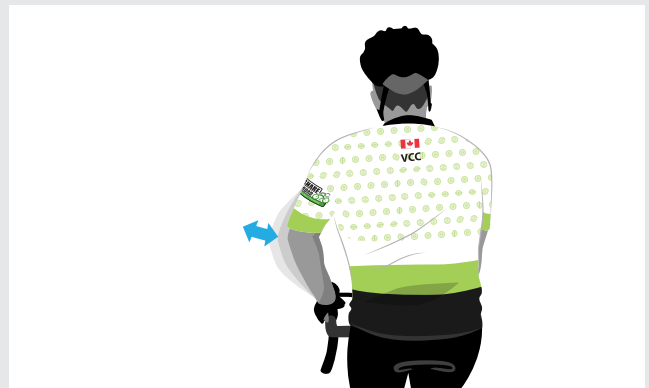
Point with a slightly bent arm and your right forefinger extended to signal you are moving into the line. This can typically happen when riding double file and required to change to single file. Right side riders are expected to let the left side rider to move in front of them.



COME AROUND

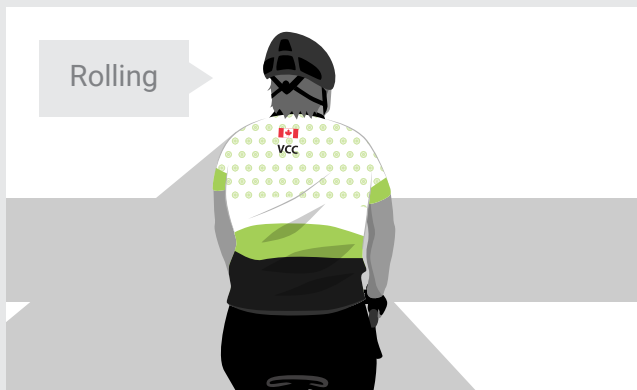


- 1 Wave your left hand forward to signal riders behind that it is safe to pass.



- 2 If you need both hands on the bars, simply flick your left elbow forward. This is most applicable on climbs or in spirited sections.

ROLLING



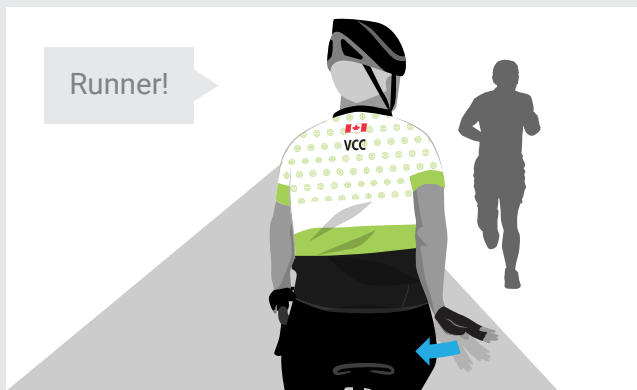
Call out **"Rolling"** when a decision has been reached at an intersection to continue through the area.

TRAIN TRACKS



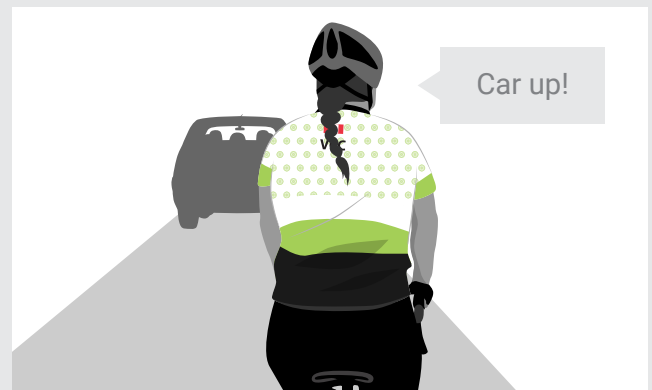
To signal to riders behind that there is a train track approaching place one arm behind your back and stick out two fingers.

MOTOR VEHICLES AND PEDESTRIANS (CITY RIDING)



Motor vehicles, whether parked or moving pose a serious threat to cyclists as do pedestrians and other cyclists.

When any of these obstructions are stationary the appropriate hand signal is to lower your right hand down and wave in the direction the riders behind should be moving to avoid the obstruction. Calling out **"pedestrian"** or **"runner"** is beneficial especially when riding on city paths.



When the front or rear riders detect a moving vehicle, particularly on single lane roads, they should call appropriately **"car back"** (for a vehicle behind), or **"car up"** (for a vehicle ahead).

Buses must be handled with extra caution given their size and frequent stops. In almost all cases it is preferred to let the bus get ahead rather than repeatedly jockeying in front and then behind them.

SOME QUICK TIPS FOR THOSE NEW TO GRAVEL RIDING

Gravel ridings popularity is increasing rapidly and has some unique aspects that are not replicated when riding on the road. Compared with a road bikes, gravel bikes are designed to be more comfortable and stable on rough ground. Tire widths range from 28 – 40+ mm and should be matched to the terrain and riding conditions.

CLIMBING

- Hills kick up more quickly so it is important to focus on your gearing in advance of reaching the climb.
- You have less traction on gravel climbs so avoid standing up.
- Having your butt on the seat and weight over the back wheel is essential for maximum traction.

DESCENDING

- Allow at least double the braking distance that you would on the road and always brake well before the corner.

- On loose gravel, rely primarily on the rear brake. A front wheel that is locked up will not be able to steer the bike.
- Keep your weight back slightly and absorb the bumps. Always keep a firm grip of the bars, while also allowing them to move around.


TIRE PRESSURE

- Know the recommended tire pressure for your weight to ensure maximum performance while also minimizing the chance of pinch flats.
- Tubeless tires run much lower so the rear wheel pressure is particularly important to ensure it is not too low.

GROUP RIDE ETIQUETTE

- Because of the frequency and steepness of hills, gravel rides have a tendency to stretch out the group more. Expect to ride for longer periods without the benefit of drafting.
- The Ride Captain will call out regular points for regrouping – most often at key intersections, rather than at the top of each climb.
- On rail paths or bike paths, expect to ride single-file more often and at a slower pace – out of respect for pedestrians and other cyclists.

Gravel attire standards allow for more leeway and sartorial imagination than the conventional 'matching kit' expectations of the Velomati. The mid-length sock with some variation in pattern or bright colours is a great way to show your gravel personality.

Our gravel ride offerings can be located at velocitycyclingclub.com  or watch for the club's weekly ride emails.