



The Black Cyclists Network

Club Code of Conduct

BCN Code of Conduct



Within this document lies the full Code of Conduct that all members of the Black Cyclists Network are expected to follow and adhere to at all times.

As BCN has grown substantially over the past couple of years, ride safety has become an important topic for the entire team. With more riders taking up the sport than ever before, we want to create an environment which is safe for all members.

As such, the Ride Captains and Club Committee have collectively put together a BCN Code of Conduct that all riders are required to adhere to. This will hopefully help us uphold a high level of safety during all of our rides, as well as make them more enjoyable for all who get involved.

Punctuality:

Group punctuality is incredibly important and sets the tone for all BCN rides that we do. Riders are expected to arrive at all pre-designated meeting locations 10 minutes prior to the rides departure time. Rides will leave promptly at their designated departure time, so it is up to all riders to make sure that they arrive on time and are ready to begin.

Ride departure times will be announced to all members in advance of any ride, either via the BCN WhatsApp group, via Strava or via our new website. It is up to all riders to make sure that they are aware of ride departure times.

During Saturday group rides within Regents park, some exceptions will be allowed under exceptional circumstances. If a rider was to puncture or have a mechanical issue on their way to the meeting point, and as a result are running late, they will be allowed to join their regular group once they have arrived. The rides will not wait for them, and it will be the responsibility of the individual to join a group when one comes past.

During BCN Epic Rides or longer Sunday rides, all riders will be required to arrive at least 10 minutes before the rides departure and form into their specific ride groups. These rides will leave on time and there will be no exception to this rule. Due to the length and nature of these rides, they must depart at their designated times. If a rider is running late, it will be up to that individual to ride on and catch up with their group.

Group sizes:

To help make group rides manageable for Ride Captains, as well as help to help maintain safety when riding on public roads, all groups will be limited to a maximum of 10 riders where possible. If groups can be further split into smaller groups, Ride Captains will decide as to whether this will be necessary.

Groups are not allowed to merge when on the road, as this congests the public highway and puts riders at risk. Groups are to remain separated and riders are asked to remain with the groups that they are put into unless stated otherwise. Changing groups is only permitted at designated stop locations such as at mid-ride café' stops. If there is adequate space in the new group for another rider, they are only permitted to change groups under the authorization of that groups Ride Captain.

Young Riders:

All riders under the age of 18 are considered to be a child, minor or young person.

A minimum age of 16 years old has been put in place to best maintain safety and safeguard younger riders as well as the groups they will be riding with. As of July 2020, BCN will not be open to riders below the ages of 16 years old due to safeguarding concerns.

BCN hopes to have coaches and groups in place to cater to the needs of youth riders in the near future. We are currently working with our Ride Captains to make sure that qualified and accredited coaches are available to begin working with youth riders soon. Once ready, BCN will make a public announcement and begin inviting youth riders into the club to join our regular club sessions.

Health concerns:

Any riders with specific health requirements or medical conditions should make themselves known to the Club Committee and Ride Captains, so that correct procedures can be put in place to best cater to those riders needs.

Before taking part in any rides, a rider with specific health requirements should always inform their Ride Captain. This is important, as, in the event of that rider needing medical attention, the Ride Captain can pass this information on to emergency services or administer appropriate first aid.

Probationary Period:

A new Novice Riders Group has been put in place to help instruct and assess new riders that wish to come along to regular BCN rides and events. Riders are required to attend a minimum of 3 Saturday group sessions in Regents Park, where their riding will be assessed by one of BCN's designated Ride Captains.

Here, new riders will be taught the basic skills they need to know, from the different hand signals used during group rides to the various callouts a rider must learn and understand.

After the 3 rides, the probationary period is over. New riders can then choose to remain within the Novice Riders Group and continue receiving instruction from their Ride Captain if they do not yet feel ready to progress onto one of BCN's regular groups. If they feel confident and wish to progress up to the BCN Easy Group, then the Novice Groups Ride Captain will inform the other Captains of their progression. The novice rider will then be allowed to participate in regular BCN rides, and join the club.

