

GUIDELINES FOR LEADING RIDES

2024



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Navigating these manuals

This document is designed to be viewed electronically and contains hyperlinks that will not work if printed. These link to places within the document or to web addresses for further information. It is also possible to search for keywords by using the ‘find’ function – usually by pressing the Ctrl and F keys at the same time.

Using these guidelines

These guidelines are for anyone holding a British Cycling leading qualification (Award levels 1, 2, 3, Fundamentals of MTB Leadership and Night Leading).

Guidance will be offered on many aspects of leading rides, from conducting risk assessments to considerations when leading with children. Some guidance will relate only to what to do before a ride or on the ride, whereas some guidance will relate to led rides as a whole. Which area the guidance relates to will be highlighted in red in the flow diagram at the bottom of the page.

Each Leader or organisation that regularly conducts led rides must produce their own health and safety and risk assessment policies taking the Guidelines for Leading Rides into account. They should do this in conjunction with any other specific requirements from their own managers, organisations, providers, governors or local authorities (e.g. rules on educational visits, staffing, the use of minibuses). Policies must be in writing and all people assisting with the leading activity must be fully aware of them and know how to implement them if necessary.

This document should be regarded as complementary to the British Cycling Handbook, which includes the regulations, policies, code of conduct, and other guidance. The British Cycling Handbook is available [here](#).

[Guidelines for leading rides](#)

The term Leader or Leaders applies to all Leaders, where information only relates to a person holding, for example, the Mountain Bike Leadership Award that will be explicitly stated. The terms bike and bicycle should be read to include all types of pedal cycles that meet the minimum requirements for safe participation in a led ride in the relevant leading environment.

The terms rider and cyclist are also interchangeable. References to parents are intended to be inclusive of guardians.

NB Any reference to specific levels or disciplines within this document is intended only to include those endorsed by British Cycling (e.g. Level 1 refers to British Cycling Level 1 Ride Leadership Award/ Mountain Bike Leader Award, etc)

If you have any queries about any of the guidance offered in this document, please get in touch with the Education Team:

education@britishcycling.org.uk



Your remit and the leading environment

Rides can only take place where bike riding is permitted. If intending to lead groups across [private land](#), Leaders should gain the land owner's permission, in writing, before commencing the ride. An example could be forestry estate. The Highway Code, the Countryside Code and the Scottish Access Code should be adhered to at all times.

Ride Leader remits

Level 1 Ride Leaders can operate in terrain that:

- Consists of public highways and rights of way accessible by bicycle
- Has a tarmac or other firm surface
- Is ride-able at two abreast
- Does not require proficiency in any discipline-specific cycling techniques to safely ride on it
- Does not require discipline-specific equipment to safely and comfortably ride on it
- Is within 10 minutes' walk from a road vehicle access point (should emergency services be required)

Recommended:

- Not to include climbs and descents with a maximum gradient of more than 14% (1:8)
- Not to include climb or descent that is longer than 2 miles in total length*

Level 1 Ride Leaders can:

- Lead rides up to a maximum distance of 50 miles

Level 2 Ride Leaders can operate in terrain that is the same as a Level 1 Leader with the following additions:

- May require some proficiency in road cycling techniques to safely ride on it
- May require a specific road bicycle to safely and comfortably ride on it
- May include climbs and descents with a maximum gradient of more than 14% (1:8)
- May include climbs and descents that are longer than 2 miles in total length

Level 2 Ride Leaders can:

- Lead rides longer than 50 miles

Level 2 Ride Leaders can also:

- Use and teach advanced hand signals to help manage risk as a group

Mountain Bike Leader remits

Level 1 Mountain Bike Leaders can: Lead on pre-determined routes they have been trained on and in terrain that:

- has one line choice, so no decision-making is required from riders (if there are two choices then the leader needs to tell/ show them the one line to take)

Road sections:

- Sections of road/public highway can be included if appropriate and part of the training

Fundamentals of Mountain Bike Leaders can operate in terrain that:

- are cycle-suitable public highways, rights of way and paths
- are known to the leader. All routes (and contingencies) have been pre-ridden for the purposes of safety and suitability evaluation
- are rollable by the whole group on flat and descent sections; wheels are not required to leave the ground
- are rideable at walking speed by the whole group
- have a single line choice (or if there are multiple line choices all must be within the remit and within leader sight)
- are likely to require a mountain bike or bike suitable for the off-road environment for a safe and comfortable ride

Road sections:

- Small sections of road/public highway can be used to travel from the meeting point to the mountain biking area and vice versa or to link sections of track and trail when appropriate.
- Public highways will be tarmac or other hard-packed, firm surfaces. Riders should ride 2 abreast or in single file as determined by road width and in adherence with the Highway Code.
- Road sections may include short climbs and descents; we recommend a maximum gradient of 14% (1:8) with a total length of hill no longer than 2 miles.

Both Level 1 and Fundamentals of Mountain Bike Leaders can operate:

- on routes that can be ridden seated by the whole group and only require basic weight-shift application
- no more than 30 minutes' walk from where a road-going ambulance can get to at any point
- during daylight hours
- within summer conditions as defined by [AALA](#)

Level 2 Mountain Bike Leaders can operate in terrain that:

- is rideable at walking speed
- is rollable on descents so that wheels are not required to leave the ground*
- has an obvious line choice
- is 90% rideable by the entire group
- is no more than 30 minutes' walk from where a road-going ambulance can get to.
- *As a guide, rollable terrain means that any drops or drop-offs should be no higher than hub height in relation to the smallest bike in the group.

Level 3 Mountain Bike Leaders can operate, in addition to the terrain appropriate for a Level 2 Leader, in terrain that:

- may require more than walking speed to be negotiated
- successfully and safely
- may require the wheels to leave the ground
- may not have an obvious line choice
- is 90% rideable by the entire group
- may be more than 30 minutes' walk from where a road-going ambulance can get to.

Both Level 2 and Level 3 Leaders can operate within:

- daylight hours
- summer and intermediate conditions as defined by AALA.

The remit and guidelines for the supplementary Night Leader Award can be found at Resources for MTB Leaders.

Trail Cycle Leaders can operate in terrain comprising:

- Public highways, waymarked routes, rights of way on which cycles are permitted, identifiable routes, tracks and trails with obvious navigational features
- Routes which are at least 90-95% rideable over their total length
- Terrain no more than 30 minutes' walk from either: the nearest accessible (by ambulance) road or a shelter from where it is possible to summon help
- Terrain that is below 600m in elevation
- Terrain matched to the skills and riding competencies of the Trail Cycle Leader
- Normal [summer conditions](#), during daylight
- Multi-day trips where the group is not required to be self-sufficient

In addition to the terrain appropriate for a Trail Cycle Leader, the remit of a Mountain Bike Leader further includes terrain comprising:

- Terrain more than 30 minutes' walk from the nearest accessible road or shelter from where it is possible to summon help (i.e. within AALS licensable terrain)
- Terrain matched to the skills and riding competencies of the Mountain Bike Leader
- Any height above sea level or open moorland.

The Leader should also pay due care and attention to the health and safety of the riders, other trail users and themselves. The weather and environmental conditions must be conducive to leading and allow riders to participate safely in the ride.

The leader: rider ratio

The maximum Leader to rider ratio is one Leader per eight participants (1:8).

Leaders can work with groups larger than their remit allows but must appoint the appropriate number of Leaders to work on this ratio. For example, a group of 16 mountain bike riders would need to be led by at least 2 qualified mountain bike Leaders.

