

# **Appalachian Mountain Club**

## **Ride Leader Guidelines**

**This Document Has Been  
Prepared to Serve  
as a Guide for the  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Ride Leaders**

**Revised  
January 7, 2009**

## Introduction

Although we use the title **Ride Leader**, it might be more accurate to think of yourself as the **Ride Organizer**. You are expected to plan, organize, and start your ride. Depending on the size of the group and riding conditions, you may want to recruit others to help you with activities like passing out cue sheets, welcoming riders, asking non-members to sign the liability waiver and consider joining the club, giving the safety talk, starting small groups of differing speeds, and so on. Note that all AMC Ride Leaders are required to wear a helmet when acting as leader on a ride. This is to promote good safety practice and set an example for riders.

### A. Planning a Ride

*This is the one day you ride for the group, not for yourself. Be aware of your responsibility to the club and all the other riders depending on you.*

#### 1. Route Selection

- a. Plan your ride as if you have never been in the area before and have no idea where you are. Remember, **you** know your route but others do not. Check your route and cue sheet/map before the date of the ride.
- b. **Plan for large groups** - Some of your favorite routes may be fine for a small group of riders but may not be safe for large groups.  
Avoid:
  - poorly paved roads or those full of pot holes,
  - bridges that are blocked so as to force a large group of riders to stop,
  - dirt roads,
  - routes with excessive left turns,
  - fast downhill's with obstructions, intersections or stop signs at the bottom,
- c. **Plan and Know The Route**
  - Keep the short route on easier terrain.
  - Minimize the use of busy, bumpy or sandy roads.
  - Minimize left turns, especially onto busy roads. Consider a clockwise route.
  - Avoid left turns off busy, main roads.
  - Be aware of intersections at busy roads.
  - Choose a lunch stop between 1/2 and 2/3 of the way into the route.
  - Try to plan a common lunch stop for all rides.
  - Determine if and where food, water and toilet facilities are available.

**"When you think you know everything about leading a ride you discover you do not."**

#### 3. Starting Times

Start time is at the discretion of the Ride Leader. In general, warm weather rides have an earlier start time than cold weather rides. Always plan to end the ride before dusk.

#### 4. Start Location

- a. Try to be aware of local community activities the same morning as a ride, such as a pancake breakfast, church bazaar or a local fair. If necessary change the actual location of the start site. Do not conflict with these activities.
- b. **Provide For The Number of Cars You Expect** - Be sure the start location has sufficient parking. In the summer months provide adequate parking for the about 10-20 cars without affecting local parking and community activities. Avoid town centers without a large municipal lot. Avoid small shopping centers with stores that are open on Sunday. In early spring or late fall you can arrange for fewer cars.
- c. **Provide a safe and legal entrance** onto the roadway for bicycles at the ride start.

- d. **Town Parking Restrictions** - Do not use town centers or small municipal lots for rides. Obtaining permits is strongly recommended for public schools and other public lots. Most towns have a school administration office.  
It may be necessary to notify the Safety Officer of the local Police Department that we are using a particular facility in the town. Many towns now require a permit just so they are aware of a gathering of a large group.
  - e. **Notify Local Police** that we are starting a bicycle ride in their town. Because we are a "tour," not a race or a parade, and use public roads we cannot be stopped nor do we need any sort of permit. Most local police appreciate knowing of such a large group. See sample letter toward the end of this document.
  - f. **Avoid a Left Turn Out of The Lot** - If the ride starts from a parking lot on a heavily trafficked road avoid large groups turning across the traffic without a traffic light.
5. **Post-Ride Gatherings** - Post-ride gatherings are encouraged. Typically, these are simple affairs with soft drinks, chips, cookies, and so on. Some leaders have small BBQs with hot dogs and hamburgers. All gatherings are expected to be self-funding. Leaders should spend modestly and do as much of the purchasing as possible last-minute when you have a better idea of the weather for that day. Contributions should be collected from attendees, typically with a helmet that has a small sign affixed, stating its purpose. Leaders might even want to indicate a suggested contribution amount.
  6. **Invitational Ride** - The AMC invites another organization to join an AMC ride led by an AMC leader. All riders must sign the AMC release and liability waiver.

