



Motorcycle 101: Riding in groups

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When new motorcycle riders are asked why they want to ride, two of their most common responses are "I want to ride with my friends" and "I want to go on group rides." As similar as these two rides may seem, they are actually quite different. Group rides require a different level of riding experience than riding with a couple of friends.

Friends tend to look out for each other. Friends generally understand each others riding skill and experience. As a result, friends will typically adapt the ride to the skill level of the weakest rider.



Group Riding Presents Significant Challenges (Photo: Lauren Bachur)

Group riding presents challenges and "unknowns" to riders. These include:

- Riding style of the group
- Riding experience of the group
- Riding experience of individual riders
- Skill level of the group and individuals

Because of these challenges, there are a few basic guidelines that everyone in the group should follow:

- Always "ride your own ride." In other words, you should ride to your own skill level and ability. Pushing yourself to "keep up" can be dangerous. If you're uncomfortable in a group ride, for everyone's safety, remove yourself.
- Each group ride should have a "Ride Captain" and a "Tailgunner." A good Ride Captain will always have a short briefing before the ride. The Tailgunner is responsible for ensuring that each rider stays with the group.
- Attend the ride briefing and make sure you understand your individual responsibilities during the ride.
- Ride in a staggered formation, with the Ride Captain at the front. This provides each rider the full use of their lane and the best visibility of the road ahead. Riding two-abreast is never a good practice. This limits your ability to change position within the lane in the event of an obstacle in the roadway.
- Entering curves, riders should drop back into a single file formation. This allows each rider to execute the curve properly.
- Traffic laws and speed limits should always be obeyed. Plans for handling traffic lights, traffic congestion, group separation and other common situations should be discussed at the pre-ride briefing.

Recognizing the risks and dangers present in a group ride is every rider's responsibility. Handling these challenges ahead of time helps to ensure that everyone has a great ride!

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