

San Diego Harley Owners Group



Basic Group Riding Handbook

Version 1.5

San Diego HOG

Basic Group Riding Handbook

1. From the Director

Thank you for joining the activities of the San Diego Chapter of the Harley Owners Group (HOG). Our Road Captains and other Chapter Officers have compiled the following into a "Basic Group Riding Handbook." All members should familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook so we can enjoy the adventures of the road together safely and without incident. This handbook is intended to be a guide and nothing more. We cannot prepare you for every possible situation any more than we can provide you a list of specific events that will affect your life tomorrow. Every on-the-road encounter, incident, situation or emergency is different and remains the individual rider's responsibility to respond appropriately. Riders must be AWARE, must be ALERT, and must be VIGILANT at all times. A safe and enjoyable ride is our primary concern. Since we are working to improve our riding skills, I would be pleased to hear any recommendations for changes to this handbook. Don't be bashful; we can't do this without your involvement. That said it's time to ride. Be alert, be aware, and be safe. The adventures of the road are awaiting us.

Sincerely,
Warren Sherman
San Diego HOG Director

2. Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within this handbook is current and accurate; however, the San Diego HOG Chapter, the San Diego Harley Davidson Dealer and the Harley Davidson Motor Company do not make any claims as to the accuracy of the information published.

3. Alcohol Policy

The consumption and use of alcohol is a serious personal responsibility involving the safety of family, riding friends and the individual HOG member. Alcohol consumption before or during a motorcycling activity is not safe, responsible behavior. San Diego HOG does not allow the use of alcohol or illicit drugs before or during a riding event and does not furnish alcohol at Chapter events. Riders whose skills are observed or suspected to be impaired by alcohol or illicit drugs

before riding cannot join the ride. Riders using alcohol or illicit drugs while riding may be asked to leave the ride. It is the responsibility of each San Diego HOG Chapter member to support the consistent enforcement of this policy.

4. Safety

The San Diego HOG Chapter has adopted the following basic policies for group rides:

- Ride Safe
- Be Courteous
- Use Common Sense
- Have Fun

The fundamental principle of safe group riding shall be reinforced through the sharing of educational material printed by National HOG, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, Riders Edge and other nationally recognized sources. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for safety of the ride belongs to the individual member/rider. Safety and the use of common sense are paramount.

5. The Simple Stuff

- Show up for rides 15-30 minutes before the pre-ride briefing so you do not miss important information or keep other riders waiting.
- Have your gas tank full and your bladder empty.
- Check your bike thoroughly beforehand. Proper maintenance is a prerequisite for a day of safe riding.
- Check your oil level and tire pressures before you leave home.
- Have what you will need with you for the ride: water, proper clothing, etc. There is nothing more uncomfortable than being a long way from home without the proper clothing and experience a major weather change. Come prepared.
- Ride Safe. Be Courteous. Use Common Sense. Have Fun.

6. Pre-Ride Brief

Prior to the scheduled departure time, the Road Captain leading the ride will give a pre-ride briefing to go over and review group riding communications (hand signals), safety topics and the ride route. Be patient and give your full attention.

Group riding communications, safety topics and the ride route must be covered at the beginning for each and every group ride. This may not be your first group ride, but it could be the first group ride for someone riding in front of you. This pre-ride briefing is for safety. Ask questions and make certain you have all the information you need regarding the ride. This is also a good time to inform the Road Captains what they need to know about you and any riding limitations. They will be happy to accommodate any special condition they can (e.g. if you prefer to ride up front or in the rear of the group.) For you to participate in the Chapter ride you must attend the Pre-Ride Brief. If you show up late and miss the pre-ride brief, you will not be able to attend the Chapter ride for that day.

7. Release Waiver Forms

All members participating in a chapter-sponsored ride must sign “The Ride Sheet” and complete the release forms for their non-member guests prior to that days ride. A member may only sponsor one guest per ride and there are three types of waivers that must be filled out and signed by the member and the guest. They are:

- **Chapter Event Release Form for Adults**

This release form must be signed by all adult participants in any chapter road or field event if the individual 1) is not a member of the local chapter hosting the event, 2) is a member of the host chapter but has not signed the Chapter Member Enrollment Form and Release for the year in which the event occurs

- **Chapter Event Release Form for Minors**

This release form must be signed by a minor’s parent or guardian whenever a minor participates in any chapter event other than a chapter meeting, even if the minor is a member of the chapter.

- **Minors Assumption of Risk Acknowledgement**

A minor, aged 12 or above, must sign this form when participating in any chapter event other than a chapter meeting. Minors Aged 12 or above will have this form AND the Chapter Event Release Form for Minors filled out and signed.