Leaders are responsible for ensuring the group is adequately supervised. The Leader to rider ratio outlined later in this section provides a maximum ratio to ensure a safe ride as guided by the qualifications held by the Leader. However, Leaders must only work with the number of riders with which they feel confident and competent, within the recommendations. The Leader to rider ratio should be sufficient to enable meaningful help to be given to riders experiencing difficulties. For example, younger children, beginners and those with disabilities or particular needs may require extra supervision.

In some instances, it may be necessary to arrange for additional help during a led ride (e.g. from another Leader, a coach, a club official or a parent). It is important that anyone enlisted to help in a ride is suitably qualified for the role and tasks they are required to undertake. This person should be present at the safety briefing held at the start of the led ride. Where an unqualified (according to the remit) assistant is used, they fall within the standard ratio.

Ride Leader: rider ratio inclusions

Adults wishing to bring along children under 5 years (on the day of the chosen ride) may do so under the supervision of a parent and they are secured in a British Standard child seat or trailer. Under 5's taking part via a bike attachment are not considered additional riders and the Leader's remit applies to the parents only.

Parents with an under 5 in a trailer can take part in easy or steady rides up to a maximum distance of 12 miles provided by a Leader.

Child seats and trailers should only be used on suitable routes.



Planning rides

Several points should be considered when planning rides. To promote a safe and enjoyable ride, Leaders should adhere to the following criteria:

- The ride has to take place in an environment that the ride Leader is qualified to operate in (see your remit and leading environment section)
- The route should be appropriate to the current level of physical fitness and technical competence of the riders who will be participating in the ride, particularly taking into account:
 - The participants' ability to ride in traffic where the ride takes place on the public highway, and their technical competence related to the route planned for mountain bikes.
 - The weather conditions, which can significantly influence the technical severity of the terrain.
 - Whether the Leader or participants are using e-bikes on the ride.
 - Route contingencies which allow for the group to travel more slowly or faster than intended, or where appropriate using fewer demanding options according to their technical competencies. After all, a Mountain Bike Leader will never be able to predict when they might have to replace more inner tubes than they have spares!

This judgement should be based on the Leader's assessment of the conditions and the riders' current level of ability (see 'Know your riders' and 'Safety checks').

Guidelines for leading rides

- The Leader should provide a record of the intended route including likely contingency plans. It is essential to leave this as well as approximate timings, and your contact number with a responsible person (appointed contact). It is also highly recommended to provide an action plan in the event of nonreturn by an Emergency Action Time (EAT) to the appointed contact. The telephone number of the appointed contact should also be made available to the parents of any riders who are under the age of 18 years.
- On mountain bike rides, road sections should be minimised to ensure that the majority of the ride is taking place in mountain bike-specific terrain and not on the public highway. However, as roads can provide the quickest way back to base or to some form of shelter it is feasible to consider them when planning route contingencies.
- Led rides taking place on the public highway can have an impact on other road users (including other cyclists, motor vehicles, pedestrians, horses or horse-drawn carriages). Other road users can also present a hazard to individuals taking part in the led ride. Leaders and riders should take precautions to reduce the level of risk to an acceptable level.



Guidelines for leading rides

- In addition to considering the safety of all road users when planning rides, Leaders should consider other safety measures including:
 - using safe stopping points (e.g. off the road/trail, in a lay-by or car park),
 - avoiding turning in the road,
 - minimising group and bunch sizes,
 - using quiet roads,
 - avoiding times when roads/trails are busy,
 - avoiding locations where other events are taking place.
- Undertaking a risk review or assessment should account for these elements, define the control measures that may be required and guide the Leader as to their operational ride plan. See the section on Managing Risk.
- Utilising a route that flows. Pay attention to the suitability, gradient and technicality of both climbs and descents, some ride much better in a particular direction. Build the technical competency requirements into the early part of the route so that riders have sufficient time to get used to riding and are 'in the flow' before the challenging sections begin. Avoid leaving the most demanding sections until towards the end of the ride as riders will be most fatigued raising the likelihood of an incident occurring.

Creating a ride plan

Once you have determined your route and have an idea of how you feel the ride should pan out, it is good practice to create a ride plan. This is as simple as writing down what you intend to happen from start to finish. Included on the ride plan should be:

Basic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start and finish location(s)• Likely weather and times of potential changes• Awareness of other activities taking place at the start location or on route (i.e. a sportive, football match, etc.)• Details of the riders, including experience, desires, capacity (fitness and/or technical competencies), medical and particular needs, use of e-bikes• Time of arrival for leaders and any assistants and pre-ride chat, i.e. to clarify responsibilities• Checklist for required personal equipment
Route information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Route facts• Changes in terrain (i.e. from road to fire track)• Rest stop locations• Identify the leader position for sections in order to manage the group most effectively and to minimise the impact of actual or potential hazards
Checks and briefings before the ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Route contingencies, inclement weather and emergencies plan• Details for base/emergencies including route, contact details, intended start and finish times, emergency and late back plan• Location of nearest Accident and Emergency
Checks and briefings during the ride	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-ride checks• Start time of briefing and intended ride time• Safety briefing location and key points• Skills assessment location and content• Key communications about upcoming sections and locations where riders need to be briefed or reminded about hazards or specific technical challenges

Managing risk

Leaders must conduct/use a risk assessment on the following stages of a led ride:

		L1 Ride Leader and FunMBL Leader	L2 Ride Leader	L2 and L3 Mountain Bike Leader
Before the day of the ride	Pre-ride route	✓	Recommended but not essential	Recommended but not essential
	Record risk assessment	✓	✓	✓
On the day	Check risk assessment and communicate any relevant details or control measures	✓	✓	✓
During the ride	Undertake continuous dynamic risk assessment and manage risk throughout the ride	✓	✓	✓
After the ride	Update the risk assessment as necessary	✓	✓	✓

Guidelines for leading rides

A risk assessment should detail information about the following points. For each point, it should identify appropriate control measures to reduce any risks to acceptable levels – see Appendix II for more considerations when risk assessing:

	Section		Section		Section
Planning ahead	Route	Being prepared	Safety equipment failure	Mitigating injuries	Climatic Injuries
	Terrain		Particular needs		Medical ailments
	Weather and surface conditions		Remoteness and support options		Slips and trips
	e-bikes	Mitigating incidents	Late back implications		Food or fluid poisoning
	Wildlife and farm stock, environmental poisoning		Lost rider		Stress or trauma induced by the challenge of the activity
Working within your boundaries	Ability of the Leader		Injury to, or incapacitated Leader		
	Ability of the Riders		Uncooperative behaviour putting other riders in danger		
	Remit of your qualification				
	Other people and activities		Walking		

Considerations for risk assessing

Section	Information
Planning ahead	
Route	The route should be chosen with the riding ability and fitness of the riders in mind and be appropriate in terms of distance, gradient and terrain as well as traffic volume and road layout. Ensure that the route falls within your qualification remit (see section on Leader Remit)
Terrain	The terrain should not present a level of difficulty that exceeds the riders' level of ability or potentially puts them at undue risk of injury.
Weather and surface conditions	The route should be selected based on the suitability of the surface to withstand the forecast and actual weather conditions. Be aware that surface conditions can change considerably with changes in the weather and the need for specialist equipment (such as mountain bikes on road rides) should not be required in those conditions.
Bikes/e-bikes	Any type of bike that meets the requirements of the bike safety check and that is suited to the intended route and ride type can be used.
Wildlife and farm stock, environmental poisoning	Leaders should assess seasonal and area-specific considerations to determine the likelihood of wildlife attacks (e.g. bee stings, farm dogs, nettle stings) and cattle on the route. The impact on a group can rise if there are young people present or riders with allergies. These factors should be evaluated, leading to adjustments in the route or specific remedies/treatments being taken on the ride. Some insects and animals may be more active at particular times of day; where high risk is identified, ride times should be adjusted where possible.
Working within your boundaries	
Ability of the Leader	The ride must not exceed the leader's riding ability and fitness. Leaders should not only be able to cope with the demands of the ride but also still have energy in reserve at the end of the ride.
Ability of the Riders	The ride should be planned with the fitness and riding ability (including their ability to ride in traffic or off-road technical competency) of the riders in mind.
Other people and activities	Other road and trail users should be considered; the Leader should make riders aware of the appropriate behaviour in the event of encountering other people. Walkers and horse riders should be specifically considered during off-road activity and Leaders should role model the proactive and polite interaction required.

