

## Rider Guide

Riding in a group brings a set of dynamics different to riding solo.  
So, how do you keep a group of riders together, safe and supportive.

When riding together, the BMW Motorcycle Club Pretoria has some pretty easy rules:

- Stay behind the Ride Leader. Never pass him/her.
- The designated Sweep rides at the back; don't fall behind him/her.
- Ride in a Staggered formation (as explained below).

There are, of course, other rules that seem so obvious that one shouldn't have to mention them. These include, but are not limited to:

- The Prime Objective - Do not hit the bike in front of you !
- Keep a safe distance – at all times !
- NEVER pass a fellow rider on the left! NEVER ! EVER !

Simple as these seem, few riders seem to understand the meaning of these rules, and many fail to observe them.

This guide sets out to explain the application of the basic rules as well as to outline a simple and easy way to apply these rules proven to be very effective.

How do we manage a group of riders, in such a way that they are safe and provide mutual support?

This question encapsulates many aspects with only some outlined below:

- Bikes have a tendency to crash into one another – pay attention to other bikers!
- People in the group miss a turn and get lost, often leading to part of the group falling far behind or landing up in dangerous areas before anyone notices.
- One bike has a problem like a puncture or empty tank and it is an hour before the leader knows about it.
- Bikes follow one another into a dangerous situation and you end up with a multiple bike crash.
- And the list goes on....

The problem with any set of rules is that it has to cover diverse situations, from high-speed country riding to the slow robot-to-robot shuffle.

Herewith the basic rules to avoid common problems when riding in a group:

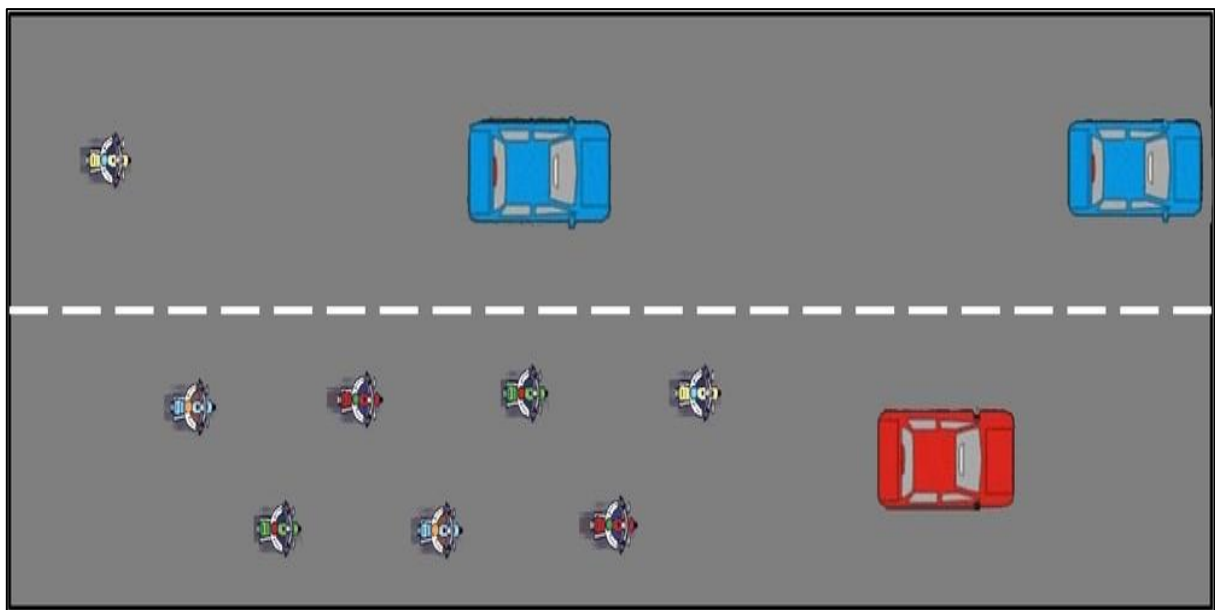
## RIDE IN STAGGERED FORMATION

Most of us would have heard of this, and been instructed to use staggered formation before.

