



Club Ride Guide

Introduction

Welcome to Lightning Velo Cycling Club! We hope your experience with the club and with cycling is enjoyable and rewarding. The foundation of Lightning Velo is our Club Rides and the most important aspect of our Club Rides is safety. We hope this clearly expresses our focus and priorities. Club rides are intended to help members reach their training and recreational goals, they are not races. Members and visitors are expected to ride safely, keeping their line and position within the group.

The Club Ride Guide is meant to keep the Club Rides safe and enjoyable for everyone. Failure to follow the information in this guide can put others at risk of injury or worse and can result in exclusion from a Club Ride in progress and / or loss of Club membership.

If you are new to cycling or group cycling, we understand you may be anxious. We welcome cyclists with a wide range of abilities and skills and provide an environment where newcomers can learn while having fun and meeting people.

Fitness Level

To enjoy our club rides, you should be able to keep a steady pace of at least 15 mph on flat terrain for two hours. There are a few areas in Long Beach where you can test your fitness level in relative safety, free from automobile traffic. You would need a speedometer with an odometer in order to determine your speed and distance.

- Eldorado Park, bordered by Wardlow Avenue, Spring Street, and the San Gabriel River Bike Trail, has paved roads good for practice riding.
- The San Gabriel River Bike trail is another good location. From Del Amo Boulevard to Seal Beach is roughly 10 miles.

If you find you cannot cover 15 miles in an hour without becoming exhausted, you may not be ready for Lightning Velo. However, all is not lost! You have options such as:

- Employing the services of a cycling / personal fitness trainer
- Steadily increasing the frequency and distance of your cycling. You might consider joining a "Meetup" cycling group that has a more relaxed approach and pace, just to get started and then begin upping your mileage.
- Local bicycle stores are an excellent resource for beginning cyclists and should be used to gain information on getting started on their cycling journey.

Preparation

The morning of your first club ride is not a good time to discover mechanical issues with your bike. If you have not ridden your bike in a long time, we suggest an inspection at least a week in advance. If you would rather not attempt the actions listed below, consider visiting our bike shop sponsor, [Los Al Bikes in Los Alamitos](#) and schedule a full inspection.

Cleaning

[Check out this video on how to clean your bike.](#) If you don't have a bike stand, don't sweat it, most of us don't and you can still get the work done. If you are not comfortable taking the wheels off, don't worry about it. If you stick with it, you will learn all about that later. The point is to ensure your bike is in good shape and cleaning it is a good way to see what's going on with it.

Wheels and Tires

Check for loose or damaged spokes and cracks in the wheels. Ensure the wheels are properly secured in the forks and that they spin freely and straight. If the tires are flat, partially inflate them and check for dry rot, side wall damage, objects stuck in the rubber, and that adequate tread is remaining. If the tires are in good condition, inflate to normal pressure and check for leaks.

Crank and Pedals

Ensure the crank turns easily without any popping, creaking or clicking noises. These types of noises could point to problems with the crank's bearings. Ensure the pedals spin freely without any noises or binding.

Gears, Chain, Derailleurs and Cables

Ensure the chain, chain rings (front) and cassette (rear) are free of dirt and debris. Use a brush to clean everything and use a high quality bike chain lubricant on the chain. Check shifting levers for proper operation, inspect the cables and ensure they are tight and not fraying or binding. Note that a chain that has stretched longer than 1 millimeter can end up damaging the entire transmission of your bike. You can have your chain checked at West River Cycles or Los Al Bike Shop or get a chain measuring tool and check it yourself. There are many YouTube videos on how to perform this.

Brakes

Inspect the brake cables and make sure they are not slipping, binding or fraying. Ensure the brake pads have adequate material. Make sure when applying the brakes there aren't any unusual noises or uneven rubbing of the wheels against the brake pads.

Other

Check the seat post and handlebars to ensure they are straight, level and secure. Ensure you have tire repair supplies. Your bike should have at least one bottle cage, preferably two, and you should bring at least one full water bottle (two on warmer days). Always bring ID, money / ATM Card / Credit Card and a phone.

Test Ride

If no major issues are found during your inspection, we suggest you take it for a short test ride. Listen for unusual squeaks, creaking, popping or rubbing noises or vibrations. The pedals and crank should turn smoothly and quietly, the shifting mechanisms should work smoothly and consistently without the chain jumping cogs or missing gears and the brakes should work evenly and quietly.