Section	Information
Being prepared	
Safety equipment failure	The Leader's equipment should be checked for serviceability prior to packing. It is important that the Leader's mobile phone is kept adequately charged, waterproofed and protected from damage.
Particular needs	The Leader should check if any rider has any disabilities or specific learning needs that require accommodations to be made. This may alter the Leadership model for that ride, such as a lower number of riders to be supervised; the Leader must act within their remit at all times.
Remoteness and support options	The Leader should consider their route in detail, identifying likely escape routes and shortcuts that may be taken if required. This should consider areas where mobile reception is unlikely to be available, leading to the identification of how the Leader might summon help if an emergency occurs in those areas. Mountain Bike Leaders in particular should consider any additional equipment required if operating in an area where it may take a considerable time for assistance to reach their location in an emergency.
Mitigating incidents	
Late back implications	The Leader should operate within a simple but robust Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Both the Leader and the Base Contact should be under no doubt about what should happen if the Leader has not returned by the Emergency Action Time (EAT) and the Base Contact has received no communication from the Leader.
Lost rider	Leaders should identify areas where there is an increased likelihood of a rider becoming lost, such as a long climb or descent where there are possible options to turn off the route. More control over the group may need to be exercised in these situations such as the Leader adjusting their position in the group or stopping the group from spreading out. Leaders should ensure the riders know what to do if they become separated from the group; in most cases, this will be to stop where they are and attempt to communicate with the remainder of the group.
Injury to, or incapacitated Leader	The Leader must design simple and robust control measures to be followed in the event that they sustain an injury or become incapacitated. Leaders may find that easy-to-follow and readily accessible checklists are useful if a rider needs to take action.
Uncooperative behaviour putting other riders in danger	Leaders should take proactive steps to align individual goals with those of the group; being clear on this from the outset should mitigate the likelihood of later issues. Leaders should continually monitor the behaviour of their riders and take prompt action where individual behaviour is likely to affect the safety of others.
Walking	Leaders should bear in mind that where a short section of the route becomes beyond the abilities of riders or the remit of the Leader's qualification, walking may be an appropriate option. In this case, the Leader should ensure riders can safely walk with their bikes considering the nature of the terrain and riders' footwear and experience of managing walking with a bike.

Section	Information
Mitigating injuries	
Climatic Injuries	The risk of heat and cold Injuries is present at all times of year; the weather does not have to be especially hot or cold for these to occur, work rate and exposure are significant factors. Leaders should adhere to the Summer, Intermediate and Winter conditions (as defined by AALA regulations) requirement of their qualification. Leaders should refer to the guidance in their First Aid qualification for more information on identifying risk and implementing appropriate control measures.
Medical ailments	The Leader should assess the risk of relevant medical conditions using the personal information made available before the ride. The Leader should know where any medications/remedies are carried and how they should be administered
Slips and trips	These can occur throughout any ride, although the Leader may identify specific locations where risk is higher. Information gathered in Planning Rides should be used to identify areas of heightened risk. A key control measure is for Leaders to confirm that appropriate footwear is worn.
Food or fluid poisoning	<p>Riders should be encouraged to eat and drink during the ride, so leaders should take reasonable control measures to promote good hygiene; in most cases, this will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid sharing food or bottles between riders. • Wash and/or sanitise hands before eating food. • Keep foodstuff taken on the ride sealed and as cool as reasonably practicable. • The possibility of illness due to faecal impact (e.g. from farmed stock), most notably but not exclusively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ on water bottles and hydration bladder tubes ○ riders taking unclean water from streams ○ eating after going to the toilet mid-ride and then not washing their hands. <p>Riders should carry adequate supplies of fresh water where possible, but where water has to be collected from natural sources during a ride, the Leader should take positive action to ensure that it is collected as close to the source as possible and consider appropriate purification measures.</p>
Stress or trauma induced by the challenge of the activity	Pre-ride skills confirmation and observations during the ride should identify riders who are excessively challenged by the activity. Leaders should identify alterations to the route or technicality of the ride that can be implemented in these situations. Openly reviewing the ride on return will help riders who have found the activity challenging to identify constructive lessons that can be applied during later activity; Leaders should take care to not stray into a Coaching or Instruction role unless they are appropriately qualified, and that technical advice is appropriate.

Responding to emergencies

Leaders should also have an emergency strategy including:

- knowing how to determine their exact location at all times
- potential routes to shorten the ride
- emergency contact details
- how to contact the emergency services
- have appropriate late-back procedures in place.

If they are operating at a venue, they must also be aware of the content of the Emergency Operating Procedures and the Normal Operating Procedures of the venue.

In the case of an emergency, Leaders should carefully consider their mode of transport for gaining help. Whether cycling or on foot, Leaders or delegated persons should cover the distance to help in a calm manner to reduce the risk of injuring themselves. In an emergency do not automatically assume that cycling for assistance is the safest or quickest way to gain help.

Recording Incidents and Injuries

It is essential to record any incidents or injuries that occurred during a ride. When documenting the occurrence of an injury or illness Leaders should record the full details on an Illness and Injury Record Form or in an Incident Record Book. The Leader's priority will always be the safety of their group, but these notes should be compiled as soon as practicable following the incident.

Recording these details will help to identify any trends or re-occurring incidents as well as near misses, unexpectedly hazardous areas of the route and factors that could be addressed to improve safety. This record will be vital in the unlikely event of legal action. A copy of the incident report form should be submitted to the relevant person. Leaders should always keep a copy for their records.

Leaders are required to inform British Cycling of any incident where their activity was covered by British Cycling membership Insurance for Coaches, Leaders and Instructors.

Serious incidents such as major injuries may need to be reported directly to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), which places a legal requirement on employers, self-employed people and those in control of premises to report serious cases of injury or ill-health in the workplace. The Health and Safety Executive website (www.hse.gov.uk) contains detailed guidance on what incidents have to be reported and how. Centres should record near misses with a view to identifying trends.

First aid

Leaders should be appropriately first aid qualified according to the requirements of their qualification and the environment they intend to use their award and operate in. [First aid requirements are defined here](#)

Leaders should carry an appropriately stocked first aid kit (See section General Clothing and Equipment) for the entire duration of the ride and ensure that there is adequate first aid provision during the ride. The contents of a Leader's first aid kit may vary between different riding environments, and Leaders should follow the advice of their first aid training provider.



First aid kit

Leaders must carry an appropriately stocked first aid kit for the entire duration of the ride and ensure that there is adequate first aid provision during the ride. The contents of a Leader's first aid kit may vary between different riding environments, and Leaders should follow the advice of their first aid training provider.