Why ride in Staggered formation?

When riding, your safe stopping or reaction distance is a function of the open space in front of you. Put another way, the distance of clear road directly in front of you is your safety area.

First let's define a unit and use a "bike length" as the length of the bike PLUS the distance required to stop.



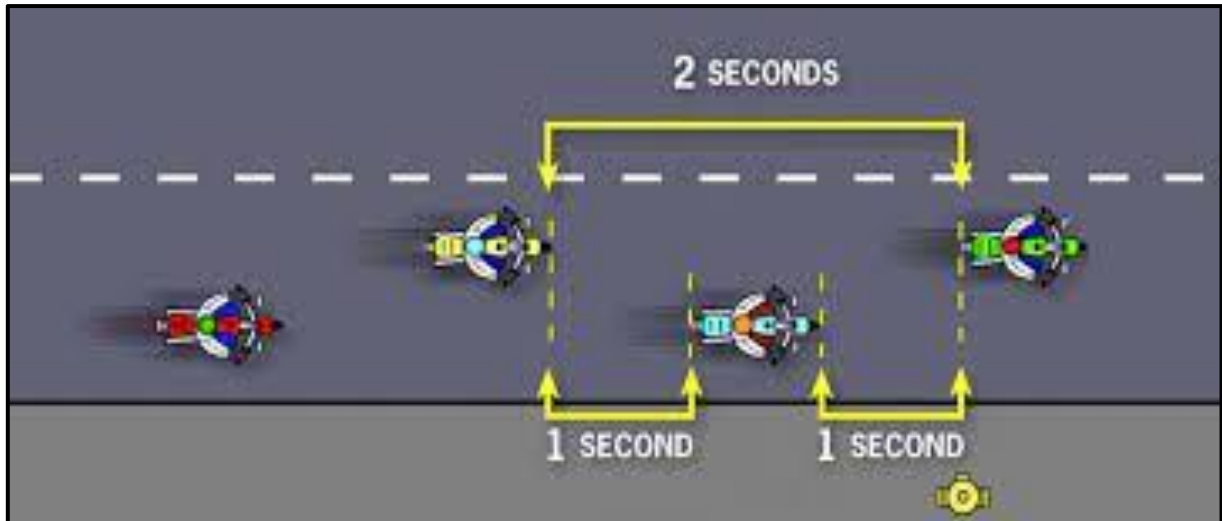
When riding, bikes need about a full lane width to ride comfortably. This allows for some space to manoeuvre.

However, in an emergency, a half lane width will do with space to brake in.

So, when riding together, **smart** bikers stagger their position to allow the bike behind them a safety margin, and to allow themselves the same margin.

You now have TWO bike lengths in which to stop, instead of one.

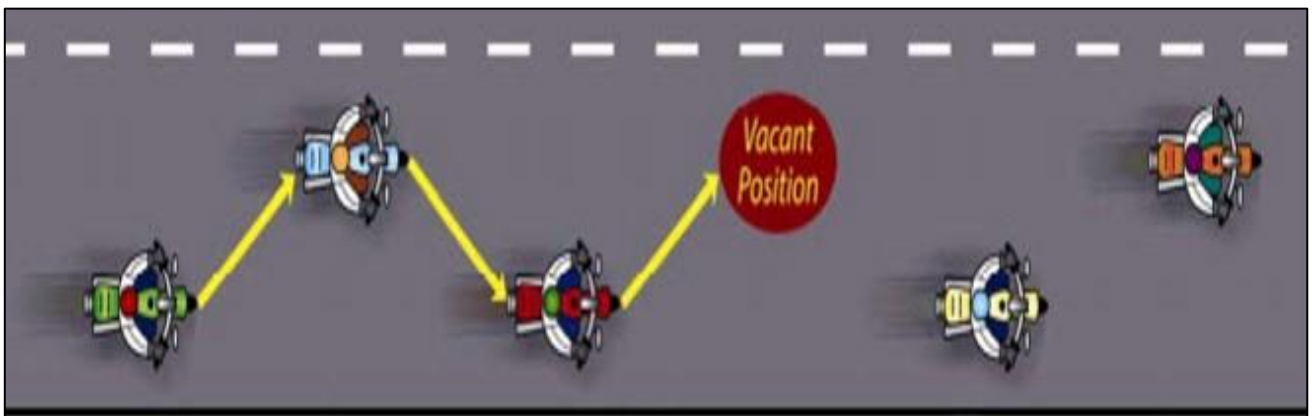
Also the bike behind you has space in which to pass you under heavy braking should they have to. Double the safety.



