

Pacelines Polishing Your Technique

- When starting from stop in a line always start at a slow pace, when everyone is on, SLOWLY increase speed to the agreed upon rate.
- When standing in a pace line your bike is generally pushed back. Always call “standing” and wait for the rider to adjust before actually standing.
- Never coast in a paceline. Adjust your speed by adjusting the pedal pressure. Once you get into a paceline keep pedaling. This is especially true for the lead rider.
- Pacelining is best for the fast flats. When reaching rolling terrain use constant effort not constant speed to regulate the line speed. Down hills will be a faster and up hills a slower.
- When closing a gap accelerate slowly so the riders behind are not left.
- When you are approaching the rider ahead, plan in advance and slow by soft-pedaling. You should meet up, feet still moving, to the rider ahead and match their speed without touching the brakes.
- No sudden accelerations when a rider arrives at the front i.e.. The front rider must watch the speed on his computer just before his turn at the front, and then maintain that speed within one-half mph or one kmh. If the speed of the pace line needs to be increased, wait until you have been pulling on front for several strokes, and then SLOWLY increase the speed. A gradual increase in speed will avoid gaps and help keep you (and everyone behind you) fresh.
- Keep your hands near the brakes when you are in the middle of the group.
- Keep your head up and look ahead. We see this problem with experienced and inexperienced riders alike. Often, we will see riders looking down at the road, eyes focused on a spot about 10 feet ahead of their bicycle. If you are focused on a spot this close, you're in trouble. Experts estimate average human reaction time to be somewhere between 1.0 and 1.5 seconds.
- If you're riding 15 mph, you are traveling 22 feet per second. By the time you see something 10 feet in front of you and react, it's too late, you've hit the hazard. Obviously, the faster you're traveling, the problem compounds itself. (20 mph = 29 ft/sec, 25 mph = 36.7 ft/sec)
- Look ahead a good distance so you can anticipate trouble. You can detect a good number of problems if you keep watch about 20 to 25 yards (60 to 75 feet, or the length of a swimming pool) ahead of yourself. Although you are looking about 25 yards ahead, be aware of items in your peripheral vision - a car crossing the centerline a quarter of a mile away, a dog running toward you from a farm house 50 yards away, a truck that looks like it may not stop at the intersection ahead of you, etc.
- If you're riding in a pace line, avoid tire-fixation. This problem occurs when you're focused on the tire of the person ahead of you. Instead, keep your head up and look ahead. Keep the rider(s) in front of you in your peripheral vision and watch for signals from the front of the group. (See tip #2.)
- If you're in a working pace line, point out hazards in the road to riders behind you. There several different ways to signal something is on the road, beside the road, moving on the road (a human or animal), etc. You can workout a signal system with your group or at minimum, simply point to the hazard.
- When riding in a pace line, don't cross wheels with the person ahead of you. This means don't let your front tire cross a line that is perpendicular to the back tire of the person ahead of you. If they make a sudden move and swerve to the side, you go down.
- Whether riding alone or in a pace line, ride a steady, straight line. Weaving all over the road wastes your energy and is dangerous to others.
- Be steady and predictable. Riders that make sudden, darty moves are dangerous. (To avoid darty, see tip #2 again.) Make it clear when you are finished on the front. A deliberate movement to the side (after checking your path to be sure it is safe) will keep the pace line flowing smoothly. This principle may seem intuitive, but it is amazing how often this principle is ignored. After moving to the side, you must immediately slow down (soft pedal) so that the next rider can move off of the front without bumping into you and/or without waiting for you to get out of the way. Of course, you also must make sure that your decrease in speed does not cause you to “back” into a rider behind you who has not yet rejoined the line.
- Do not gap on your way back. After pulling off the front the rider behind you will be on your wheel, you must do the same when the rider in front of you pulls off, stay tight on their wheel so there is a constantly flowing group of two lines of riders with no gaps.
- If you become tired. Never pull out when in the pack/line moving forward, pull through to the front and then signal to the rider behind that you are pulling out. Pull out gradually and carefully; know when you have done your last "pull". Remain at the back of the pack by allowing the riders coming off the front to pull in ahead of you. If you cannot maintain the pace at the back of the pace always call Gap.