A standard first aid kit should include the following:

- Eye pad dressing
- Eye wash pod 20ml
- Crepe roller bandage
- Medium dressings
- Resuscitation face shield
- Triangular bandages
- Non-alcoholic wipes
- Nitrile gloves
- Safety pins
- Medical scissors
- Waterproof and fabric plasters
- First aid guide
- Gauze swab
- Micropore tape

Items that may not be included in standard first aid kit yet are worth considering are:

- Lightweight malleable splint
- (e.g. SAM splint)
- large adhesive dressings
- additional bandages
- Steri-Strips
- emergency foil blanket.

Leaders should ensure they are competent to use any of the additional first aid items carried.

These lists are not extensive, and Leaders are welcome to add additional items that they can use.

Clothing and equipment

Appropriate personal clothing and equipment are essential for safe and enjoyable participation in led rides and to minimise the risk of illness or injury due to unsafe or inappropriate equipment being used. These guidelines are relevant to everyone involved in the ride including the Leader, recognised volunteers and riders.

General clothing

All clothing must be appropriate for the activity, environment and weather conditions, taking into consideration any possible changes in the weather. Several thin layers of lightweight, breathable clothing are advisable, including base layers made from wicking fabric allowing the riders to keep warm in cold and wet weather. Various materials function well as a base layer, but cotton is to be avoided where possible. This allows the body temperature to be regulated more easily, by adding or removing layers, as necessary. This is called layering and is the recommended method for controlling body temperature when cycling in environments where changeable weather is likely.

A waterproof jacket is advisable in the event of rain and can be a useful extra layer for riders to wear when they are not riding. Clothing should be checked for safety, as loose or poorly fitting clothing or straps can get caught in moving parts on the bicycle. Riders wearing inadequate or inappropriate clothing should not be allowed to participate in the ride and the Leader should ensure all riders are advised to bring appropriate spare clothing including a waterproof jacket as appropriate, a basic repair kit and some food and water with them on the ride.

Full-finger gloves may be determined as more suited to be worn on mountain bike rides, depending on the environment being used and the risk assessment undertaken. Fingerless gloves such as track mitts may be worn but these usually do not offer the same level of protection to the fingers.

Shoes should be appropriate to the environment being encountered. They should have full toe covering and a sole suited to the bike being ridden and the ground surface condition.



Eyewear should be considered for all rides, leaders and participant's particular needs as part of the risk evaluation process. Certain conditions and environments increase the preference for eyewear, such as locations with lots of flying insects, off-road forests with low branches or where mud may be flicked up from tyres. Other circumstances such as high humidity where glasses can steam up and reduce vision may reduce the requirement for eye protection.

It is often worth the Leader bringing spare gloves and eyewear to the ride to lend to riders as it is common for these items to be mistakenly forgotten.

No one should be permitted to wear earphones, or other items that prevent rather than permit hearing, on rides.

Leader equipment

Leaders are expected to be appropriately equipped including all personal items and Leader equipment.

The below list is not exhaustive, but Leaders are advised to bring the following Leader-specific items:

- Bike pump
- Puncture repair kit
- Multi-tool
- Spare inner tubes (Leaders are not expected to carry each type, but it may be useful to carry a selection of the most common sizes of inner tubes). Presta valves are recommended as they should fit most rims.
- Map, suitably water resistant
- Emergency food and water
- Emergency clothing
- Notebook and pencil, suitably waterproofed
- First aid kit
- List of rider details

Mountain Bike Leaders are also expected to carry, amongst other things:

- Group shelter for the whole group
- Spare layers of clothing as appropriate. An extra-large size is recommended to fit the widest range of riders.
- Spares and tools for trailside repairs
- Navigation compass
- Whistle
- Front and rear lights in the event of a ride going beyond daylight hours as a result of unforeseen circumstances

Leaders may also choose to carry a Leader Card Pack, available to download at the resources section of the Leader website pages.

Bikes

Any bicycle used in the led ride environment must:

- be in good working order
- have two brakes that work or be fitted with a front brake if a fixed-wheel bike
- be an appropriate size to allow the rider to participate safely
- be appropriate to the environment, surface conditions and activity.

Bike attachments

Where appropriate for the ride and agreed in advance, adults wishing to bring along children under 5 years (on the day of the chosen ride) may do so providing they are secured in a British Standard child seat or trailer, and this is suited to the intended ride.

Power-assisted bikes (e-bikes)

Power-assisted 'e-bikes' or 'e-MTBs' are allowed on led rides for either participants or leaders. For more information about e-bikes/e-MTBs, please see the sections below.

Ride Leaders must ensure that, if they or a participant is using an e-bike, the route is suitable for e-bikes and appropriate consideration has been given to the use of e-bikes in the risk assessment.

Further checks required for e-bikes/e-MTBs include:

- Checking battery charge will be sufficient for the duration of the ride,
- Checking the power output does not exceed legal requirements and is only activated through pedalling.

Use of e-bikes for medical or mobility reasons

If a leader or rider is using an e-bike due to a medical reason or mobility issue, appropriate consideration must be given to risk assessing, with appropriate consideration for managing a failure of the e-bike's system.

Considerations could include the use of an assistant/support rider, or other similar suitable e-bikes being ridden in the group, as examples.

e-bikes on led rides

What is an e-bike and which e-bikes can be used on led rides?

e-bikes are now a common sight on UK roads and trails. You may hear them commonly referred to as 'e-MTBs' or 'pedal-assist bikes', or occasionally their official term 'Pedelecs'. They come in a range of designs, with models which may be designed for trail, commuting or performance road use. In these guidelines, we will use the term e-bike to describe any of these bikes irrespective of the use they were designed for. They look very similar to non-assisted bikes, sometimes with a motor and battery visible and sometimes entirely integrated into the frame design which may make them less obvious.

In the UK, pedal cycles with electrical assistance can be legally ridden by anyone over the age of 14 without any of the regulations of a motorcycle (insurance, registration, licence etc.) where they produce no more than 250 watts of power (continuously rated) which cuts out at 15.5mph. This output is measured by the manufacturer as part of the bike's compliance with CE marking requirements and the bike is labelled accordingly. More than 250 watts of continuously rated power and the electric bicycle ceases to be an electric bicycle and becomes, in the eyes of the law, an electric moped. [see legal definition].

Indeed, if the power is over 4kW it becomes an electric motorcycle.

The application of these regulations remains, even if the e-bike was purchased abroad, or if an electric moped is used at a lower power setting.

If a rider wishes to ride an e-bike on a led ride in the UK, they must do so on an electric bicycle which complies with both UK Law and the terms and conditions of British Cycling's third-party liability insurance policy. This applies equally to the ride leader who must also ensure that riders are of a legal age to ride an e-bike.

The legal requirements for the use of e-bikes in the UK can be found at gov.uk/electric-bike-rules

British Cycling's current third-party liability insurance policy details can be found as a useful [download](#). (Please note that British Cycling members must be logged into their dashboard to be able to view this.)

Riders and ride leaders who wish to have the benefit of third-party liability insurance cover for rides outside the UK must also additionally ensure they comply with the legal requirements of the country where they are riding.

Can a Leader use an e-bike on a led ride?

