



*Our thanks to the authors
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GOLD WING ROAD RIDERS ASSOCIATION

Rider Education



Road Captain

These are a set of guidelines to help a group to ride safely as a team. The guidelines are intended to be used in conjunction with the GWRRA Team Riding Manual. It seems like everywhere you go, each group appears to ride a little differently.

It is our hope that these guidelines will help in teaching techniques that may become used universally. If someone in Virginia participates in a ride in Arizona or Maine, they will fit in with the way each group rides because each group rides the same.

If you will put to use the principles taught in the Road Captain Course, you will find that in time they will become second nature to you. Some riders have commented that, even when there are only two or three bikes, they ride this way because it has become so automatic.

Gold Wing Road Riders Association

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ROAD CAPTAIN GUIDELINES

1. Try to arrive at the meeting place early, with a full fuel tank. The person who sets up the ride is usually the Trip Coordinator and, in most cases, also the Drag of Group #1-- unless he/she gives up that responsibility.
2. As participants begin to arrive, get them in place, keeping in mind that some folks may not have CB capability. If there are bikes with a trailer and/or sidecar or there are three-wheelers (trikes), place them at the rear of the group (in front of Drag); they sometimes take turns and curves slower than other bikes and may need more room to maneuver.
3. If more than 5 bikes show up, ask if there is another **Lead/Drag** on site, and get them to begin setting up another group. Look for the Road Captain rocker under the Chapter patch. The "ideal" group size is 3-5 bikes.
4. Spend some time looking at the bikes that are going to be in your group, keeping an eye out for any obvious safety problems. Get your group members to assist, as additional eyes will see more than just one pair.
5. Choose your **Drag/Lead** early and discuss the route that you will be taking, the kind of terrain that you will be running, the kind of terrain that the group will be riding through, etc. Make sure that all members of your group know the route. If you know the route in advance, you might draw up a map and make copies for all group members.
6. At about 5 minutes prior to the announced departure time, begin to get your group to mount up so that all groups can leave at the appointed time.
7. If the ride will be going through the kind of terrain that some people may have trouble with, ask other **Road Captains** if they would volunteer to **Lead/Drag** a slower group. This group may choose to leave a little earlier than the other groups, or later. Be sure that the slower group is aware of scheduled stops, so that everyone will have a chance to get together for lunch, etc.
8. If your group has a bike with no CB, go over the hand signals with this person. Make sure that this person, and all other group members, knows the route and approximate length of time between breaks.
9. Once on the road, assume the standard staggered file formation positions for **Lead and Drag**. **Lead** bike is always in the left track of the lane you are traveling in.

10. **Lead** should start out slow, allowing time for all group members to get out onto the road and into position. Then, increase speed to cruising speed (per designated speed limits). And, when stopped at a stoplight, have everyone double up, side-by-side.

11. Where road conditions permit, ride in the staggered formation. However, if your travel route takes you onto narrower roads or road conditions that indicate a need, call for a single file formation--both by CB and by hand signal.

12. When you have a choice of several lanes, **Lead** should plan lane changes in advance. Conditions will occur that call for immediate action; but most of the time, you can tell that you will want--or need--another lane.

13. **Lead** should call the **Drag** and ask him/her to "**secure the left/right lane.**" **Drag** will move to the requested lane and call back that "**the lane is secured.**" At that time, the **Drag** will announce to the group to "**look left/right and move left/right.**" The **Drag** should check to see that all members are looking left/right over their shoulder before making the lane change. All group members should be encouraged to move as a unit, and move with the bike directly in front of them. This makes for a safer and smoother lane change by the group. An individual bike "diving" across lanes can cause the remainder of the group to have to break or swerve.

14. Keep the length of a ride down to a reasonable time between breaks. Remember, your co-rider may tire before you do.

15. Keep to the right lane at all times, unless passing or conditions in the right lane warrant staying in the left lane, such as on/off ramps of interstate highways. On divided highways (with 3 lanes on your side), you might want to stay in the center lane, versus constantly changing lanes.