## B. MAPS/CUE SHEETS

1. Use a map that is legible and will allow a local resident to direct the rider back onto the route. Avoid hand drawn maps because they do not show side streets.

## D. CUE SHEETS

1. If you are preparing a cue sheet with mileage designations, specify the mileage readings to .1 mile as recorded on your own bike computer.
2. A cue sheet with no mileage readings is better than inaccurate readings or estimates. If you are referencing street names be sure the street signs are actually in place. "Left turn onto Smith Street" is useless if there is no sign for Smith Street.
3. Note major landmarks when applicable. They help people confirm their location.
4. Use all street names, and in the case of a missing sign, note this as well. The reason for the street name in this case is that if it appears at another point on the particular roadway riders will be able to confirm they are on the correct route.

See The attached section on cue sheets

## Day of the Event

### A. Be sure you have enough maps or cue sheets for the expected size of the group.

### B. Arrive early to coordinate pre-ride activities.

1. Be sure sufficient parking is available. If necessary designate someone to direct riders as to where to park if it is not immediately apparent.
2. Be available to answer questions about the ride, mileage, lunch stops, food, etc. Point out trash receptacles if they are on the site.
3. Leave yourself "space" and time to formulate your pre-ride speech.
4. Be sure maps/cue sheets are handed out by yourself or a designated individual.
5. Ask all riders to sign the liability waiver, and offer them AMC brochures with membership applications. Ask if they need any help understanding group.

### C. Pre-Ride Talk

*This three part procedure must be followed for maximum effectiveness.  
Do not be afraid to ask assistance from other ride leaders.*

1. **Safety Talk** - Maximum 3 minutes.  
Welcome everyone on behalf of the AMC. Keep the safety talk brief and to the point. See further suggestions in the next section... **Emphasize that all riders must sign the Liability Waiver.** As a ride leader, you cannot be held responsible for making sure every non-member signs the document, but you must ask for their signature in your pre-ride talk. Completed liability waivers should be sent to the Biking Chair
2. **Break** - Ask for announcements and notices.
3. **Ride Information** - Maximum 3 minutes
  - a. **Be Brief**, no one wants to hear about every pot hole and every traffic light. Cover only major points of interest and major problem areas.
  - b. Inform the group of exact route distances and how far it is on each route to the lunch stop. Indicate distances to ride splits.
  - c. Be sure to emphasize any danger spots; such as a turn at the bottom of a downhill.

### D. Ride Start

1. If the group is small, announce the start and let riders filter out.
2. We recommend staggering ride starts for groups exceeding 30 to 40 riders. Staggering your ride start lessens impacts on traffic and is safer. Announce that you will release riders in three groups based on average riding speed: 1) 18 mph and over, 2) 16-17 mph, and 3) under 16 mph. If you prefer, you can simply define the three groups as 1) fast, 2) medium, and 3) casual (or leisurely). Allow a full 90 seconds between group releases. Time this rather than estimating. If you leave it to riders to self-stagger, you'll simply get a steady stream of cyclists departing. You may need to encourage the first group to start, and then encourage the others to wait their turn. Most riders won't deliberately foil the process, but some don't listen carefully and may get confused. Don't be afraid to exercise your leadership skills and be insistent. People will generally respond. Use the time between group releases to provide additional safety/group riding information.
3. Leave some cue sheets under the windshield wiper of your or another rider's car, so that late-arrivers can pick one up.

## Pre-Ride Safety Talk

Both parts of the pre-ride talk, safety and information, should be tailored to the size and type of group assembled. Emphasize the Golden Rule as the smart basis for all safety: Treat other riders and motorists as you would like to be treated.