Requirements and Expectations

- All participants, including visitors, in all club rides must have submitted a completed and signed club Insurance Waiver form.
- All riders must wear a cycling helmet and carry identification.
- Visitors who participate in more than three (3) club rides are expected to join the club.
- Riders must follow the direction of ride leaders.
- The use of headphones, ear buds, portable electronics (phone, mp3 player, etc.) while in a group ride is not allowed. Also, cameras that require use of your hands are not allowed. If you want to take pictures during a ride, use a GoPro or similar device.
- Riders are expected to bring the supplies for the ride they are on. This includes water, snacks and tire repair items such as spare tube, tire levers and CO2 / air pump.
- Riders are expected to bring bikes they know are in good and safe operating condition.
- Club members are expected to wear their club jerseys to help other riders discern the group and avoid joining the group inadvertently and creating possible safety issues.
- Riders must obey all traffic signs, laws and directions from traffic / law enforcement officers.

- Riders are expected to avoid confrontations with motorists, other cyclists and pedestrians. Keep the safety of the group in mind.
- New riders under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian present to sign the club insurance waiver form.

Club Ride Schedule

- Saturday Social Ride: 7:30 AM, 35 – 40 miles, stop for coffee near the end and socialize.
- Sunday Training Ride: 7:30 AM and 8:00 AM, 50 – 60 miles, varied terrain, 1 or 2 rest stops.
- Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:00 AM, meet on the San Gabriel River Bike Trail at the bridge south of Willow Avenue. Usually down to Newport Beach and back with a stop at Crema Café in Seal Beach afterwards. This ride is typically paced around 18 – 20 mph.
- Friday Pirate Ride: 8:00 AM, meet at the Long Beach Public Library parking lot near the corner of Studebaker and Spring. This ride is typically paced around 23 – 25 mph.

Club Target Rides: Special events sponsored by Lightning Velo or another club or organization. These are announced and organized in advance.

Club Ride Groups

Club rides are organized on the basis of ability and group riding experience. While a cyclist may have a high level of ability, they may lack group riding experience and will be directed to ride with a group best suited for them to learn important group riding practices and skills. The groups ensure optimum safety and enjoyment for everyone.

The “A” Group: Minimum speed of 23 mph. Riders that can’t keep the pace are dropped. Along with physical ability, a high level of discipline and group riding skills is key.

The “B” Group: Minimum speed of 19 mph. Maximum speed of 22 mph. The “B” group will slow for riders that fall behind. This is known as a “no drop” policy.

The “C” Group: Minimum speed of 15 mph. Maximum speed of 18 mph. The “C” group will slow or stop for riders that fall behind. This is known as a “no drop” policy.

Club Ride Routes

The club has a number of established routes that are scheduled on a rotating basis. For details of the routes and the rotation schedule, please [check the club web site](#).

New Riders / Members

For those new to cycling or new to group cycling, we understand it can be intimidating to join a club or start a new activity with a group of strangers who are already accomplished. Please consider the information in this guide, suggestions from other members and directions from Ride Leaders as given in the interest of safety and helpfulness.

Prior to participating in their first club ride, new members will be asked about their cycling experience and preferences by a Club Officer or senior club member. The Club Officer or senior club member will consult with the applicable group leader and the new member will be assigned to the appropriate group. The group leader will either assign or act as a ride mentor, staying with the new member during the ride providing guidance and coaching on group riding best practices.

New members cannot be assigned to the “A” group without a current “A” group member vouching for their ability and experience levels.

Becoming a Member

- [Complete the online Membership Application Form](#)
- [Complete, print, sign and submit a club insurance waiver form.](#)
- [Pay membership dues in full.](#)

Club Clothing

Members are encouraged to acquire and wear club clothing (known as a “kit”) to have a greater sense belonging and to more easily identify non-member riders that may inadvertently get pulled into the group during a ride. Non-members within the group can create a safety issue as they may not be familiar with or willing to honor group riding protocols and skills. Please contact our club clothing director at clothing@lightningvelo.org for your club clothing needs.

Group Riding Skills

Riding in a group is considerably different than riding solo or with a few friends. The following skills should be developed and practiced continually.

Be prepared. Ensure your bike is adjusted and ready before you head out for a ride. Tires at recommended pressure, tire repair items ready, shoes, clips and pedals working correctly, saddle bag closed, helmet straps adjusted, sunglasses cleaned, speedometer all set, phone ringer up or down, water bottles filled and secured in the cages, etc. This may sound very basic, and it is, but having all these things taken care of in advance will help you stay focused once the ride starts.

Stay alert. Keep reading the dynamics of the group and road, they can change very quickly. Be watchful for debris, sand, water, potholes, road cones, saw horses, opening doors, cars, pedestrians and other conditions that can affect the safety of the group.

