



**CYCLING
ULSTER**

***GUIDE FOR
NEW CYCLISTS***

PRE-RIDE PREPARATION AND CHECKS

Cycling Ulster encourage all cyclists, new and more experienced, to set aside time to prepare before venturing out on the road.

BIKE CHECK

All cyclists should complete an “M” check before each cycle.

See [Bike Check](#) and [Know your Bike](#) for more information.

TYRES

- Ensure tyres are fully inflated
- This is one of the simplest things you can do that can have the greatest effect, and is often overlooked
- Properly inflated tyres make pedaling easier and reduce effort needed to maintain your speed, protects rims from damage, prolongs tyre durability and less likely to experience a flat
- Inflation limits will depend on the tyres so check the guide on the tyre side wall
- Tyre treads need to be checked for excessive wear or other damage, such as embedded glass or objects

BRAKES

- Spin the wheels to check for rubbing and then apply the brakes to ensure they stop the bike smoothly and evenly
- Check brake pads for excessive wear
- Check cables and housing to make sure there is no fraying or splitting
- Check the wheel quick release levers to ensure they are secure
- Check for any loose parts or other mechanical problems
- Do a slow-speed ride and inspect bike, brakes, and shifting before you depart

PRE-RIDE PREPARATION AND CHECKS

EQUIPMENT

- Spare tubes, tyre levers or patch repair kit. Normal tube sizes are 700x25 or 700x28
- Pump or gas canisters
- Toolkit for basic repairs, for example, wrench that fits your bike
- Saddle bags are useful to carry the above items and fit snugly under your saddle
- Front and rear lights fully charged. Rear lights help cyclists to be seen by other road users, even in daylight
- A rear mudguard during winter months
- Map, route or GPS device
- First aid kit
- Mobile phone
- ID or medical card that includes next of kin details

SUPPLIES

- Adequate water, water bottle(s) or hydration pack. Add fruit juice to improve the taste or use an energy drink/powder if going on a longer cycle
- Cash for coffee stops or emergencies
- Energy foods, snacks etc
- Sunscreen/lip balm with sun protection

CLOTHING

Cycling Ulster encourage all cyclists to *'be safe be seen'* by wearing hi-vis/bright clothing at all times, especially during poor weather and lighting conditions.

Helmet – ensure the straps are tight (can only get two fingers under straps) and the helmet is securely in place. As a guide the front of the helmet should sit just above your eyebrows

Gloves – padded to reduce pressure and road shock that can cause numbness or tingling fingers

Shoes – can be trainers or specialist cycling shoes. Most cyclists wear cycling shoes with cleats that fit into clipless pedals allowing them to lock into place. A simple twist to the foot releases the shoe from the pedal. Clipless pedals allow cyclists to pull up as well as push down on the pedals and create a much more efficient pedal stroke and faster speeds. Remember to check that cleats are not worn beyond the recommended limits. Worn cleats can cause the shoes to release from the pedal without warning

Shorts/tights – these have a special padded area in the seat designed specifically for cycling which is necessary for comfort. Both are worn without underwear to avoid chaffing

Sunglasses or other eye protection - these are important for protecting your eyes against wind, insects, stones, dirt etc. Make sure sunglasses are the correct fit and don't slip off your nose. You can get sunglasses with interchangeable lenses to adapt to different light conditions

Bespoke gear to protect against the elements. This may include hi-vis rain jacket, arm/leg warmers, thermal jackets/jerseys, overshoes etc

FOOD

- Eat a healthy breakfast 30 to 60 mins before the start of your cycle
- Porridge and a slice of toast/oat or wholegrain cereals are a good option
- Light cereals such as cornflakes do not provide the slow-release energy you will need for a cycle lasting a few hours
- Carry additional food and drink, for example, bananas, or cereal/energy bars
- Drink plenty of water before your cycle to ensure you are well hydrated
- Try to drink and eat as often as possible whilst out cycling
- If you are nervous eating while on the move, wait until you are at the back of the group to eat

DURING THE CYCLE

A cyclist should know the rules of the road and understand signs and road markings. Please refer to the [guide to cycling on the road](#) for more information.

