Rules for group riding

Riding in a group isn't as simple as it seems. Some want to go faster, some want to go slower, the group breaks up, riders get separated and pretty soon it's every man (or woman) for themselves. But a simple pre-ride meeting covering the rules of the ride can solve most problems before they happen.

The Ride Captain

Organized clubs often have an officer known as the Ride Captain, but even informal rides need someone to assume leadership, plan the route, explain the rules and make sure everyone gets home safely.

The Route

At the pre-ride meeting, the Ride Captain should discuss the route to be sure everyone knows where the group is headed and likely stopping points. In familiar territory a verbal description is OK, but handing out copies of a map with the route marked is never a bad idea, especially on strange roads.

Stay Together

The leader should try to keep all riders in sight, even if everyone knows the route. Speeding away from the others ruins the group dynamic and may cause less experienced riders to ride beyond their ability in an attempt to keep up. So find a comfortable pace and stick to it. And NO PASSING THE LEADER. (Hey, if you didn't want to ride with the group, what are you doing here?)

Watch Your Behind

Every rider should keep an eye on the rider behind them. If your follower drops out of sight, ease up until they reappear. If everybody obeys this rule the rider in front of you will also slow down so that the entire group slows and nobody gets left behind.

Back Door Man

If you have a new or unfamiliar rider along, designate an experienced rider to be the last in line to make sure the rookie doesn't get lost and stays out of trouble. Be patient and let the rookie set the speed. Push him and you may cause a crash.

Communication Breakdown

Knowing a few basic hand signals can avoid potentially dangerous confusion; so go over the signals before the ride. Take along cell phones and exchange numbers, or at least share the Ride Captain's number with the group, in case someone gets lost or breaks down. If someone decides not to complete the ride, make sure they know to inform the rest of the group, so you don't spend your afternoon searching for a fellow rider who's home watching TV.