You have the last and best opportunity to promote safe, courteous, and lawful behavior on your ride. Focus on one or two points that are important to you, and really drive them home. We suggest focusing on 1) getting single file quickly each time a motorist approaches, and 2) yielding the right of way in intersections (unless, of course, the rider has the right of way). Too often, riders will enter an intersection simply because the riders ahead of them do, without determining for themselves that it is safe and lawful to do so. Remember, promoting proper behavior is generally more effective than discouraging improper behavior (i.e., be positive).

### THE ENTIRE PRE-RIDE PROCEDURE SHOULD TAKE NO LONGER THAN 6-8 MINUTES.

The talk should proceed in the following manner:

"Hello, my name is (\_\_\_)".

SHOW OF HANDS - "How many of you are not AMC members or on your first AMC ride? Please come up here and sign our insurance waiver. All members and non-members must sign a liability waiver" (Offer membership brochures) "We provide these rides at no charge and depend on our membership to fund all our activities."

#### Points to Cover (focus on one or two points—briefly mention one or two others)

- **BE LEGAL** - On bikes we are subject to the same laws as motorists, including observing red lights, stop signs and one-way streets. Obey all traffic laws: stop signs, traffic lights, pedestrian crosswalks, blocking "right turn on red" traffic lanes, etc.
- **PAY ATTENTION** to all road conditions, traffic, other riders
- **SIGNAL YOUR INTENTIONS** - Use hand and voice signals for all your moves. Yell out "stopping," "slowing," "passing," "left turn", etc. Let other riders in your group know what is happening.
- **CALL OUT CONDITIONS** - Sand, Runner up, Dog, Horse, etc. Use hand signals as well whenever it is safe to do so. Point out road hazards to riders behind you.
- **OVERTAKING AND APPROACHING CARS** - Riders near the rear of a group should call out, "Car back!" when any vehicle is approaching from behind. Riders near the front of a group should call out "Car Up!" when any vehicle is approaching from the front. Be courteous to motorists and relinquish the right of way. On a narrow road, when you can see it is clear ahead, slow down and move to the far right side of the road to let the vehicle pass.
- **RIDE SINGLE FILE** - Stay in single file when there is automobile traffic, not two and three abreast. Communicate with other riders in your group to also do so. Long pace lines are very difficult for motorists to pass. Break up the line if necessary, let the car pass, then rejoin. The Massachusetts state law says that bicyclists must ride single file.
- **DISPLAY SAFETY AND COURTESY** - Pass other riders on the left only. Ride on the right side of the road, not in the middle. Call out, "On your left!" to let riders ahead of you know you are behind them and about to pass.
- **MOVE COMPLETELY OFF THE ROADWAY** whenever stopping, even if only briefly. Stop only where traffic approaching from either direction can see you clearly. Be sure all riders in the group move completely off the roadway.
- **Group Riding** - Encourage riders to limit groups to 6-8 riders. When more than 6-8 riders are involved in tight groups, there is no improvement in drafting, there is increased risk of accidents among riders, and it is significantly harder for cars to pass the group.
- **REMEMBER**, in any accident with an automobile, YOU LOSE!!"
- **CLOSING** - "We can be an overwhelming presence on the road and in the small communities we pass through. Please help the AMC with our community relations. Make an extra effort to be courteous to one another and to local citizens. Thank you and have a great and safe ride."

*If you have a particular incident or accident to talk about make it short and make your point.*

**Stress the Following:** Most accidents happen because someone is not paying attention to their surroundings. Be constantly aware of cyclists and motorists behind, in front and beside you. If there are riders behind you and you do something without warning, you may cause an accident.

## Sample Letter to Police

April 2, 2009

Rochester Police Department  
Route 105  
Rochester MA

Officers:

The Appalachian Mountain Club is a recreational bicycle club in Massachusetts. At no charge, we provide social bicycle tours for our members and non-members who want to participate in our activities. (For more information please visit the AMC website [www.AMC.org](http://www.AMC.org)).