8. Group Size

The size of the group will be determined by the Road Captains. Determining factors will be the route, weather conditions and the overall safety of the riders. When the Road Captains determine the group is too large they will split the ride into two groups for manageability and safety.

9. Key Group Riding Personnel

Lead Road Captain: Responsible for organizing the ride and selecting the route. Rides at the front of the group and is in charge of the ride.

Mid Road Captain: Will ride in the middle and assist the Lead Road Captain when needed. Lead the second group if more than 40 bikes are present for that days ride.

Sweep Road Captain: Will be positioned at the back of the group. This position is known as “the Sweep” and will watch over the group and provide assistance to any rider that may require help.

10. New Riders and Riders with Speed Restrictions

Rides will be conducted to the level of the rider with the greatest limitations. What this means is we will ride no faster than necessary to support newer inexperienced riders or we will ride within mechanical limitation like the 55 mph break in period of a new bike. New riders and new bikes should ride towards the front of the group. The reasons are:

- The closer to the front, the slower you ride
- You are less likely to be separated from the Lead Road Captain by traffic at a stoplight.
- The Lead Road Captain can more easily adjust the pace of the group to match the riders easily seen immediately behind him or her.
- Ride pace is limited to match break-in speed for new motorcycles.

11. Formation Riding

When riding in a group, the importance of formation riding is critical to the safety of all riders within the group. It is important to know the various formations and the basic rules to follow to ensure a comfortable and safe ride. Remember you are riding in a group, so not only do you have to think of yourself, but you have to

be aware of the other riders around you. Try to maintain a consistent interval between you and the other riders. Inconsistent opening and closing the gap can cause the group to experience an accordion effect.

Staggered: The standard group riding formation will be the staggered formation. The Lead Road Captain will always lead the group from the left position of the lane. Riders will ride in a double file line within a single lane at a staggered interval. This interval generally consists of two seconds between you and the rider directly in front of you and one second between you and the rider immediately to your left or right. However, give yourself enough room to feel comfortable and provide enough room to stop in the event of an emergency. Try not to allow yourself too much space between you and the rider in front of you as this can cause the group to become drawn out or lengthened. The best way to determine proper distance is you should be able to see the face of the rider in front of you to the immediate left or right clearly in their mirror.

Single File: The group will be put into single file by the Lead Road Captain because of narrow or curvy roads, obstacles or other potential hazards that the staggered formation will not allow for. Again, the general distance between you and the rider in front of you is two seconds. However, for extremely curvy roads you may want to expand this distance to fit your comfort level.

Remember: formation group riding is intended to promote safety by increasing our visibility to automobile drivers. It is not intended to be mandatory if a situation dictates otherwise. Staggered formation, single file adjustments, or emergency evasive action should take place safely and whenever warranted. This remains the rider's individual responsibility. Safety remains the prevailing factor for all rides. Formation adjustments may be warranted and necessary without the Lead Road Captain executing and passing back a signal. For example, a narrow or winding section of the road may require a change from the staggered to single file formation. Be alert and be aware of those around you and, above all, **be safe**.

12. Standard Maneuvers

Changing Lanes: A lane change refers to maneuvering the group into a new travel lane where the direction of traffic in the new lane is the same direction of travel as the group. The Lead Road Captain will initiate lane changes by giving the appropriate hand signal and with the motorcycle's turn signal (if so equipped). Each subsequent rider will hold their position and pass the signal back. Once the lane change signal has been passed all the way back, the Sweep Road Captain

will move into the new lane. The Lead Road Captain, upon observing the Sweep Road Captain in position and with no traffic between the Sweep and the Lead in the new lane, will maneuver his or her bike into the new lane. Each rider, in turn, will then follow suit and maneuver into the new travel lane. Once the group is established in the new lane, the Sweep Road Captain will then assume the correct position in the center of the travel lane.

NOTE: With the exception of the Sweep Road Captain, no one is to change lanes until the rider in front of them does so. If the lane change is required for safety reasons like a road hazard in the lane of travel or because the ride route requires exiting a freeway with little time to perform the above described lane change, the Lead Road Captain may initiate the lane change without waiting for the Sweep to perform the lane change and when it is safe, the group will reassemble back into the group riding formation.

Stop Signs and Stop Lights: It is normal for bikes coming to a stop signal to pull up next to each other two by two, breaking the staggered formation and to take off together two by two and re-establish the staggered formation.

