



CHARLES RIVER WHEELERS

On the roads of New England since 1966

CRW Ride Leader Handbook

April 27, 2021

RIDES are the heart and soul of CRW, and **RIDE LEADERS** are its backbone. Whether you are new at leading rides, very experienced, or somewhere in between, we thank you for your willingness to volunteer.

There aren't always right and wrong ways of doing things and that includes leading rides. We all have our own styles, likes and temperaments. However, there are often best practices that work well and you'll find many of them outlined in this handbook. The others, you will learn by doing and by working with more experienced Ride Leaders and listening to feedback from riders.

Please use this handbook as a tool to help you plan, develop and lead the best rides you can. Should you have any suggestions or comments, please let us know, as we welcome them. You can contact us at ridesvp@crw.org.



Why Lead Rides

You're the boss!

Leading rides means you get to do the kind of ride you like, including start location, pace, distance, destination, theme, social activities, etc. You can choose to lead a group at a specific pace or have people ride on their own, pick a great spot for lunch, arrange for ice cream or other treats at the finish, and find other creative ways to make your ride interesting.

It's a Chance to Give Something Back to CRW

We've all benefitted from others who are willing to organize, post to the calendar and lead rides for us. CRW often has more riders than Leaders and it can be hard to fill every weekend. You may be willing to start a ride from a location that is not often used. This is your chance to make a contribution.

Recognition and Camaraderie

There are great events for CRW Ride Leaders including a spring kickoff and a fall thank you party. The club takes care of its Leaders and there's often a thank you gift that's exclusively available to Ride Leaders. There's a special satisfaction that comes from helping a less accomplished rider. Plus, leading is a great way to meet others in the club and make friends.

How to Become a Ride Leader

To become a Ride Leader, you must attend CRW Ride Leader training in the spring and co-lead at least two rides. Once you have co-led two rides, please send a note to the VP of Rides at ridesvp@crw.org describing your co-leading experience, including the ride name, Ride Leader and your responsibilities during the ride.

You'll then be tagged in our member database as a Ride Leader, so you'll be receiving exclusive emails announcing Ride Leader information and events. In addition, you'll find new options open to you on the CRW website under the Ride Leader menu item for access to all sorts of great resources. You'll be able to post rides to the calendar and copy routes into the club RwGPS account.

Types of Rides

CRW offers a huge variety of rides and it's important to understand the options. When posting a ride, be sure it's a ride type you're trained for and comfortable leading.

Adventure

Adventure Rides are single or multi-day trips that start at less traveled (by CRW) destinations. Routes may include gravel/bike trails or roads. Single track is discouraged. Rides are self-supported and SAG services can be offered at the Leader's discretion. These rides are led by CRW Leaders and they are no-drop rides. Participants will be responsible for their own expenses and registration is required.

Centuries

Century rides are typically run twice a year (spring and fall) and involve distances of 100, 62 and 50 miles. The rides require prior registration and are fully supported by over 50 volunteers with rest stops, port-o-potties, police details, etc. CRW has a Centuries Committee that organizes these rides.

Devo

Devo (Development) rides are performance oriented virtual and In Real World (IRL) events focusing on road cycling fitness, disciplines, techniques and skills. Each season may have a specific theme such as climbing or improving your power output. The Devo program includes challenging rides climbing iconic mountains throughout New England, recurring time trial rides, virtual rides and participation in organized events such as B2VT and Crank the Kanc.

Diversity

The purpose of diversity rides is to find a way to make CRW more welcoming and open to all. The Diversity Committee is looking to create rides that are especially welcoming to people of color. In 2021, two themed rides are planned, a Marshall "Major" Taylor ride and a Kittie Knox Ride. In addition, the committee will look for opportunities to host several rides starting in or near Boston.

Led Ride

Led rides are typical CRW weekday or weekend rides that involve one or more Leaders taking out a group at a specified pace. Led rides can have the Leader in the front or another rider with GPS in the front setting the pace. Human arrows can also be used to help with navigation. These are the ideal CRW rides and we encourage Ride Leaders to be explicit about leading at specified paces.

Gravel

Fun on mixed terrain is the objective of gravel rides. They may follow gravel roads, double track or rail trails with surfaces that are primarily stone dust, packed dirt or other soft materials. Single track, bike portage, roots and rocks are avoided and mountain bikes are not required to participate. Wide 32 – 35 mm tires will be most suitable.

Hub

Hub rides regularly start at the same location and time. Multiple routes are available to accommodate all riders. The goal is to have members socialize with other nearby cyclists and to have confidence that they will have other people with whom to ride.