Leaders may benefit in the same way as all cyclists from the use of an e-bike. It might facilitate the Leader in participating where they felt previously physically limited or might help the Leader to extend the range of the rides they offer. Before using an e-bike on a ride they lead, leaders must consider the following:

- The Leader must take all reasonable precautions to avoid mechanical and/or electronic failure of their e-bike or bike on any ride. The presence of the mechanical motor and electronic control systems necessarily presents a further point of failure when compared to a non-pedal-assisted bike. This risk can be mitigated with appropriate maintenance schedules and software updates, some of which may only be possible through a professional workshop. Leaders must ensure the e-bike battery has the appropriate charge to last for the ride, plus an appropriate reserve in case the duration of the ride becomes extended for any reason.
- The Leader must be competent in the operation of the e-bike prior to conducting a led ride. This should include braking, weight shift, and the selection of appropriate pedal-assist power whilst moving and riding in a group of other riders who may not be on e-bikes.
- In some cases, the perception of exertion levels and fatigue will be reduced for a Leader using an e-bike in a group including non-pedal assisted bikes. Leaders riding e-bikes should keep this in mind and carefully monitor the exertion levels of the riders in their group.
- As with any ride, Leaders should be aware of the image they portray to the riders in their group and the non-verbal messages they may send. This effect may be mitigated by explaining why the Leader is using the e-bike and reassuring any concerns the riders in their group may have.

Working with a landowner's consent

Where cycling on private land, it is worth Leaders checking with landowners to see if they have any special considerations for e-bike riders. Such restrictions are usually minor, such as a slightly higher fee for e-bike riders at some trail centres to reflect the increased mileage MTB riders often enjoy. Trail centres may offer battery charging facilities, but there may be a small fee for the privilege. It is prudent to let your riders know of any considerations or charges before the ride.

Additional pre-ride checks for e-bikes

During the pre-ride checks, Leaders are encouraged to make the following additional checks when e-bikes are used:

- Leaders should take the time to discuss the power and range of their participants' e-bike, taking into account the charge held in the e-bike's battery. Most units display the remaining range. Battery failure must be avoided; pedalling an e-bike uphill or on flat terrain without any assistance is usually significantly harder than it would be on a lighter non-pedal-assisted bike.
- Confirm that the e-bike rider can perform the handling techniques appropriate to the ride using their e-bike. This is especially important where weight shifting is required, such as on a mountain bike ride on technical terrain. Safe braking should be confirmed in a safe manner as taught in Ride Leader and Mountain Bike Leader training courses.
- Confirm that the e-bike rider can select appropriate power settings whilst the e-bike is moving. This is important in all riding group riding environments - and indicates an awareness of how to contain the changes in momentum experienced when riding an e-bike. As such, this is a key safety issue for Leaders. Leaders are encouraged to introduce an appropriate game or exercise where the e-bike rider cycles in close proximity to other riders to physically observe this competence.
-

Controlling ride flow and avoiding separation

A significant challenge for a Leader managing one or more e-bike riders is controlling the flow of the ride, particularly in a group with a mix of e-bikes and non-pedal-assisted bikes. Even at relatively low power settings, it can be a challenge to catch up with a rider who has left without a key piece of information, such as the next stopping point. Leaders should set clear boundaries about where they would like the group to reform if they become separated. If in doubt, the Leader (or the assistant Ride Leader where available) should take a dominant position to control the group. Another technique is to pair e-bike riders with non-e-bike riders and ask them to ride at a similar pace.

e-bikes setup guidance for leaders

The additional weight of many e-bikes will often mean that the rider needs to run slightly higher tyre pressure and possibly may need to add more air into the e-bikes forks and shocks. A rider's best source of information is the shop they bought or hired the e-bike from, or the supporting documentation that should come with the e-bike.

Riders new to e-MTBs may find that slightly heavier braking is required to manage their speed than they would normally apply when riding a non-pedal assist bike. This effect may be heightened when adjusting to an e-MTB after a period of riding a non-pedal assist bike. For this reason, it is worth checking brake pad wear during pre-ride checks.

Understanding trailside repair of e-MTBs.

British Mountain Bike Leadership Award holders are assessed in the conduct of trailside repairs and bike setup. Irrespective of whether or not Mountain Bike leaders choose to ride an e-MTB, they should develop a working knowledge of how e-MTBs work and any adaptations they may need to make to their existing knowledge and skills in the case of having a rider in their group using one. Key considerations that apply to most e-MTBs are:

- e-MTBs tend to be heavier than non-pedal assisted bikes, so a Mountain Bike Leader needs to consider how they might improvise a work stand on the trail, minimising the time anyone needs to lift the e-MTB. A horizontal object such as a low-lying, sturdy tree branch is ideal for hanging the e-MTB by its saddle when the rear wheel needs to be kept off the ground to conduct adjustments. For mountain bikes or e-MTBs equipped with a dropper seatpost, the post should be fully extended before lifting it or hanging it by the saddle.
- As mentioned above, braking may be heavier when using e-bikes.

Lifting, carrying and pushing e-bikes

Leaders may find that their group has to lift bikes over obstacles, such as a newly fallen tree on the trail or a motorcycle 'trap' on a paved bridleway. It is always prudent for the Leader to support riders to manage the manual handling of any bikes or equipment over such obstacles, but additional support may need to be offered to e-bike riders. They should take care to offer this openly and proactively to all riders as anyone in the group may be reticent to ask for help in this situation. The same consideration applies to sections of the route where e-bikes have to be carried or pushed; it is worth noting that some e-bikes have a 'push assist' function where controlled support can be offered from the motor to assist the rider in wheeling their e-bike up steep inclines. The Leader must address lifting, carrying and pushing e-bikes within their risk assessment and alter their route accordingly if required.

Repairs

Riders should arrive with a functional bike suitable for the planned ride, leaders are not expected to carry out repairs on riders' bikes before a ride.

British Cycling Ride Leaders and Mountain Bike Leaders may affect roadside or trailside repairs that were assessed during their course and form part of their qualification. For these repairs, or others that riders undertake themselves during a ride, the leader should verify the bike is safe to be used.

Where TCL or MBL-qualified Leaders are operating using their British Cycling Membership Insurance for Coaches, Leaders and Instructors, they should comply with the scope of the trailside repairs covered by the Level 2 or Level 3 Leader award, respectively.



Ride Leader repairs are:

- Replace an inner tube
- Replace an unshipped chain

In addition to Ride Leader, Fundamentals of Ride Leadership repairs include

- Repair a punctured inner tube
- Adjustment of brake cable using barrel adjusters.
- Repair a broken chain.
- Separation of closed hydraulic disc brake pads.

In addition to FunMBL, Level 2 MTB Leader repairs are:

- Adjustment of gear mech limit screws and gear indexing.
- Adjustment of a headset.
- Replacement of own brake pads.
- Effect emergency trailside repairs as appropriate ensuring a cycle is safe to ride.

In addition to Level 2, Level 3 MTB Leader repairs are:

- Replacement of riders' brake pads.
- Realignment of a hydraulic disc brake calliper.
- Adjustment of hub bearings.
- Removal and fitting of a cassette.
- Replacement of a broken shifter cable.
- Repair of a buckled wheel.
- Use of a single-speed tensioner.
- Trailside repair in the case of a broken pedal, faulty dropper post, tubeless puncture and failed suspension.
- Straightening of a bent disc rotor.
- Suspension set up.

Taking care of your riders' bikes

Leaders must take care of their riders' bikes while carrying out trailside repairs. If possible, avoid inverting the bike to work on it; this could result in further mechanical or cosmetic damage. It may be worth checking with the rider if this is needed to perform a trailside repair.

The leaders' bike

Leaders should take care to maintain their own bikes and carry specific spares for them.

Level 2 and 3 Mountain Bike Leaders, in particular, should carry the following bike-specific spares for their bike:

- spare brake pads
- spare derailleur hanger
- spare cleat bolts where clipless pedals are used.

See below for more details on conducting a full bike check.