Should the Novice Group Ride Captian feel that a rider is not ready to progress up to a larger group, they may ask that they complete more rides in the Novice Riders Group until they are satisfied that the rider has mastered the basic skills necessary to progress up to bigger group rides.

Group selection:

Other than the Novice Riders Group, BCN members are allowed to move between the various groups we offer, depending on their skillset and experience. Riders who have progressed up from the Novice Group are required to do their first large bunch ride with the BCN Easy Group so that they can get a feel for what it is like to ride in a larger organised group.

Regular riders are free to move between the BCN Easy and BCN Medium groups depending on the sorts of riding they wish to do. There is no limit to how long a rider can remain in a group, so can choose to remain in the Easy group if they wish.

For the BCN Fast Group, certain requirements must be met to maintain a higher level of safety. Due to the intense effort and drills carried out in the BCN Fast Group, the margin for error is incredibly slim. Riders are travelling at incredible speeds, so the safety of all riders is paramount. In order to participate in the BCN Fast Group, riders must have taken part in several BCN Medium Group rides.

Upon completion of these rides, a Ride Captain will then invite you to join the Fast Group should they believe that you are skilled and experienced enough to ride with them safely. Safety is our number one priority, so even if you are strong enough to ride with the fast riders, you will not be allowed to ride with the fast group until you have acquired the necessary skills and ride experience.

Ride etiquette:

From the Novice Riders Group, all the way up to the BCN Fast Group, ride etiquette will be taught and enforced by all Ride Captains.

Where possible, riders are encouraged to ride two abreast within their groups. Riders are not allowed to ride three abreast at any time whilst out on the road as this is dangerous and hinders other road users.

However, groups may occasionally have to go into a single file line, in which case, a Ride Captain will shout, "Single!" This callout is expected to be passed back through the group so that all riders are made aware.

Riders are expected to maintain orderly groups when riding together, as well as remain close to the wheel in front. This helps keep the whole group in a nice neat formation and prevent riders from scattering across the road. Failure to do so will negatively affect other road users, as well as endanger other riders.

Riders are expected to call out obstacles and obstructions to all members of their group, as failure to do so will result in a crash and possible injury.

When on the front, always ride at the same pace as the person next to you. If riders are struggling to hold a consistent pace on the front of the group, they will be asked to spend more time in the centre of the group where they are better sheltered. This will help to prevent them from being dropped by a group, and prevent accidents due to fatigue.

Stronger riders are also encouraged to stay on the front and pull longer turns. However, they are expected to keep a steady tempo whilst on the front of their respective groups, to prevent the groups from being split by unexpected surges in pace.

Try not to brake suddenly, for the sake of those behind you. Riders are expected to always watch ahead for possible danger and traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and traffic lights. If a group needs to slow down or stop, it should be done in a controlled manner. Riders should call "Slowing!" to signify to the rest of the group that they need to slow down, and "Stopping!" to signify that the group needs to come to a halt. Gradually come to a stop, being mindful of the other riders around you.

Discriminatory behaviour:

Riders are expected to uphold a respectful and professional image when riding with BCN and when wearing BCN club kit. If it is found that riders are behaving dangerously out on the road or being disrespectful to members of the general public, they may be reprimanded and in some circumstances banned from participating in further BCN rides and club activities. We have a zero-tolerance policy to violent behaviour, bullying, racist remarks/actions or foul language/actions towards our members or members of the general public.

With this in mind, members are also expected to treat each other with respect and courtesy in person, online, and on social media channels. They are to refrain from abusive language, ad hominem attacks, and any other form of deliberate victimisation. Members must not use discriminatory language – whether directly or indirectly – against anyone based on their gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or disability. If an individual or group is found to violate these rules, they face having their membership made void, as well as facing other forms of disciplinary action.