Leaderless

Leaderless rides are rides that do not have a CRW Leader but they are fully insured, official rides. CRW is using Leaderless rides to help fill out the calendar as needed and to test new start locations and routes. Only the VP of Rides and Ride Program Coordinators may Leaderless rides.

Recurring

Recurring rides as those that run on a regular schedule, either weekly or monthly. Most follow the same route each time though some vary the route and start location from week to week. Some recurring rides are led by Leaders or use human arrows to ensure that no one is dropped and others are Show and Go.

Show and Go

The traditional style of CRW rides is Show and Go. Rides are published in the club calendar; members assemble and listen to a safety talk and are then sent on their way to follow a GPS route on their own or with friends.

Women-Only Rides

Women-Only Rides are designed to promote women-only group rides or to lead women-only groups as part of other CRW rides.

Ride Leader Responsibilities

As a Ride Leader, there are things you must do, things you can do and things you're not expected to do (but still could if you'd like!). All will make for a more enjoyable experience for both the rider and you, the Leader.

Ride Planning

Route Development

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.

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. If possible, have another rider check your GPS route before the date of the ride.

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.

Things to avoid:

- Poorly paved roads or roads with lots of potholes
- Dirt roads
- Excessive left turns
- Construction areas
- Steep descents with sharp turns, intersections or stops at the bottom
- High volume traffic roads, especially if they have inadequate shoulders
- Bike/recreation paths, especially at the beginning of the ride and on weekends

Route Selection

This is a good time to take your favorite route and share it with club members. One advantage is that you're probably intimately familiar with all the intricacies of the route, which will help you in describing it and leading others.

If you're not sure of a good route, the CRW [Town Collections](#) are an excellent place to start. You can find them on the CRW RvGPS site and there are many rides listed that start in different towns. These have all been curated by club members so you know they'll be terrific.

Weekend rides typically have a short ride of 25-30 miles and a long ride of 50-60+ miles. Here are a few things to consider:

- Keep the short route on easier terrain
- Consider a clockwise route as right turns are easier to make than left
- Avoid left turns off busy, main roads
- Be aware of intersections at busy roads
- Choose a rest stop between 1/2 and 2/3 of the way into the route

Here are some general guidelines:

Public or Private School - Contact the school directly. Information can usually be found on the website.

Public Lots - Check with the town public safety officer or local Police Department.

Commercial Lots – Obtain permission with the facility manager or store manager.

State Parks – You can apply for a permit at <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-state-parks-special-use-permit>

Town Parks - Check in at Town Hall; information can often be found on the town website.

Many public and private entities require a Certificate of Insurance before allowing use of a parking area. This is a common request and easily satisfied. Contact the CRW Treasurer at treasurer@crw.org to get one.

Ride with GPS

All CRW club rides must have an associated RwGPS route. For details on how to do that, please go to <https://www.crw.org/content/using-ride-gps-club-account>. Note that many people have a personal RwGPS account. CRW also has a club account that you can use for free. Any ride posted to the website calendar must be copied into the club account.

If you don't know how to use RwGPS, you may find this video useful:

<https://www.crw.org/content/planning-routes>

Social Activities

Activities that encourage social interaction between riders contribute directly to an enjoyable ride experience. Proven approaches include:

- Have new or non-CRW members self-identify at the start of the ride.
- Take a moment at the start of the ride and give riders time to introduce themselves to others standing nearby that they may not know.
- Pick a specific place to meet for a lunch break.
- Organize a post-ride party. Funding from CRW is available. Contact the VP of Rides at ridesvp@crw.org for more information.

Alcohol maybe served at CRW social events but there are a few rules based on our insurance policy:

- Alcohol may be served at CRW social events.
- Having a ride finish at a location that serves alcohol, where riders are responsible for buying their own, is allowed. If a Ride Leader is going to buy a round (with prior approval for funding), it must be available to all participants.
- Having a picnic or BBQ at the end of a ride is great. Serving alcohol and asking everyone to chip in to pay for it is not allowed.

Led Groups

Leading a group of riders at a specific pace is highly encouraged though not required and is a surefire way to make new friends and build camaraderie among club members. You can include a note in your ride description that you'll be leading a group or you can make an announcement at the start of the ride.

Ride Posting and Promotion

The more you do to promote your ride, the more riders you'll have in attendance. The one requirement is that your ride must be posted to the CRW website calendar. Posting to all other social media sites is optional.