What happens when riders move out of the staggered formation or change positions?

If the bike in front of you shifts from one side to the other, shift to the opposite side, maintaining the formation. The bike behind you will follow suit.

The Ride Leader will take-up the **right-hand position** of the lane in order to have a clear view of the road and traffic ahead. The Sweep will take-up the **centre position** of the lane in order to have a clear view of riders in the group.



In some instances it may be necessary to “break” formation, but only for good reasons and in the interest of safety. Here are some good reasons:

- If you see something potentially dangerous in your path, move around it. Signal to the rider behind you to look out, pointing at the road surface with hand or foot – if you are able to do safely. Then, get back to your side as soon as it is safe to do so.
- You should not attempt to keep a staggered riding formation through tight bends. This is extremely dangerous and riders should follow the best and safest line through a bend irrespective of fellow riders’ position. Safe following distances and returning to formation after the bend is key.

## RIDE YOUR OWN RIDE

When following a leading bike, there is a natural tendency to keep your eyes on the bike in front of you, rather than on the road. This means you tend to follow the leading bike, braking when he does, accelerating when he does, and taking the same line through bends.

This can be a big problem as few bikes have exact matching handling characteristics, acceleration, braking power or comfortable riding speeds. Even fewer bikers have exact matching riding experience and abilities.

***Keep the bike in front of you in your peripheral vision, your eyes on the road, and make your own decisions.***

Focus on your own speed, cornering line, road surface, braking distance, etc.

Additional points to note:

Watch out for a difference in colour of the road surface – this is a good indication of hazards such as potholes, spilled oil, sand, etc.

Rider fatigue is very dangerous when on a motorcycle. Please stop regularly if you can. If you know the Ride Leader is taking you on a longer route, request him/her to stop for “leg stretches”.

**In closing, you're not a passenger on a bus – you're operating a very powerful two-wheeler in a group so, be aware of what's going on around you all the time and stay focussed.**