Ride communication:

During every group ride, a series of verbal and physical signals will be used to point out or highlight important things to other members of a group. This is usually done via specific hand signals and a shout. For novice riders, these important callouts and hand signals will be taught during introductory rides with the club.

All callouts and hand signals must be passed up and down the line so that riders are made aware of upcoming obstacles or danger – a shout from the front of a group cannot always be heard at the back, and vice versa.

Examples of important hand signals are as follows:

- If someone points to the floor: a pothole/drain is coming up.
- If the rider in front puts their arm across their back: this means that there is a car/obstruction on the road, and the group will be required to move around it.
- A hand in the air: means the group is slowing down to stop, usually at traffic lights.

All riders are expected to look after those around them, including the general public. Riders are not allowed to run red lights, ride into oncoming traffic unnecessarily or disobey state traffic laws. Not only does this tarnish BCN's proud image, but it puts other peoples lives at risk. If riders are caught at traffic lights or railroad crossings, the rest of the group is responsible for waiting for the riders until it is safe for them to regroup. Do not feel tempted to run lights or put your life in unnecessary danger.

Mechanical issues:

Groups will also wait for riders if someone is to have a mechanical issue or puncture. Groups should look out for each other and make sure that all of their members make it to the end of the ride where possible. If riders are unable to continue a ride for whatever reason, the group is responsible for making sure that those riders can get homes safely, such as aiding them to local transport hubs like train stations.

If a ride is stated as a 'Drop Ride', riders are then responsible for taking care of themselves if they are dropped by their group. In this instance, a group is not required to wait for riders, other than for mechanicals and punctures. If a rider is dropped during a Drop Ride, it is their responsibility to make their way home safely in whatever way they deem suitable.

Maps and navigation:

Where possible, GPS route maps will be made accessible for riders to download prior to a BCN ride. For Saturday group rides in Regents Park, riders are not required to download route maps. However, for longer BCN Sunday rides and BCN Epic Rides, all riders are required to download the route maps before the ride. These maps will be made available on the BCN Strava page, via the BCN WhatsApp group and via the BCN website.

On longer rides, all participants are required to have maps in case they get separated or lost. Riders are also asked to avoid riding at the front of their groups if they are unable to have a route map for whatever reason. This is to avoid rides leading their group the wrong way and prevent accidents due to riders hesitating at junctions and roundabouts.

Ride Captains:

Ride Captains are hand-selected by BCN based on their experience and knowledge. Many have participated in the sport for several years and participated at varying levels from club riding to professional racing.

Their knowledge within the sport allows them the ability to coach and guide new riders, helping them to quickly gain the skills necessary to ride safely within our structured groups. Their objective is to keep everyone in their group safe during their rides and to help riders develop through the sharing of their knowledge.

With this in mind, the instructions of Ride Captain must be taken seriously. If a Ride Captain gives their group orders or instructions, it is for the safety and betterment of their ride. The group must follow these instructions immediately, as failure to do so can put other riders at risk.

If a Ride Captain pulls you aside to talk with you about your riding privately, do not think that they are trying to single you out specifically. Ride Captains want to see all of their riders grow, so any advice they are giving you is purely based on their intent to help you develop safely. Take everything a Ride Captain is telling you onboard, as one day, you might even be personally selected to become a BCN Ride Captain yourself.

A full list of the Ride Captains names and contact information can be supplied to members upon request.

Rider Equipment:

All riders are required to be self-reliant. If they are required to ride alone for whatever reason, all riders are expected to be able to take care of themselves or those in their care.