Filling the Gap: If a rider drops out of a staggered formation and the group is not going to stop (e.g., a rider decides to ride with the Sweep,) it is desirable to preserve the integrity of the formation by filling the gap. However, you should not fill the gap until the rider in front of you acknowledges your presence by waving you to move forward. Gradually each rider behind the gap, waiting for a signal from the rider ahead to move forward, will fill the gap safely. If the rider in front of you does not wave you forward maintain your position and do not fill the gap. The gap will eventually get filled either by stopping at a stop sign or light or when the group stops for a break.

Passing: Pass quickly, but safely. If possible, The Lead Road Captain will complete the pass far enough beyond the vehicle being passed to provide sufficient room for the entire group to pass. Otherwise, riders will pass on an independent basis. Remember, there are riders behind you.

13. High Alert Areas

Intersections: Intersections are one of the more dangerous areas as traffic may come from many different directions including from behind. Remember red lights provide no physical barrier to traffic so be aware – be alert.

Freeway Merging: The Lead Road Captain will try to facilitate the merge as a group, but merging as a group may not always be possible. Once the Lead Road captain merges onto the freeway he will keep the group at a slower speed of travel so as to allow the riders at the back to catch up to the group. You should merge safely and if while merging, a vehicle gets between you and the group **do not** attempt to pass around the vehicle. This is unsafe and the riders behind you will do the same. Maintain your position behind the vehicle until the vehicle moves out of your lane allowing you to reconnect to the group. Remember, no automobile driver likes to be in the middle of a motorcycle group and will move out of the way as soon as possible.

Turns: The Ride Leader will signal turns using standard hand signals and simultaneous turn signals. Duplicate the signals and pass them back.

Parked Cars: Group rides will usually stay away from the curb lane if there are parked cars. The reason is to avoid suddenly opened car doors, and people and/or animals darting out from between parked cars.

Passing Large Trucks: The key here is “**BE SEEN.**” Assume you are not easily seen and you will probably be correct in that assumption. Depending upon the traffic conditions, the Lead Road Captain may give the single file signal. Everyone should move to the opposite side of the lane furthest away from the truck, providing a larger space cushion between you and the truck. It is a general rule that if you cannot see the truck driver’s face in his rear-view mirror, he cannot see you either.

14. Road Hazards

If you see a hazard such as a pothole, rock, tire tread, or gravel, identify it so that the rider behind you sees the hazard as well. Point out the hazard with your foot. We prefer to use our feet to identify road hazards instead of our hand so we keep our hands on the controls at all times.

15. Traffic

Automobiles will sometimes merge into the group. The automobile drivers normally do not like it and will not stay there and usually move out of the group as soon as possible. Let them in and let them out.

16. You are the Leader (of a split group)

Traffic lights and other traffic conditions will often break up the group. You may even find that you end up the leader of group that has become split from the original group. Don't panic and carry on just as you have been. The Lead Road Captain will realize the group has become split and will slow down or pull over so you and your group can rejoin. If necessary and when safe to do so, a Road Captain in your split group pulls up and takes over. In any case, split groups should continue on to the next destination or planned stop.

17. Need More Space

A rider may need more space because of their experience level, road conditions, or bike's handling characteristics. The rider should signal this by extending the left arm down and slightly to the side with palm facing downward then signal with an up and downward waving motion. Riders behind should then drop back and give the rider showing the signal more room. Be prepared for the signaling rider to move anywhere on the road, and/or pull off the road and stop.

18. Need To Drop Back Or Stop

A rider may need to drop out of their position in the group and take up a position in front of the Sweep so they can adjust for any special situation such as, needing more space or slower speed, or the rider may need to stop. Whatever the need, the procedure must be done safely. There are three methods for moving out of the group:

- If on a multi-lane road, the rider signals to change lanes, does so, then waves the other riders to pass.
- The rider keeps to their side of the lane and waves the other riders to pass.
- If a rider has a serious need to drop back or stop, the rider signals the riders behind for more space and pulls off the road when it can be done safely and immediately waves other riders to pass.

The Sweep will stay with the last rider to either ride with them or provide assistance if necessary.

19. Other Non-Group Bikes Overtaking Our Group

Sometimes other bikes will overtake our group from the rear. This is a concern on two-lane twisty roads. The group will likely already be in single file so move as far to the right as possible and allow the faster rider to pass safely and with as much safety consideration as necessary for the both of you.