Safety briefing

A safety briefing should be conducted at the beginning of every ride to ensure that riders and others involved have the relevant health, safety and emergency information as well as a check of the Leaders and riders' equipment.

Relevant information might include:

- an introduction of who you are,
- an explanation of the ride plan,
- an explanation of specific safety issues and hazards of the route (i.e. identified during the risk assessment),
- an explanation of any specific safety or operational requirements associated with the planned ride,
- an explanation of relevant ground rules and code of conduct,
- advice/reminder about the relevant safety and emergency procedures,
- how to obtain first aid if required and the procedure for if the leader is incapacitated.

Guidelines for leading rides

A bike, helmet and clothing safety check must be performed at the beginning of every led ride. Allow time and opportunity for anyone to speak with you privately about any concerns they may have. Any rider with personal clothing and/or equipment that is deemed unsafe or inappropriate should not be allowed to participate in the led ride and their parents (if appropriate) are notified as to the reason to ensure it can be fixed for future rides.

See below for details regarding the minimum requirements of a bike safety check.



Helmet

Leaders

The wearing of cycle helmets is compulsory for all Leaders when leading a ride using their British Cycling qualification and member insurance.

Participants

British Cycling strongly recommends that all cyclists on all led rides wear a cycle helmet when engaged in any cycling activity. As such, adult participants on any led ride should be encouraged to wear a helmet* despite the wearing of a helmet not being a legal requirement.

Any individual under 18 participating in a led ride must wear a helmet*.

Participants on a mountain bike ride with a British Cycling qualified Mountain Bike Leader in charge must wear a helmet*.

Helmets should:

- conform to a recognised Standard (see Helmet Safety Check section)
- be undamaged
- be in good condition
- be the correct size for the rider
- be correctly fitted and worn by the rider.

Leaders are within their rights to turn a participant away if based on their risk assessment they consider it inappropriate to ride without a helmet.

* Exceptions to helmet-wearing

Exceptions may apply when wearing a cycle helmet may not be compatible with a religion, faith, or disability (an example is a cyclist wearing a turban). On such occasions, Leaders/participants may be permitted to cycle without a helmet, but this will ultimately depend on the Leader carrying out a risk assessment which will consider their capability as a Leader, the participant's ability, and the overall environmental conditions of the planned activity. Any Leader or participant (using the exception rule) not wearing a helmet does so against the advice offered by British Cycling.

Any such, cyclist (with a parent or guardian if under 18) should discuss the matter with the Leader at the earliest opportunity. British Cycling is keen to include members from all sections of the community and reasonable adjustments will be made to led rides to facilitate progress for all in the sport.

Helmet safety checks

Helmets should have a CE mark and conform to an appropriate standard such as BS EN 1078:1997 (Europe) or SNELL B95 (USA). If a helmet is CE-marked, the mark must be affixed to the helmet. If a helmet conforms to a recognised standard, it should be indicated on the inside of the helmet, either directly on the inner material or on a sticker attached to the inside of the helmet. The CE mark and relevant standard number are usually included on the same sticker.

Helmets should be within the manufacturer's recommended lifespan - if it is reasonable or possible to identify.

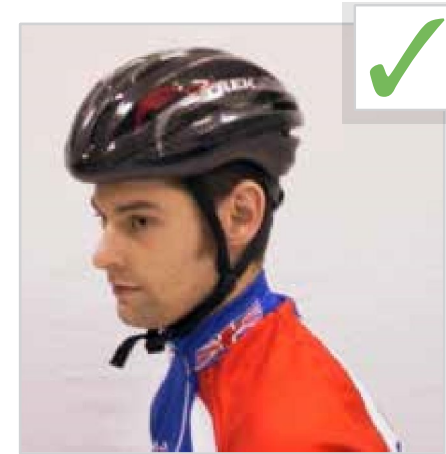


It is important the Leader checks that the helmet is undamaged, fitted, and worn correctly as shown above.

Helmet safety checking procedures

Standard helmet safety checking procedure:

- Make sure it is the right way around – this is particularly important with children.
- It should be placed on top of the head with the straps fastened under the chin.
- The cradle at the rear of the helmet should be appropriately adjusted to retain the helmet in position. Whilst sufficiently tight to prevent the helmet from slipping, it should not be overtightened making the helmet uncomfortable or developing a headache.
- The front strap should be as vertical as possible, and the rear strap should join the front strap just below the ears (forming a 'V' just under the ears).
- The helmet should fit comfortably on the head – if you try to move the helmet there should be very little movement.
- If you can slide the helmet off the head either backwards or forwards, then you need to tighten the straps – always get the rider to take the helmet off before adjusting the straps. Gain the rider's permission, or remove the helmet, before adjusting the straps.



Correctly worn and fitted helmet



Incorrectly worn and fitted helmets

Standard and skate-style helmet fitting

These pictures illustrate examples of correctly fitted helmets.



Example of a correctly fitted standard helmet



Example of a correctly fitted skate-style helmet

Full-face helmet fitting

Procedure:

- Place the helmet on the head with the straps fastened under the chin.
- The front strap should be as vertical as possible, and the rear strap should join the front strap just below the ears (forming a V just under the ears).
- The helmet should fit comfortably on the head - if you try to move the helmet there should be very little movement.
- If you can slide the helmet off the head either backwards or forwards, then you need to tighten the straps – always get the rider to take the helmet off before adjusting the straps.
- The chin guard should cover the mouth and chin.
- The visor should not impair the rider's vision.
- The visor should be firmly attached and fit the opening of the helmet snugly.



Example of a correctly fitted full-face helmet

Bike safety check

To ensure riders can participate safely, a bike safety check should form part of every ride. Leaders must be satisfied that the riders' bikes are safe to participate in the ride. Minor repairs and adjustments, if they can be done quickly, can sometimes be undertaken immediately by the riders or their parents (if appropriate). However, if this is not possible leaders should not undertake repairs or adjustments to a rider's bike. Instead, they should refer the rider to the nearest bike shop. Leaders must never be afraid to stop riders from participating in a ride if their bike could put them or others in danger.

The minimum checks for bike safety are as follows:

Component	Look for
Frame and forks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appear true and undamaged. • Fork seals and stanchions are clean and dirt-free. • No excessive play in the suspension fork legs. • Appropriate amount of fork compression for the rider.
Headset and brakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brakes work and are properly adjusted – when the brakes are fully on the lever should have been pulled approximately halfway to the handlebars. • Brake levers are securely attached, and the cables are not frayed. • The brake pads should not be excessively worn, and pads should not bind or rub on the rim or disc. • Check the adjustment of the headset by engaging the front brake and seeing if there is any rocking movement when gently pushing on the handlebars – there should be no movement.
Wheels and tyres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheels run freely, with no excessive wobbles/buckles. • Check for loose spokes by running a hand over the spokes. • The tyres should be inflated to a reasonable pressure – this will help avoid the possibility of impact punctures. More pressure means less grip, and less pressure results in more grip and an increased risk of a puncture. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations regarding tyre pressure, which will normally be indicated on the side wall of the tyre. • The tread should not be excessively worn, and the tyres should have no splits, cracks or holes.
Hubs and axles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolts and quick-release mechanisms securely tightened.
Saddle and handlebars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check to see if either is loose, but do not use undue force. • Saddle is straight and set at the right height. This is very important because if it is too low or too high it could cause an injury. The rider's knee should be slightly bent when the ball of the foot is on the pedal, and the pedal is at its lowest point. With novice riders, you will probably find that the majority have their saddle set incorrectly. Do not try to change everyone at once – look to adjust the worst cases first. • Handlebar and stem are tight straight and in line. Handlebars should have end plugs.
Pedals, cranks and bottom bracket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No movement in the bottom bracket or cranks. Check by holding one crank still and trying to move the other crank. • Check pedals rotate freely.
Chain and gears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chain is lubricated properly and is not slack or rusty. • Gears are properly adjusted and lubricated, and the cables are not frayed.
BMX trick nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For safety reasons these should be removed if for group rides

Know your riders

It is important to know who is coming on your ride in order to plan and deliver a ride that meets the needs of the riders whilst minimising risk or harm to the group.