Focus on the rider(s) and the road ahead. Don't make the common mistake of focusing on the back wheel in front of you. Look up at the shoulders of the riders ahead and occasionally look at the road ahead so you can see what's going on and be prepared for sudden changes.

Be communicative about potential road hazards such as debris, glass, sand, water, road cones, pedestrians, cars, etc. Communicate clearly to the group behind you when stopping, slowing or turning.

Hold your line, be predictable. If you need to move left or right, do so gradually after checking for other riders and pointing out your move to make fellow riders aware of your intentions. Group rides are to be no more than two riders wide except when passing other riders.

Don't overlap wheels by putting your front wheel next to the rear wheel of the rider in front of you. An evasive move by the rider in front will immediately take you down.

Don't half-wheel your partner. Keep your front wheel even with that of your partner. Being wheel-to-wheel and shoulder-to-shoulder ensures a tight double pace-line and increases overall safety.

Be careful when looking back. Looking back causes even skilled riders to swerve, which can cause a crash. If you must look back, ask the person next to you if you can put your hand on their shoulder. That will keep you riding straight. Also position your hands closer to the stem for more control.

Always keep both hands on the handlebars. Keep your hands positioned over your brake hoods rather than on the top of the bar. In an emergency, you won't have enough time to move your hands to the brakes and stop in time. When riding over bumps and minor road hazards, use a relaxed grip with your thumbs under the bar for full control. Keep your shoulders down (not up against your neck) and bring your elbows down and in so that they're slightly bent.

Keep pedaling - When you need to slow down to avoid colliding with the rider in front of you, keep pedaling without applying power (soft pedal). This will keep your bike from slowing suddenly and introducing an accordion effect.

Don't brake unless necessary. If you must brake, do so lightly to scrub off a little speed. You can also slow down by sitting upright and catching more wind in your chest.

When standing from a seated position maintain a constant pedal stroke and speed. DO NOT allow your bike to stall as you stand. It may cause a crash if the rider behind you hits your rear wheel.

When overtaking other riders, call out "On your left!" to allow them time to react and move out of the way.

Never pass another rider on the right. Always pass on the left. Pass carefully. Look to your sides to make sure it is clear. You should verbally warn the rider ahead that you are coming by.

If you are experiencing a mechanical issue with your bike, call out "Mechanical" and carefully move to the side of the road. All other riders in the group are expected to stop until the issue is resolved.

If you feel another rider is acting in an unsafe manner, it is best to alert the ride leader who will stop the ride until the issue is resolved.

Know and accept your limitations. Our "B" and "C" group rides have a "no drop" policy which means that the group will slow or stop to allow riders who have fallen off the pace or gotten stuck behind a traffic light to catch up. However, if you consistently cannot keep the pace, respect the group and make your next ride with a group more appropriate to your level of ability.

Riders joining a ride in progress should always join from the back. If you are in the back and another rider is coming back from the front, let them know you are last as they come along side. This makes it easier for them to slide into place.

Be predictable. Maintain your position relative to the group. Don't change the column you are riding in, don't swerve or allow gaps to open in front of you and don't change position forward / back unless coming off the front.

There is no obligation to pull at the front. While you should always rotate forward through the group, you should not feel you must exceed your ability. If this is a concern, when you get to the front, advise your partner (person to your left or right) that you may need to back off the pace slightly, then wait a few moments for the rider who just came off the front to reach the back, then signal by flapping your elbow and while keeping constant pressure on the pedals, move to the outside. Keep pressure on the pedals while slowing just enough for the group to begin overtaking you. If you slow too much it will be difficult to catch up.

When pulling, keep the pace of the group you are in and the ride you are on. If you feel the pace is too slow, increase the pace at your own risk. Group rides typically have agreed speeds, pushing past the agreed speed may generate ill will from the rest of the group as well as create confusion that can result in safety issues.

When pulling at the front, plan your move to the back in advance. Don't come off the front just before, while going through or just after intersections and hills. If you are familiar with the route, plan your move off the front

for flat, wider areas in the road that have minimal variables. Limit the time of your pulling to roughly 5 minutes to keep the group rotating.

When at the front and starting after a stop sign or stop light, bring your speed up slowly. Remember, the riders behind you are clipping in and have to wait for the person in front of them to move before they can move. Accelerating rapidly off of a stop causes an accordion effect within the group.

Do your business at the rear of the group. If you need to remove your vest, arm warmers, wipe your sunglasses, eat a gel, or any activity that involves removing your hands from the bars and taking your attention away from the group, it should be done at the back.