16. If you notice that the group is spreading out, or getting sloppy in the formation, don't hesitate to tell the group to close it up or to get the formation straight. This is especially true for the **Drag**, because he/she has the best view of the group. Remember that the group's safety is as much the responsibility of the **Drag** as the **Lead**.

17. When pulling off of the road or preparing to stop, find an area that will accommodate the entire group. Pull into the area, ride to the end, and swing the front of your bike out. Then back up to the curb. All bikes should follow suit. This makes for a neat formation when parked and leaves more room for other groups or for non-riders to park. Always remember that we want to make a good impression on the general public, and not hogging all available parking spaces is just one more way to do this.

18. When heading back from a ride, there are times when a bike (or group of bikes) will split off from the main group. This split should come before the turn so that you do not have bikes breaking out of formation at an intersection, where other drivers might get confused and pull out in front of one of us. If you know that you will be leaving the group during the ride, position yourself at the rear of the group. As the split is made, make sure that the **Lead** knows who his **Drag** is.

19. If you find your group behind a slow moving vehicle on a narrow two-lane road, you may need to pass the vehicle individually. The **Lead** should announce this fact to the group. Once you are around the vehicle, you should keep in contact with the rest of the group, informing them about passing lanes and traffic conditions. Once the group has gotten around the vehicle, the **Drag** should inform the **Lead** of that fact.

20. When traveling through towns, the group may get broken up at traffic lights. The **Lead** may pull over to wait, if an area is available. If not, continue on at a reduced rate of speed and keep in touch with the stragglers, letting them know where you are. This is especially important if there is a turn to be made before the group gets back together.

21. We all enjoy the fellowship of our Chapter members, and enjoy talking to them during rides. You have to keep in mind that the **Lead** and **Drag** need to be able to pass on safety information to the group. Keep conversation short to keep the airway clear. This is especially true when there is more than one group. Everyone should keep conversation to an absolute minimum.

22. This guide may seem cumbersome at first glance. However, the GWRRA Chapter that initiated (and still uses) this training has an excellent record for safety on the road. Compliments are heard, wherever they go, regarding the professional look that is projected.

Let's continue the tradition.

Ride Safe, Ride Smart!

Safety is for Life!

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

The Road Captain Course is well structured and covers most of the riding techniques encountered when group riding. The information listed here is additional information that may help you in improving your techniques. Keep in mind, the safety of the GWRRA members is your prime responsibility. Also keep in mind that **each rider is responsible for their own actions. Riders should not do anything that they feel is unsafe or beyond their abilities.**

Passing or being passed by an 18-wheeler. *Wind blast!*
When passing or being passed by a large vehicle, such as an 18-wheeler, the **Lead** should call for the group to assume a single file formation. This allows all motorcycles in the group to move to the portion of their lane away from the 18-wheeler. This gives the motorcycle more space cushion. This will greatly reduce the wind blast effect.
Do not go slow when passing an 18-wheeler. Do not hang beside an 18-wheeler or cause other riders to be caught in this situation. **Lead** and riders should pass quickly and safely allowing room for the other members of the group to do the same.

Exiting a freeway.

The **Lead**, when exiting a freeway, should exit at highway speed, if possible. Don't slow down so much that you leave the rest of the group hanging out in traffic.

Single Lane Pass.

When passing a vehicle on a two-lane road, ensure after you have passed the vehicle you leave enough room for the other riders following you to safely pass and pull back into the lane.

Hand Signals.

Get into the habit of using hand signals! There may not be enough time for the **Lead** to inform everyone over the CB of a hazardous condition. The three most used hand signals should be memorized and used by all riders and/or co-riders in the group. Teach untrained or new riders and co-riders these basic signals before you start the group ride.

HAZARD IN THE ROAD.

SINGLE FILE.

STAGGERED FORMATION.

Cruise Control

On the open interstate highway the **Lead** can help the group maintain a steady speed by using the cruise control. The **Lead** should announce to the group what speed they will be traveling. For example, "Cruise set at 70 mph". When the **Lead** changes the speed, he should announce to the group "changing speed to 65 mph", etc.