CALLS

- Alerting the group to hazards such as potholes/parked cars/debris on the road/traffic approaching is very important
- The cyclists at the front of the group should clearly and loudly announce hazards on the road ahead. These are announced early so the group is aware of potential dangers and can smoothly and safely take evasive action.
- Cyclists at the front of the group call the hazard and people behind repeat the call so the message gets passed through the group.

Example of calls

- “Hole on left” means pothole on the left-hand side
- “Stones on the right” means stones on the right-hand side
- “Gravel in middle” means loose gravel in the middle of the groups path

MOVING CARS APPROACHING THE GROUP

- If a car is approaching from behind (or a car following the group is beginning to overtake the group) “car up” is called
- The last person in the group should be aware of traffic following/approaching the group from behind
- If a car is approaching the group from in front on a narrow road: “car down” is called

DURING THE CYCLE

PUNCTURE OR MECHANICAL

- The person who gets the puncture should call “puncture” or “mechanical”
 - Repeat the call so the message gets passed through the group. This alerts the group that someone has an issue so the group can stop
 - The call also alerts people who are cycling behind the person that has suffered the puncture that there is someone in the group who may need to stop immediately and that they need to be alert
- [See Fix a Puncture](#) for information on how to repair or replace a tube

CYCLE TWO BY TWO/DON'T OVERLAP THE REAR WHEEL OF THE CYCLIST IN FRONT

- Cyclist in front cannot see the position of cyclist following behind
- If your front wheel overlaps the rear wheel of the person in front, any movement left or right could result in wheels touching, a loss of balance and ultimately a crash
- Never pass another cyclist on the inside (left), always pass on the outside (right)

DURING THE CYCLE

AVOID FREEWHEELING WHEN AT THE FRONT OF THE GROUP

- It usually requires more effort to cycle at the front of the group
- If a cyclist at the front of the group freewheels the following cyclists could easily run into the back of the cyclist at the front, causing an accident
- Always keep pedaling when at the front of the group

GEARS AND CADENCE (PEDALING SPEED)

- Lower gears make the pedals easy to turn, so it becomes easier to spin to a fast cadence and cycle for longer distances
- Pedal faster in a low gear, rather than 'harder' in a high gear, you'll last longer!
- Find a comfortable cadence and try to maintain this during the cycle by moving up or down gears as road incline changes
- Over time you should gradually try to increase your cadence
- Most new riders think they are getting a better workout if every pedal stroke is a strain and the quads are burning
- Although there's a place for low-cadence workouts, during a normal ride, aim for a smooth spin at between 80-100 rpm (pedal revolutions per minute) which is much more efficient -- and easier on the legs, especially the knees

DURING THE CYCLE

HANDLEBAR GRIP

- Always keep a good grip of your handlebars using you thumbs
- Don't rest your hands on top of the bars if cycling behind another cyclist

ENJOY YOUR CYCLE

- Build up the distance of your cycles gradually
- If you are comfortable with 20 miles try 25 then 30 miles and so on in small increments
- Ask the group leader (or another club member) for advice if you have any questions

POST RIDE

CLEAN YOUR BIKE!

- After the ride, if the moving parts have got muddy or picked up road salt, give the bike a quick hose down
- Keep wheel rims free of oil
- Keep drive train, derailleur, jockey wheels and other moving parts moving freely
- Check for loose parts, rough or loose bearing, tyre condition etc
- Keeping your bike well maintained will help to sustain the equipment and components longer term

SAFE GROUP POSITION



TAKING A TURN AT THE FRONT ("UP AND OVER/ROLL OVER")

- When 'up and over or roll over' is called, the outside line should increase the pace very slightly, moving up without significantly increasing speed
- The cyclist at the front of the outside line should only move inside when a safe distance ahead of inside cyclist, to avoid touching wheels and causing an accident
- Everyone moves up on the outside. Outside line should ease pace back to normal group pace

Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