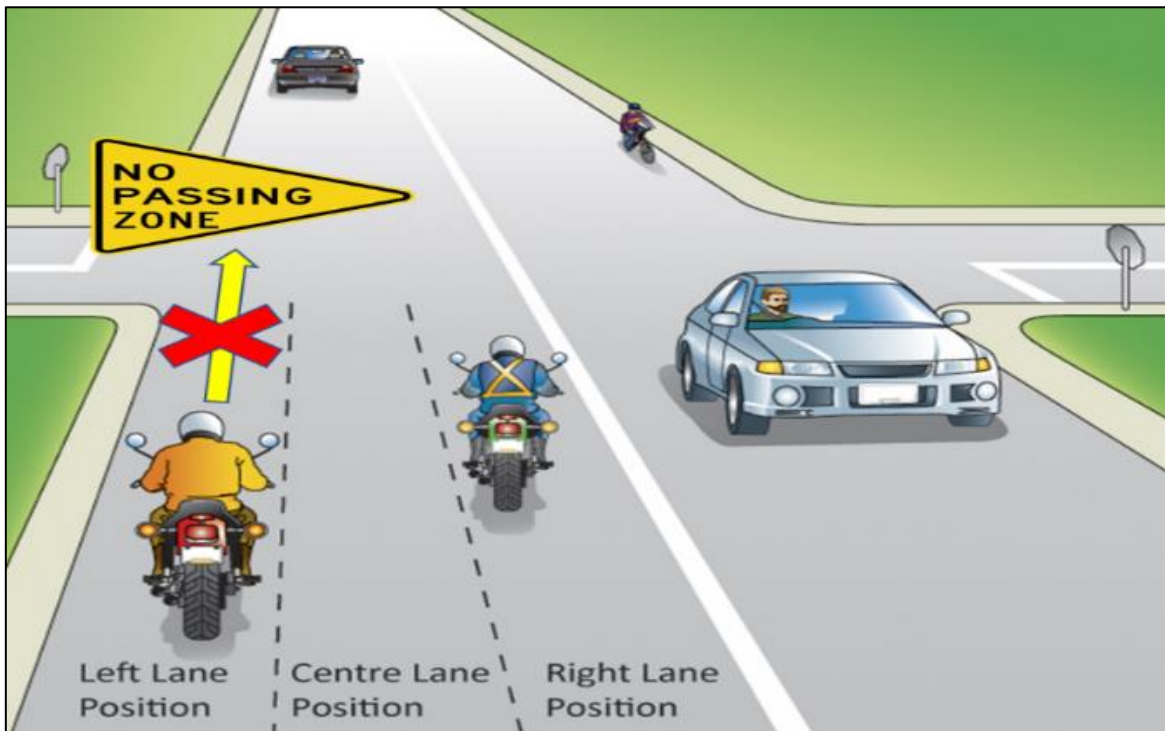
**DO NOT PASS ON THE LEFT – NEVER !**



The area to the left of a rider, between the bike and the edge of the road or another lane, is the rider's emergency area or safe zone.

As a rider, you know that under no circumstances will anyone intrude on this space. This is your safe zone to use in an emergency. Any eventuality (*bike failure of some sort*) or threat (*oncoming vehicle approaching head-on, pothole*) will cause a rider to automatically move into his safe zone without looking – rightfully so.

***If there is another bike passing on the left at this moment, you have a horrible crash on your hands.***



## LEADER AND SWEEP

All organised BMW Motorcycle Club Pretoria rides will have an appointed leader and sweep, who should be made known to all members of the group – at briefing prior to departure.

Smaller groups can be more informal but should still observe these basics. The leader is the biker who knows the way and rides in front of the group.

The **ride leader** is responsible for the entire group's safety and well-being. He is the first to observe hazards in the road and warn those behind of the danger.

The ride leader will judge a safe speed in any situation and takes the lead in drastically reducing speed when entering towns. If rain starts to pour, he has to find a safe and sheltered spot for the deployment of rain gear.

The **sweep** plays a role that is even more important. It is the sweep's job to see that NO-ONE gets left behind. If one member of the group stops for any reason, the sweep will stop to assist.

So, who then looks out for the sweep?

***Every rider is responsible for the rider behind them.***

In large groups it is impossible for the leader to keep track of more than two bikes behind him/her. Each and every rider takes responsibility for the rider behind him/her. This way, the group stays together and even the sweep has a rider looking out for him/her.

Application of this rule is very easy - **keep one bike's headlight visible in your rearview mirrors. If he disappears, reduce speed slightly.**

You can trust that the sweep will take care of any rider falling far behind, therefore you need not stop or slow down to the extent that you are also losing the group. Continue riding at safe speed in order to catch-up with the group.

In summary, have the rider in front in view whilst having the rider behind you in view. If you reduce speed, and the rider in front does so, and the rider in front of him. The ride leader will realise he/she is starting to lose the group and slow down accordingly.

## SECOND MAN DUTIES

Taking responsibility for the rider behind you also includes taking up second man duties.

At a junction, crossing or route direction change, the ride leader will point to a specific position that the closest following rider, known as “2<sup>nd</sup> man” or “pointsman”, should take up. This is when you will act as pointsman with your motorcycle facing in the direction of travel, indicator on towards that direction.

Don't worry, the ride leader will scout the route beforehand and therefore point you to a safe position. If you feel it is unsafe, you may adjust slightly to compensate but in such a way the riders can still see the direction you're pointing.