CRW Website Calendar

For instructions on how to post to the website calendar, please go to <https://www.crw.org/content/how-schedule-ride-0> A registration link will automatically be inserted in your ride listing.

Be sure to have a detailed description of your ride, with an outline of the route and details about the terrain, points of interest, food and water stops, etc. Let people know if you're going to lead a group at a certain pace and if there's a specific theme to the ride, which always piques riders' interest.

Also, specify your cancellation policy. Stating that "rain cancels" is not sufficient. If you think there's a chance of inclement weather, cancellation is your choice but please be specific. A good approach is to put a note in your listing stating something like "Check here after 7:00 p.m. on the night before the ride for any cancellation information." Then, be sure to update your listing by that time!

Social Media

CRW uses a variety of social media sites to promote club rides. Ride Leaders are encouraged but not required to post to these sites, though doing so will often generate greater participation in your ride. If you choose to post, please be sure to monitor your postings for any chatter or questions and be prepared to update multiple sites if you make any changes in the calendar listing.

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/676488229753395>

Strava - <https://www.strava.com/clubs/crwheelers>

Slack – Use your existing Slack account to join CRW Slack or go to <https://www.crw.org/content/slack> for more information

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/crwheelers/>

To learn more about how to use CRW social media channels, check out our [Zoom](#) call on this topic.

Ride Day Management

On the day of the ride, plan to arrive early to coordinate pre-ride activities. Here are other points to consider:

- Be sure enough parking is available. If necessary, designate someone to direct riders where to park if it is not immediately apparent.
- Be available to answer questions about the ride, mileage, lunch stops, food, bathrooms, etc. Point out bathrooms and trash receptacles if they are on the site.
- Leave yourself "space" and time to formulate your pre-ride speech. Preferably, prepare it in advance but update it with any late-breaking information such as the latest weather forecast or information about construction along the route.
- If there is a large turnout, and if you recognize other Ride Leaders in the crowd, ask if they are willing to lead a group on whichever route they're doing. Keep it low key, no pressure.
- It is helpful to have with you a few cue sheets for those without navigation.

Rider Registration

All riders, including the Ride Leaders, are required to register for all CRW rides and can do so on the CRW website. Leaders need to verify that riders are registered and you can handle this in several different ways:

- Wander the parking lot at the start of the ride and introduce yourself as the Ride Leader. Ask riders if they have registered. If not, ask them to use their phone and go to the website to register. This is a great way to meet the riders on your ride and is especially easy if you have a bag of Snickers bars to share. It's also a good task to delegate to a co-Leader.
- As you gather riders for your pre-ride talk, ask if all have registered. If there are any who have not, ask them to register before starting on the ride.

Ride Leaders are not the registration police. Explain that registration is required by our insurance carrier (yes, blame the insurance company, everyone will understand) and we want to insure medical and liability coverage for everyone. After that, these are public roads and you cannot stop an unregistered rider from joining.

Waivers

As part of the registration process, riders are asked to agree to a liability waiver. If a rider has registered, there is nothing further the Ride Leader needs to do.

In the past, Ride Leaders were asked to carry blank waivers for riders to sign. This is no longer necessary.

Non-Members

Non-members may participate in two CRW rides per calendar year. This is a change from the previous policy, which allowed for only one ride per year. Non-members must also register for the ride which requires them to agree to the liability waiver. They can register on the CRW website and there is a separate link for non-member registration.

Minors

You must be 18 or older to be a member of CRW.

Non-Members

Non-members may participate in two CRW rides per calendar year. They must also register for the ride and links will automatically be inserted in your ride posting.

Getting Ready to Go!

As you prepare to start your ride, you'll want to ask members to gather around. Verify that everyone has registered, then provide a description of the route and do a brief safety talk. The whole process should take no more than 10 minutes. Riders will be anxious to get started and will not always be listening nor will they remember more than a few things you tell them.

Route Description

Spend a few minutes to describe the route to riders.

- Be brief. No one will remember more than about 3 things.
- Inform the group of exact route distances and how far it is on each route to available food and bathroom breaks. Indicate distances to ride splits. You will make enemies if you are not accurate!
- Be sure to emphasize any danger spots such as a turn at the bottom of a downhill or a road with bad pot holes.

Safety Talk

A pre-ride safety talk is required by our insurer for all CRW rides. For some reason, preparing to do this petrifies many Ride Leaders but it shouldn't. Think of it as the steward on an airplane telling you how to buckle your seatbelt. People either listen politely or tune out.

The easiest approach is to use the [SMART Safety Talk](#). You can simply copy it to your phone or print it and read verbatim at the start of the ride.