- Leaders should be able to access appropriate details regarding each rider including their name, address and emergency contact, preferably through the use of a Rider Information and Consent Form. In certain circumstances, such as outdoor centres, the responsibility for collecting and retaining this information may lie with the organisation, in which case the Leader should ensure that they have access to it when appropriate. The information should be stored in line with data protection requirements, securely and appropriately to ensure it is kept confidential but should be readily available during every ride (e.g. their name, address, emergency contact details and other relevant details such as medical conditions or health requirements).
- To facilitate safe participation Leaders should know about any specific (health, behavioural, disability) requirements, medical conditions or other needs of the riders such as whether they are using an e-bike. Where possible this information should be sought in advance of the ride through the completion of a registration form or a Rider Information and Consent Form. However, it may be necessary to talk directly with the rider and/or parent before the ride.
- To talk to participants as they arrive, assessing their mood and confidence before the ride commences. Try to be welcoming and create a relaxed atmosphere to ease any anxiety a participant may have.

- When leading riders under 18 years old, each rider should be signed out on the register by a parent in the presence of the Leader in line with safeguarding protocol. The principle of *loco parentis* applies.
(*The term in loco parentis, Latin for "in the place of a parent" refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organisation to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent.*)

Engaging riders

Importantly, make sure your riders are engaged and enthusiastic about cycling. This will help to ease any anxiety some riders may have, as well as help to manage the group - happy and engaged riders are easier to manage.

Skills Assessment

To ensure you know the ability of the riders on your ride, always deliver a pre-ride or pre-session skills/ ability assessment. This should take place in a nontechnical environment taking as much time as necessary to assess the ability level of your rider(s), explaining the importance of this time to the rider(s) no matter what ability level they consider themselves to be at. Ensure there is ongoing observation and assessment of rider(s) skills and ability throughout the ride/session. Included within this evaluation should be an appreciation of the likelihood of riders listening to, hearing and implementing your communication. You may need to use additional reinforcement techniques with riders who aren't likely to adhere to instructions.

Coaches, Leaders and Instructors should bear in mind that where a rider demonstrates a lack of confidence or skill required for a section of the route or practice a suitable alternative should be used (i.e. getting off the bike and walking).

Riding on trails and the use of bikes have inherent risks. These risks are exaggerated for beginner riders who have yet to master the techniques and skills required to enable them to ride confidently; this is especially true for mountain biking. Always ensure that the terrain selected is suitable for the riders, for instance, some riders may be comfortable on a blue trail at a trail centre but not on a red one.

Starting out and the initial part of the ride

Before setting off you must organise the group based on what you know about the participants, gained through talking to them and the skills assessment. Good organisation leads to better group dynamics, safety and communication and in a mixed-ability group you will need to think carefully about the order in which riders set off.

In the early stages of the ride, you may have to guide and support riders to adhere to ride protocols such as not overtaking. You may need to be assertive, maybe even stop the ride and give some extra briefings to help them ride more effectively. Experience shows that finding the right balance between assertiveness and assurance is important in the early stages; the riders will soon settle down once they know what's expected of them.

You may need to clarify how to move as a group through junctions and road features. Depending on the experience of the group, this may require practice and/or specific clear communication.

Once set off, you need to monitor the group formation, considering:

- The initial stages should be ridden at the pace that you expect the rest of the ride to be ridden at – ask participants if they are happy with the pace as well as observing.
- Is the group riding together? If not, what adjustments can you make?
- Are the pairings (inside and outside) working if leading on a road?
- Do people look comfortable in their positions?
- Are riders observing good ride etiquette?

The 'mile trial'

The 'mile trial' is the method of analysing your participants' positioning to ensure you have organised your group correctly and the rest of the ride will go as planned. When you roll off on the ride your immediate concern is to get the group into a good group riding shape. A good group riding shape is when all your riders are two abreast (on the road, where appropriate) or riding with good spacing if cycling off-road. Use the first mile (or less, if required) to analyse the group and make necessary adjustments.

Monitoring riders

Cycling is fatiguing and all riders, particularly those new to cycling, will demonstrate a loss of skill and/or concentration as they fatigue. This may be exacerbated on mountain bike rides where technical proficiency is also required. The Leader should ensure that riders take appropriate rest breaks during the ride to ensure the level of fatigue does not affect rider safety.

Keep an eye on the supply levels of riders' food and hydration. Decisions may need to be made if there is a significant distance still to cover and riders are lacking food and water. Do consider any dietary requirements, allergies or intolerances if offering your own food to a rider.

Leaders should continue to evaluate the suitability of the remaining route in light of rider fitness and skill levels changing through the ride.

Ride and route progression

If you know your riders and have been monitoring them, you will have an idea of how the ride or route may progress. Do not extend the difficulty of the ride if you have any doubts about the ability of the participants or their physical state. Remember, your role as a Leader is to offer a great cycling experience leading from start to finish, not to extend the competencies of the riders and push them outside of their comfort zone.

As riders become fatigued, their capacity to take in and apply the communications you provide or those developed through the ride may diminish. You may need to change your approach in these circumstances.

Managing the ride

The objective of every Leader is to create a flowing ride where stop length and regularity are appropriate for the group's desires and enjoyment is maximised. This, of course, requires strong group management which entails navigating with authority, managing behaviour and changing plans where required.



Navigating with authority

If you have planned the route and ride thoroughly, this will be possible. If you have included too many junctions or trail features, then a flowing ride may be hindered somewhat. Our guidance is to:

- Plan/recce the route before the ride to understand turns, features and pinch points – try to minimise these where possible. (Whilst route recce is not mandatory for Level 2 and 3 Mountain Bike Leaders, it can have a positive impact on the quality of the ride and should be considered where feasible.)
- Spend time at a point of multiple features to understand how best to negotiate it
- Agree and use a set of clear verbal and visual signals with riders
- On the ride, anticipate the upcoming junctions and features and communicate these to the group in plenty of time
- Navigate them in a timely manner and with authority
- If leading on the road, ensure the rear Ride Leader arrives at the junction ahead of the group in a timely manner.

Busy or noisy locations

It is important for your riders to be able to hear and see what you are asking them to do. Could you undertake a briefing in a quiet spot before you reach the location? Be clear and concise about what you are expecting of riders and any simple signals you may provide to them, for example when a road is clear.

Ensure that you do not position yourself in a place of risk at junctions e.g. stationary in the road or lane you are crossing.

Managing behaviours

Additionally, there will be a need to manage riders with a range of personalities. Importantly, be aware of and manage behaviour that jeopardises the safety of the group and secondly, the enjoyment of the participants.

The easiest way to manage behaviours is to outline the ground rules and conditions for the ride in advance and the consequences for jeopardising safety or enjoyment. If a rider's behaviour falls short of your expectations, take the time to discuss this with them in an appropriate manner.

Changing plans

Changing plans may be necessary in the event of:

- medical emergencies,
- heavily fatigued riders,
- mechanical failures,
- inclement weather,
- loss of light,
- route being closed/altered.