- Riders must have spares, including inner tubes, patches, tyre levers and a pump in case they get a puncture.
- Riders must carry a multitool or tools so that they can carry out repairs should they need to.
- Riders must also carry food to prevent them from bonking, either through gels, cereal bars and fruit.
- Riders must have water for the same reason and will not be allowed to come on longer rides if they do not any.
- Riders are asked to carry a phone, in case they get lost or need to call for help.
- Riders must carry money in case they need to use public transport, pay for more food, etc.
- Spare clothing during winter months, such as arm warmers, hats and gloves should the weather change.
- A helmet. There are to be no exceptions to this rule
- And Medication. Riders that have specific medical needs should inform their Ride Captain and carry their medication with them if necessary.

Epic Rides:

Entry to BCN Epic Rides will be allowed to riders who have participated in multiple regular Sunday club rides in the fast or medium BCN groups. Due to the nature and difficulty of these longer events, all riders must prove that they are up to the demands. Ride Captains reserve the right to turn riders away if they do not believe that they will be able to complete an Epic Ride safely.

All riders participating in BCN Epic Rides must RSVP (Reserving a place) on the BCN Strava page in advance of the ride, to let everyone know that they will be attending. This will allow Ride Captains to appropriately organise groups before the event takes place. Failure to do so may result in riders being turned away on the day.

Youth riders below the minimum age of 16 will not be permitted to attend BCN Epic Rides due to the nature and intensity of such events. Due to the demands of these rides, it would not be deemed safe or responsible to take younger riders such distances away from home. Special exceptions may be made for youth riders between the ages of 17 and 18 if two or more Ride Captains deem a rider to have shown promise and feel that they are capable of completing an Epic Ride safely.

Riders are expected to be able to take care of themselves should they fall behind and are unable to keep up, as well as be able to manage their mechanical issues such as punctures or gear problems. The group will aim to remain together as long as is possible and aid anyone who has bicycle-related issues, but riders who can no longer keep up with the group are required to have basic mechanical knowledge and deal with these issues.

Riders are required to have all route maps used during BCN Epic Rides. These will be distributed in advance via the BCN WhatsApp group, BCN Strava and BCN website. If riders are forced to ride alone, they will be required to navigate back home safely. Route maps will make this easier.

Riders are required to get the contact details of at least one Ride Captain during these rides so that they have the means to contact someone in the group should they become separated or have an accident that the group is unaware of.

BCN Epic Rides are the toughest rides BCN runs, and as a result, the highest levels of discipline and safety must be adhered to. If riders are seen to be riding dangerously or put the groups safety at risk, they may be prevented from joining Epic Rides in the future.

Accidents and First-Aid:

In the event of an accident, Ride Captains will assess the situation and attempt to administer first-aid where appropriate. All Ride Captains are either first-aid trained or in the process of attaining a first-aid certificate. Other riders within a group are asked to allow the Ride Captain to take control of a given situation and are expected to follow all instructions a Ride Captain gives out.

Use of recreational drugs, performance-enhancing substances and other narcotics:

Any use of performance-enhancing drugs is prohibited, both in competition and in recreational use. Not only is this an unfair advantage and dangerous to your health, but it also goes against rules set out by the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) and UK Anti Doping (UKAD). Riders caught using performance-enhancing drugs of any kind, without proper permission granted via a therapeutic exemption form, will face an instant and permanent ban, as well as being reported to the national governing body.

Use of other recreational drugs and narcotics is also prohibited unless taken for legitimate medical reasons. In such instances, leeway will be granted for riders with specific medical needs. Use of drugs for any other reason will not be tolerated by the club, and swift procedures will be taken to safeguard other members.

Competition rules:

All riders who wish to compete either on the BCN Race Team or as a member of the BCN Club, expected to follow all sporting rules put in place by British Cycling (BC) and the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). Links to the competition rules are provided on the BCN club website or can be accessed by going to

UCI: <https://www.uci.org/inside-uci/constitutions-regulations/regulations>

BC: https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/road/article/bcst_rulebook_and_constitution?c=EN

Any riders found to be in violation of the competition rules will face being reprimanded by the club committee. Serious violations also face a club ban.