All the riders will then pass you, the pointsman until the sweep arrives. Usually, the sweep leaves a gap between him/her and the last rider to allow the pointsman time to recognise the sweep (in high-viz). When he/she indicates to you, you may proceed safely.

The sweep will never pass the pointsman and will even stop at the pointsman if required. So, please look at for the Sweep so you can continue riding without delaying the group.

As rider, **DO NOT** hoot, flash your lights or wave at the pointsman, as this could be mistaken as the sweep coming up from behind.

**Exception:** On some rides, the ride leader will identify “wingmen” during the ride briefing. The wingmen will be identifiable by their yellow riding jackets.

These “wingmen” will direct the group at turn-offs and junctions. Please be on the lookout for them and move slightly left out of the way to allow them to pass safely. This is you being courteous to allow them to reach the next turn-off safely so you don't have to do second man duty. Thank you.

Only the **identified wingmen** are allowed to perform wingmen duties, **no other rider** may join in to assist with these duties.

Where wingmen are appointed, it would normally not be necessary for other riders to take up the duties of pointsmen. *However, the riders following the ride leader should be cognisant of the ride leader possibly pointing at a position with route changes and thus taking up the pointsmen duties, should the wingmen not be able to reach the point of direction change on time.*



## INCIDENTS ON ROUTE

As a community of riders with similar passions and inevitable great relationships growing from this shared love for riding, it is understandable that should any misfortune happen on any of the riding group during a ride, we would want to stop and assist.

### PLEASE DO NOT STOP AT AN INCIDENT!!!

The following procedures will be followed, in the unlikely case of mechanical and/or medical incidents:

- 1.) Only the first rider behind the incident may stop to help with the initial assist, until a Rides Committee member arrives and can relieve them.
- 2.) All the other riders proceed with caution to where the Ride Leader deems it safe to stop and regroup.
- 3.) The Ride Leader will take control of the decisions regarding the trip at this point.
- 4.) Do not leave the ride to go assist in anyway **unless the Ride Leader or requests** you to do so.
- 5.) The rides committee will have spaced themselves throughout the riding group (they all have first aid training) and will stop to attend to those involved in the incident accordingly.
- 6.) The first riders on scene will be instructed to continue on the ride, should the Ride Committee member no longer require their assistance.
- 7.) In case of a medical incident / accident, no more than 3 of the Ride Committee members will attend to the incident and those involved;
- 8.) In the case of a mechanical incident, no more than 2 Ride Committee members will attend to the incident. Riders should ensure their own mechanical breakdown insurance is in place.
- 9.) In all cases where an incident occurred, the sweep will make direct contact with the Ride Leader to inform him/her of the incident and to decide on the continuation of the ride.
- 10.) In a scenario where the sweep is attending to an incident and held-up for a period of time, a secondary sweep will be appointed from the Rides Committee members attending the ride to fulfil sweep duties to the rest of the group.
- 11.) All changes in sweep duties will be communicated to the Ride Leader as to ensure everyone in the group is aware of such changes.

## RIDING STANDARDS

Finally, it should be mentioned that there are some minimum standards that the club expects when riding together. Unnecessary injuries due to inappropriate clothing or punctures due to badly worn tyres are problems that can ruin everyone's ride and are easily avoided.

When leaving on any ride, please make sure that your tyres and tubes are up to the trip; bike mechanically sound and tank filled up. Having to find breakdown support, a new tyre or any other motorcycle parts in a small town can be very difficult and can delay the ride by hours or even days.

The following are regarded as a minimum standard regarding protective clothing:

- Helmet – invest in a good helmet. It protects your brains! Remember to fasten prior to riding.
- Riding jacket - proper, protective riding jacket. No anorak or windcheater.
- Gloves – proper riding gloves, leather, or other protective material.
- Boots – riding boots are best. Invest in sturdy protecting your feet. No flipflop riding.
- Trousers – proper riding trousers, leather or other protective material. Denim jeans are the very least. Shorts are obviously way off the mark!



Failure to meet the above standard may result in the Ride Leader requesting you not to ride with the group.

Follow the basic rules, use your common sense and you will have many great experiences and memories to look back at!