Part of managing a ride is being responsive to the need to change and if you have planned correctly, you should have designated route contingencies and ensured support is available if required. As the Leader, if an incident occurs then you need to manage it calmly, quickly and with authority, resolving the situation whilst maintaining the safety of the group.

Know your role

The role of a Leader is to deliver a safe, enjoyable and inclusive cycling experience. Leaders should not act as either a [cycling coach](#) or cycle instructor during the led ride (see the Use of other cycle coach and instructor awards section below for additional detail) as this could compromise the safety of both the riders and themselves (especially if they were to have an incident). This is because they would not be able to undertake a safe and effective Leader's role (e.g. navigating the group safely) while maintaining their safety and that of the group. However, this does not prevent them from addressing issues of safety (e.g. riding in a dangerous position on the road) or from providing simple guidance to riders (e.g. where to look when riding, or advice on body position).

Use of other cycle coach and instructor awards

It is important to be clear about the purpose of a ride/session and your role in delivering it, this enables appropriate planning, risk assessment, and delivery within the correct remit.

If a leader also has cycle coaching or instructing qualifications (with appropriate insurance cover), and if they choose to include in a coaching/instructing session, this should be conducted as a discreet session within the whole activity, rather than during the ride.

It is important to separate the leader and coach/instructor roles and remits. The Leader must understand the different remits of their various awards/roles and ensure the planned activities and environments are within that role's remit.

Using assistants

You may on occasion need to use assistants on your ride to help with group management of rides. Examples of using an assistant include:

- Asking someone at the back to hold a signal whilst you move ahead to manage a road junction,
- Asking the person at the front to wait at a specific point so the group can gather together after a section of trail,
- Asking the person at the front to assist with controlling the pace of the group (i.e. not shooting off),
- Asking a couple of people to find help whilst you remain with a casualty in the event of an incident

Note, at all times it must be stressed that you are the Leader and therefore responsible for the safety of the group and also the actions of the assistant. Only use people you trust and who are confident enough to assist you and you are confident will be able to find help when required. Where possible (i.e. if a phone signal is available), splitting the group should be avoided.

Be fit to ride

All riders should:

- ensure they are fit and able to ride safely,
- ride in accordance with the Highway Code,
- adhere to the Code of Conduct, including points regarding the consumption of alcohol or drugs.

Leading with children

Parents and guardians must provide the Leader with a completed Parental Consent Form. This does not necessarily mean that the Leader has to meet the parent/ guardian (e.g. when working in an outdoor centre); the Mountain Bike Leader may rely on the centre staff to collate consent forms. Regardless of the method of collection, any rider failing to submit a form signed by a parent means the rider must be excluded. Leaders must consider the following:

- Riders under the age of 18 are the Leader's responsibility from when the ride commences until the appropriate person collects them at the end of the ride.
- Young riders are expected to remain in the ride from beginning to end unless they have made prior arrangements to be picked up early. If a rider has to leave early or is being collected by someone other than the parent/guardian, the parent must advise the Leader of the details of the arrangement including who will be collecting the rider and when. This may take place through another member of staff in a centre environment.

The Leader should also confirm the departure times and procedures with parents/guardians before the ride commences, this may take place through another member of staff in a centre environment.

While the Leader to rider ratio provides a minimum ratio to ensure a safe ride, it is recommended that when leading young riders, a minimum of two responsible adults (with at least one person holding a valid leading qualification) are present at all times to ensure an adequate level of supervision. It can also help prevent any allegations resulting from inappropriate one-to-one contact with young children.

Responsible adults without valid qualifications should be included in the Leader to participant ratio



Safeguarding, equality and equity in your leading

Everyone should have equal access to cycling opportunities so that they can benefit from the enjoyment it can offer at all levels.

Cycling must build its profile and promote itself as a friendly, open and welcoming activity for all - and this starts with the Leaders in the sport, like you, behaving in an equitable manner. If existing or potential cyclists have a negative experience or feel that they may not fit in, it is likely they will choose not to take part. Equity on guided rides will help ensure the future of cycling, as more people from all walks of life will be encouraged to join in.

As a Leader, you can promote equity by making sure you:

- treat everyone fairly,
- eliminate discrimination,
- allocate resources fairly,
- use language, policies and procedures that are free from bias,
- meet the needs of different individuals, groups or communities,
- create conditions that will be inclusive to the wide range of people that make up your community,
- be sensitive to safeguarding issues and how to report them.

Remember that even where you think the language you use is appropriate, you must consider what language the recipient considers to be acceptable.

All British Cycling's policies are available on the British Cycling website at britishcycling.org.uk/safeguarding, as well as contact information for our compliance team.



Ride etiquette

It is in the interest of the sport to promote responsible trail etiquette to riders at all times and to ride responsibly, being considerate of other road and countryside users.

Though it is not right for every Leader nor every cyclist to be held accountable for the actions of all cyclists, it is in the best interests of the group to display responsible trail and road etiquette.



Therefore:

- give way to pedestrians or other trail users, in line with the Highway Code hierarchy of users both on and off-road,
- thank other users (either on a trail or a road) who show consideration for you (such as a driver not rushing to overtake),
- adhere to the countryside code,
- position yourself and the group in single or double file and within the lane as per the guidance in the Highway Code
- be considerate of slow-riders ahead – let them know you are coming,
- additionally, allow faster riders behind to pass you,
- do not obstruct the trail or road,
- leave no trace – take your litter away and encourage participants to take their litter too,
- when off-road, ride using trails in sustainable conditions, where possible, demonstrating and encouraging riders to ride with minimum impact.

A controlled finish and warm-down

Leaders should be considerate of when the ride is coming to an end and work towards having a controlled finish before warming down.

It is good practice to let riders know around 5-10 minutes before the anticipated end of a ride. This allows participants to relax, contributing to a positive, relaxed end to the ride. However, the end of a ride is also where riders are most fatigued and can stop concentrating. Along with the start of a ride, it is the time when most incidents are likely to happen. Your role as a Leader can be at its most intense at this point of the ride – remember that the ride is not over until it is over!

Think about the pace of the ride and consider slowing it down to avoid finishing abruptly.

Have a chat about the ride and ask for feedback. Be prepared to direct riders to further cycling opportunities and let them know when your next ride may be.

Where any trailside or roadside repairs have had to be implemented, inform the rider of suitable actions to ensure their equipment is suitable for a future ride.

Developing your leading

After each ride, it is best practice to reflect on the ride, what happened, what went well and what could be improved. This will help your personal development as a Leader and ensure you deliver a great ride experience, every time.

Alternatively, opportunities are available with British Cycling to develop yourself; from new education courses to extending your existing qualifications or different areas of cycling such as coaching.

There may additionally be more locally based development opportunities available. See if you can assist other leaders on their rides and observe their leadership. It is always good practice to check with your local authority, employer and other outdoor / activity agencies about what may be on offer in your community. This will also allow you to pass this knowledge on to your riders, helping them to continue their journey in cycling.

Contacts

British Cycling contacts for support or additional information can be found [here](#) or use the details below.

British Cycling Ride Leader webpages

The Ride Leader webpages on British Cycling's website are at this address - www.britishcycling.org.uk/rideleadership

British Cycling Mountain Bike Leadership webpages

The MTBL webpages on British Cycling's website are at - www.britishcycling.org.uk/mtbleadership

British Cycling Education Department

The education department, also in BCHQ, can be contacted at education@britishcycling.org.uk

Incident and insurance queries

During office hours, the incident and insurance queries number is - 0161 274 2015 or incident@britishcycling.org.uk

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