20. Hand Signals

Hand signals are our primary means of communication and will be used at all times to maneuver the group, change formation, or point out hazards. Hand signals should be given in a timely manner. Not so early that they are meaningless, and not so late that they become unnecessary. The Lead Road Captain will initiate all hand signals with the exception of pointing out hazards. Any rider in the group, in any position, upon becoming aware of a hazard, should point out the hazard to all riders that follow. When the Lead Road Captain issues a hand signal, he or she shall hold the hand signal until the rider behind the Road Captain performs the signal. Upon seeing the signal relayed back, the Road Captain may then resume riding with two hands. Each subsequent rider will maintain the hand signal until the rider behind acknowledges receipt by also performing the hand signal. The Sweep Road Captain will perform the hand signal to acknowledge receipt to the rider in front of the Sweep. Passengers may assist with the passing back of hand signals. The hand signals are:



Single File – Hand raised high above the head with the index finger pointed upward.



Staggered – Hand raised high above the head with the two finger victory sign given and rotating the wrist.



Right Turn – Left arm out to the side bent at the elbow and hand or fist pointed upward.



Left Turn – Left arm straight out to the side with open hand or pointing to the left



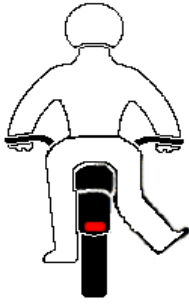
Slow Down – Left arm outstretched and downward with hand flat, palm facing down moving in a downward motion



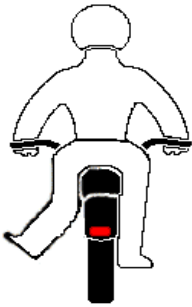
Start Your Engines – Left arm raised up high above your head with index finger pointed upward and moving in a circular motion.



Speed Up – Left arm outstretched and downward with hand flat, palm facing up moving in an upward motion.



Road Hazard Right – Extend your right leg toward the road hazard pointing with your foot.



Road Hazard Left - Extend your left leg toward the road hazard pointing with your foot.

Need Fuel – Point to your gas tank



Group Broken - Hand raised high above the head formed in a fist and the signaling arm is straight. Maintain this position until the rider in front of you gives the signal. This signal needs to reach the Road Captain leading the group so he knows to either slow down or to safely pull the group over. You may honk your horn to get the riders attention in front of you to assist in getting this signal passed to the front. Anytime you pass through an intersection you should look in your rear view mirror to see if anyone behind you gets stopped at the intersection. If every rider in the group gets in the habit of checking their mirrors after an intersection they will see the Group Broken signal and pass it forward to the leader.

21. Forming Up To Depart

This is an unceremonious activity. When the Lead Road Captain says it is time to form up and leave, everyone should line up behind him or her in a two by two formation. If you feel more comfortable up front behind the Lead Road Captain don't feel bashful about telling someone you need to position yourself in front of them. If you would rather ask a Road Captain to request the position in the group for you, you may do that as well.

22. Parking

Plan ahead when parking and always try, as long as circumstances allow, to back into a parking spot so your rear tire is to the curb. Try to park so any pushing that may need to be done when leaving will be done downhill.

23. Ride Your Own Ride

Never ride above your personal comfort level. Advise the Lead Road Captain during the pre-ride briefing of any issues or concerns that you may have. If, during the ride, you feel pressured or uncomfortable, pull out of the group if safe to do so and take up a position in front of the Sweep. The Sweep will ride at your comfort level and appreciate your good judgment in taking a positive safe action. If the two of you lose the group, someone else will assume the Sweep duties of the first group. Although you are part of a group, you are also an individual and the sole operator of your bike. "Ride your own ride" is the term used to emphasize that you must take responsibility for your riding.

24. Health And Well Being

Please take a moment before any ride to perform a self-evaluation. Perform a mental check of these key areas:

- Are you well?
- Have you had enough sleep?
- Have you taken something that would impair your judgment or reflexes, making it unwise and unsafe to ride?
- Do you have proper riding attire?
- You should tell a Road Captain your limitations and concerns, don't be shy.

The above key areas are important to ensure the safety of yourself and others in the group. We cannot stress enough the importance of proper riding attire. At the minimum, you should wear jeans, a long sleeve shirt and boots. If you chose to wear sneakers or shorts be prepared to have a Road Captain tell you that you can't go on the ride. Your safety is the Road Captains primary concern and it should be yours as well.

25. Pre-Ride Check List

Riders need to take some simple actions prior to the ride to ensure their motorcycle is ready for the road. Check your motorcycle's general condition, critical components and fluid levels prior to every ride to help ensure a safe ride. A common checklist used to help you remember the exact items you need to check is TCLOCK. The acronym TCLOCK stands for:

- T - Tires & Wheels
- C - Cables & Controls
- L - Lights,
- O - Oil & Fluids
- C - Chain & Chassis
- K - Kickstand (Sidestand)

Remember our San Diego HOG Chapter policy is:

Ride your own ride
Be Safe
Be Alert
Be Aware
Be Courteous
Use Common Sense

HAVE FUN!