

## RoadSkill: Riding in a group

Riding in a group can be a casual, social event or a thrilling, high-energy rush. Many rides contain elements of each. But riding in a group requires skills not developed in solo riding, and without which the ride can be unpleasant or even dangerous for you, other riders or other road users. I'll highlight a few of these skills below, but if most of this is new information to you, look for a more complete treatment, such as *Bicycling Magazine's Complete Book of Road Cycling Skills* (Rodale Press, 1998).

### Be predictable and consistent

The best way to keep from getting a bicyclist up the butt is to be predictable. If the person behind you knows what you're doing, he or she can respond appropriately.

- Hold your line—don't swerve.
- Brake gradually.
- Up-shift before standing so your bike doesn't suddenly slow.

### Communicate

- If you're going to turn, stick out the appropriate arm to signal your intent.
- If a car is approaching from the front, say "Car up".
- If a car is approaching from behind, say "Car back".
- If the car that was approaching from behind then turns into a side street say "Clear back".
- If a car is approaching from a street on the right say "Car right".
- You get the idea.
- If there is gravel, sand or roadkill in the road, point down, toward it, moving your hand to attract attention.
- If the debris is dangerous, such as glass or a bad sewer grate, say something as well, like "Glass!" or "Bad grate!"

**Note:** Many riders, when approaching an intersection that is free of traffic, will call "Clear". Do not trust this. Look and decide for yourself whether the intersection is safe.

### Be considerate

- In a large group, if there is car traffic, break into groups of three or four riders with enough space between groups that a car can pass one group at a time.
- Make sure the rider behind you sees you turn onto a new road.
- If you don't know where you're going, catch up with the rider in front of you or wait for the one behind you.

### Be safe

- Don't overlap wheels with the bike in front of you.
- Wear bright clothing (and don't wear red at dusk or at night—it is hard to see!)
- Use a red flashing rear light.

Next month: riding in a paceline