



BMMC Rider Training

***etiquette** |'etikit; -ket|

noun

the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group.

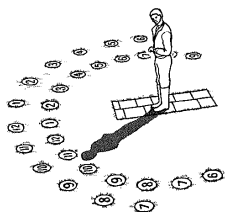
Group rides are an excellent way to spend time with friends with the common affinity for motorcycle riding and having a great time. However, they can also be very frustrating if you have a couple of riders who seem to be "on a different page." As with any group activity we need to work together to have the ride go smoothly (and safely).

All participants in the group, both riders and passengers, need to be singing from the same sheet of music to make the ride enjoyable for all. We're referring to some basic considerations that will make the whole experience more pleasurable. Here are a few examples of how to help.

I. PRE-RIDE

Putting together a group ride is a labor-intensive endeavor. Setting up fuel and activity stops, reserving restaurant facilities, and arranging overnight lodging takes hard work and time. Many times there are signed contracts that must be fulfilled.

The ride host bases most of his/her decisions on the number of riders/passengers who have signed up to participate. Calls are made and emails exchanged finalizing details well before the ride begins. However, sometimes a few riders don't show up when the ride host is counting on them. Some things are unavoidable (e.g. sick, work, family, etc.) and everyone knows that, but it is especially bad form to not inform the ride host as soon as possible so that other arrangements can be made. If they can't, and there is a financial commitment (e.g. pre-paid lunch, hotel occupancy requirement by contract, etc.) that must be met in your absence, it is only right that you fulfill that obligation even though you can't go.



A. Punctuality: This is a big one with group riding, and is a basic courtesy no matter what activity you are involved with. If you are one of those people who "moves kind of slow in the morning," then plan accordingly the night before. If the ride is important to you and you've made the commitment to go, then meet your obligations and show up on time and prepared (e.g. printed out maps

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in hand, familiar with the route, know which group you're in, etc.). A good rule of thumb is to arrive at least ten minutes before the scheduled arrival time. Take into account stops along the way and any traffic delays you might expect.

Having the rest of the group wait past the scheduled start time will not endear you to anyone in the group, is not respectful of their time, and is not a good way to start a ride. If you encounter an unavoidable delay, make sure that you call someone in the group to let them know that you will not be on time and when you could be expected to arrive. The leader then has the option to wait a reasonable amount of time, or you can catch up with the group at the first stop.



B. Common courtesy: The ride leader has spent many hours preparing, making arrangements, and planning the ride so that it can come off without a hitch. The ride briefing is where he/she covers the particulars of the ride like the weather and road conditions, and the stops along the way. For both *riders and passengers*, please pay attention to the briefing and keep quiet so that all can hear. Ask your questions when the briefing is concluded. Save unnecessary conversations for later.



C. Be Ready To Go: When you show up at the agreed upon start location at the agreed upon time, be ready to go. Showing up for a ride (any ride) without having topped off your tank is bad form. It has happened many times when we are all saddled up and ready to go, someone announces that they are low on fuel and will need to stop at a gas station to fill up. Not good, or fair, to the rest of the riders who filled up on the way **to** the start location.



II. RIDE

A. Food: If you suffer from low blood sugar from not eating every hour, then take some crackers or something with you to tide you over to the scheduled lunch stop. Don't stand around talking and then when it is time to take off, announce that "you have to put some food in your stomach" before you go. Take care of these things as transparently as possible without slowing up the whole group.



B. Bathroom Stops: This is *the* biggie in group riding. If there are ten people in the group, there will be ten different needs for bathroom breaks. This will usually send the group over the edge faster than anything when you have just taken a rest stop for forty-five minutes, and everyone is on their bikes and ready to leave when



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someone says, "Oh, I have to use the restroom." That is the last thing the rest of the group wants to wait for. If you have an over-active bladder, plan accordingly. If you know that you have to go every hour, make that a priority as soon as you stop and then again *before* departure time. The group leader will let you know in plenty of time when you are leaving. Don't hold up the rest of the group while they now have to wait for you.

C. Putting on your gear: When the leader announces that you will be starting in ten minutes, this is your clue to take care of all of your personal needs of bathroom, food, drink and putting on your riding gear, especially if there is a lot of layering/shedding of clothing happening. You need to be cognizant of how long it takes you to put on your jacket, helmet, gloves, glasses, ear plugs, MP3 player, sunscreen and unwrap your lollipop or gum for the ride (try timing yourself



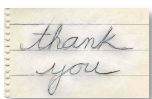
sometime). Be ready to go. When everyone else is on their bikes with motors running, ready to roll, have you ever seen that one last person zipping up a jacket or putting on gloves, while all the others are sitting and staring at him/her? Don't *always* be the one everyone is waiting for. "Key" off the leader... in other words, if the leader has his helmet on (meaning he's getting ready to go), you should have yours on too.

D. Visiting at stops: The reason we take these group rides is to enjoy the company of our friends while enjoying our passion for riding. The problems come with the tendency to talk about the last leg before we take care of what needs to be done at the stop. A good rule of thumb here is to get your gas, drinks, and bathroom breaks out of the way *first*, and then visit with your friends. That way you're ready to go when you need to be.



I know a lot of you reading this right now are nodding in agreement thinking, "Yep, we've got one or two of those on every ride." Giving them the benefit of the doubt, there are some people who simply don't realize they are doing these things. However there may be some who knowingly do them and don't care. The ones who "don't care" usually don't get invited to many more rides. To the ones who "don't realize," hopefully, reading this will ring a bell somewhere.

III. POST-RIDE



As mentioned earlier, there is a tremendous amount of time, work and energy that goes into a successful group ride. It is reasonable and

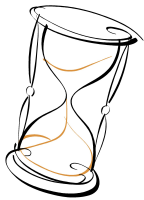


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customary to thank your ride host and group leaders for a job well done either in person, a call, or an email.

IV. THOUGHTS

Group riding can be one of the best ways to safely see the countryside and thoroughly enjoy the day, but we need to work together to make it happen. The bottom line is that we all need to be considerate of others. The best way is to check and see if we are a consistent violator of any of the points above, find a way to improve, and to respect the time of our friends.



Speaking of time... it is a commodity that is hard to come by these days, and we want to use it wisely. For some, going on these rides is the only window of riding time they have for the entire week or possibly the month, and making this time as enjoyable as possible should be very important to us all.

So, if we could put the "It's all about me" aside for the group and show up on time, full of gas, food and water, and be ready to roll when it's time at every stop, the group riding world will be a very contented place, indeed.



Hope this helps.

* Parts of the above article are reprinted/paraphrased from "**Group Riding Etiquette 101**," an article written by Barry Caraway (Cyclerides.com) with his expressed consent.