On Sunday, April 15, 2009 we plan to start one of our weekly tours from the commuter parking lot in Hyannis on Central Ave. This is a tour, not a race, and all riders are instructed to adhere to all the laws of the Commonwealth as they apply to bicyclists.

We expect about 75 cars. Cars will start arriving between 9:00 and 9:30. After the riders leave the lot there will be no activity until riders start returning about 1:00 PM. They will stagger in over a period of several hours.

This letter is being sent as a courtesy so you will know the reason for this gathering. Please direct any questions to me at the above address or telephone number.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

## CUE SHEET GUIDELINES

### How to create a Cue Sheet

It is imperative that you have ridden your route and are familiar with all the roads and the turns. The easiest method to create the cue sheet is to ride the route – by bike or car - with pen/paper and note the mileages, the actions, the street names and any outstanding landmarks. Alternatively, write down all the actions you can think of ahead of time, double spaced to allow insertions, and note the mileages using a pencil.

If you are using a spreadsheet, allow for a second column to place the distance to the next action. This is a simple formula outlined below.

	A	B	C
1	0.0	0.2	text
2	0.2	0.x	text

The formula for cell A2 is [Cell A1 + cell B1] The formula can then be copied and inserted into every other cell in this column. The only exception is the top cell of the column.

Splits should be well defined, as should headings for the continuing routes (if all on one page).

The use of 2 columns and a horizontal space in the center makes the sheet easy to fold without obscuring any text. This also allows the page to be quarter folded and put in a pocket or half folded and inserted into a handle bar map pocket.

The syntax for cues should be as follows:

**Leg** - distance from last cue

**Total** - total so far

**Cue** - direction to turn, or not, one of: L, R, BL, BR, X, S

**L** Turn left                      **R** Turn right

**BL** Bear left                      **BR** Bear right

**X** Cross                              **S** Straight

**Dir** - what to do, where, street names, etc.

Notice the use of such terminology as "LEFT onto Concord Rd @ Stop sign @ T". This helps to avoid any confusion. There are four reference points - the mileage, the road name, the stop sign and the "T".

Also: "LEFT onto Glezen Lane by red house" if the red house is a good landmark to look for and can be seen way before the street sign.

Food stops can be inserted as well:

0.2	22.5	LEFT on Plymouth Post Road into Carver center
0.1	22.7	Bruegger's Bagel shop on right by supermarket
	22.8	End of ride

*After all, what kind of cyclist would pass up a good bagel shop at the end of a ride?*

You can also put on your cue sheet:

- Your name and contact info

## SAMPLE TEXT FOR NEWSLETTER

### Sunday – April 15 - The Spring Cranberry Country Tour

**Times and Routes:** Long (56 miles) and Medium (40 miles) 9:30 AM in Carver - Short (25 miles) 10:30 AM in Bolton

**Ride Type:** Follow-The-Leader

**Leaders:** Joe Tavilla, (781-647-0233), Jack Jacobsen (508-667-7006)

**Highlights:** The common lunch stop for the long and short is at BagelMakers in Middleboro. The medium splits off in Rochester. There are several food stops along each route. This exquisite tour of Carver, Lakeville and Rochester winds and rambles on mostly very quiet back roads. The long and medium routes continue to the harbor in Marion. Don't forget to stop at Phil's for award winning apple cider. The medium route by-passes Acushnet. Lunch for the medium route is in Marion. You will experience some beautiful vistas, magnificent down hills and, hopefully, some gorgeous foliage.

**Start:** Long and Medium Ride - Plymouth "T" station, Central Street @ Route 27 - The parking meters are not active on weekends. Short Ride - Emerson School, Route 117, Halifax, 1/2 mile west of Route 495 on the left opposite the Halifax Police station.

**Directions:** Long and Medium Ride - Route 3 West, exit left onto Route 24 @ exit 43, turn left onto Route 27 at light. Central Street is a sharp right turn .95 miles past the light at Route 111. Look for the Mobil station then the tower of the wheat-yellow colored Mattapoisett Music Center on the corner.