For the long version with all the points you might want to cover, check out the [Sample Safety Talk](#).

Another effective method is to have riders take a moment to introduce themselves to anyone in their immediate vicinity that they don't know. Then, proceed with your safety talk and note that most unsafe activities such as not pointing out obstacles in the road, not ride predictably, not signaling turns, etc., most often impact the rider *behind* you and that could be the person you just met.

Ride Start

Once you complete your safety talk, if you have a large group (30+ riders), you should have them assemble into groups based on speed. You need to decide your speed groups and be more granular the more riders you have. Tell them specifically where you want them to stand and place them in a way that the fastest group has the simplest egress. If there are led rides, be sure to have a place for these riders to gather.

How you start a ride is dependent on the number of riders, the nature of the start location and whether or not there are led groups.

Number of Riders

With a large group, you need to stagger the start. Let your fastest riders go first and allow at least 3 – 4 minutes between group releases. A longer gap may be necessary if there are traffic lights that will delay groups.

Nature of the Start Location

If your ride start calls for a right turn onto a rural road, you can send out groups at shorter intervals than an urban location with more traffic, stop lights immediately after the start, etc. You need to use your best judgement as to how much time to allow between groups. Yes, people will get antsy. It's ok.

Led Groups

Led groups will follow the same guidelines, with the Leader taking the group out. Be sure you know how many people are in your group and you can somehow identify the last rider. Led groups need to be sent out as their own bloc. Otherwise, they will quickly be infiltrated by other riders and it'll be difficult to know who is and isn't in the group.

There is no requirement for a Leader to provide a lead or sweep. However, it is always a good idea for all riders to be helpful to each other. Ride Leaders are encouraged to leave the starting point a few minutes after the last group in order to check on and chat with slower riders as you pass them.

Manage the Ride

During the ride, it is impossible for a Ride Leader to be everywhere and see or speak with everyone. However, it's helpful to be friendly and collegial as you encounter other riders and you should certainly check in with any rider you see stopped by the side of the road. This is a day you are riding as a volunteer for CRW, so try to do more than just hang with your friends.

Problem Management

There are too many possible problems you can encounter on a ride and too many variables for us to give you a solution to all of them. Examples include mechanical problems; riders without proper navigation, equipment, food, water and fitness; slower riders, injuries; adverse weather conditions and more. You will need to use your good judgement, common sense, resources available and the assistance of others to the best of your ability.

A few things to remember:

- In case of injury, call 911
- Call Uber
- Other cyclists, motorists and people nearby can provide assistance

Accident Scene Management

Although we all try to ride safely, accidents will happen. If you are the Ride Leader, please follow this coordinated emergency response, which should cover all the essentials. Ideally there will be 4 people, each prepared to take on one of the following roles so they can be done simultaneously. Otherwise, some may have to be done in sequence. You should take control and assign tasks.

- **Crowd Control.** Get other riders and bicycles out of the road and away from the victim. Make sure other cyclists are not blocking traffic and there is access to the victim for emergency personnel.
- ☒ **Protect the victim.** If the victim is on the road, protect them from traffic. Do so without risking your own safety. If possible, position yourself or another bike between the victim and oncoming traffic, directing traffic around the victim. If there are others available, position them along the road so that they can alert oncoming traffic to slow down.
- ☒ **Call 911.** The most important information is location. Try to provide the name of the town as well as cross streets. If possible, give information about what happened and condition of the victim(s). Often, passing cars will see that an accident has occurred and call 911 before you get to it. In addition, these drivers can be of assistance if you're not sure of your exact location.
- ☒ **Attend to the victim.** If there is anyone who knows CPR or has more advanced training, they should take this role. If you don't have any training, just keep the victim from further harm:
 - Don't move or allow the victim to move their head or trunk unless absolutely necessary (moving can contribute to paralysis if there is spinal injury).
 - Don't remove their helmet.
 - Don't give food or water.

After the Ride

Check the area after most of the riders have returned; make sure no trash is left behind and pick up any lost belongings so that they can be returned to riders. Leaders are not expected to wait at the end of the ride to make sure everyone has returned.

If any issues have occurred on your ride or there have been problems with a particular rider, please contact the VP of Rides.

We also encourage you to post photos of the ride or a ride report on any of the club social media sites.

Additional Information

For even more information about leading rides for CRW, go to the website and click on the Ride Leaders menu item.

In addition, you can post your questions on Slack at # ride-leaders. This is a great place to ask questions, look for co-leaders for your ride and more.

If all else fails, contact the VP of Rides.