

The Drop Off System

The **Drop Off** system is typically used for larger groups of riders, or on longer rides. It tends to produce a faster-moving, more spread-out group than the **Buddy** system. It allows a group of riders to follow the same route *without having to remain in constant view of each other*. Thus, each rider can **ride their own ride**, enhancing safety.

The Drop Off group consists of a **Leader**, the **Riders** and a **TEC** (Tail End Charlie; some groups call them the Sweeper). The system is so named because the Leader will '**Drop Off**' riders to mark turns. The rest of the group pass by that rider, who later re-joins the group just ahead of the TEC.

Before the ride begins the **Leader** will brief the group and ask all riders to provide **ICE** (In Case of Emergency) contact details – these are necessary in case of incidents or if the group gets broken up. They will also point out who the **TEC** is, and which bike they are on. Take note of this: eg, the TEC's bike's make, style or colour; or their kit and helmet colour. You will find it useful to know the **total number of Riders** in the group and, as you set off, to take note of the bike/rider directly **in front** of you; this is helpful for smoothly re-entering the group after having been dropped off.

During rides, it is not uncommon for Riders to find themselves out of sight of the rest of the group. This is fine – you **do not** have to keep the rider ahead in view, nor the rider behind; you can **ride your own ride**. The only time you **need** to see another group Rider is when you arrive at a *junction* where the group has turned. One of the group **Riders** will be positioned to indicate such turnings. As you approach, s/he will **remain in place** – you simply pass by (or follow their directions) and continue.

Not all junctions need to be marked. The *default direction is straight ahead* – so the **Leader** will not mark every four-exit grid-road roundabout in MK for example, nor most mini-roundabouts. Complex junctions such as six-exit roundabouts do need to be marked though.

In built-up areas and on multi-lane roads, **Riders** should aim to compact the group *when safe and suitable* by filtering up at traffic lights, riding in staggered formation and safely overtaking traffic to group up. For example – if, as you slowly approach red lights, several of your group are a car or two behind you, can you unobtrusively create and 'reserve' a gap, allowing those riders to filter up? Compacting the group in towns is particularly helpful when using *Drop Off*, because the **Leader** may need to mark several turns in quick succession.

Overtaking is not the norm *within* the group: it can be perceived as judgemental and may create risks. However, if *you* feel you may be holding up *swifter* riders – particularly on twisty country roads – then do consider inviting them past: a set Rider order is less important in the Drop Off system than in the Buddy system. And you may overtake *other* traffic of course, but always ensure you do not simply follow other riders through overtakes - use **The System**.

Junctions are **Hazards**. As you approach, use **The System** to consider all available Information ('Ahead, Spread, Behind') and form a **Riding Plan** to allow you to pass the rider safely and unobtrusively. Considerations may include:

- Is the rider marking the junction actually from *your* group – or a *different* one.
- Dropped off riders will aim to pull out in front of the TEC. If you are directly in front of the TEC, can you help create space and time to aid the rider in re-joining safely?

- If you see a case where a Rider *should* have been dropped off, or was asked to drop off *but did not*, can you do so instead? Where a rider *has* been dropped off, but has ended up in an unsafe position or a place of poor visibility, can you help?

Use **The System** and **IPSGA** to help you manage all this safely and courteously. **Information** is key: **Take; Use; Give**.

As riders are used as **Drop Off** markers and you and the rest of the group pass by them, you will gravitate toward the head of the group yourself. Once you are directly behind the **Leader**, you will be the **next** Drop Off. Use **The System** to plan ahead at upcoming junctions, assessing where the route is likely to go and where you may be dropped off. The Leader will point to an **advised** area to Drop Off – but it is **your** responsibility to assess this. You must stop in a location that is **safe, legal and visible** to the rest of the group and **give a clear indication of the route to be followed**. If, for example, you have dropped off before a small crossroads you might have your left indicator on to highlight this to other traffic – but if the route to take is to the *right* you will need to use clear hand signals to indicate this to the group. Be aware that at large complex junctions, such as very large roundabouts with a poor through-visibility, the Leader may drop off two riders – one at the entry and one at the exit.

Having stopped to mark a turn, watch for the rest of the group arriving (and for any developing **risks**). If, say, there are **10** bikes in the group, you can expect **7** bikes to go by before the **TEC** arrives. Count the riders going past and look for the bike which has been ahead of you during the ride; the TEC should be arriving next. The TEC will try to create space for you to pull out ahead of them; use **The System** to safely re-enter the group. If it is not safe to pull out, acknowledge the TEC as they pass you, and then pull out when safe; the TEC will slow down to allow you to catch up and overtake him/her.

Drop Off groups can get **very** strung out due to heavy traffic, overtaking opportunities etc – more so than when using the Buddy system, which tends to result in a more compact group. Dropped off riders can often be waiting for the rest of the group for several minutes. **Do not panic and do not leave!**

Drop Off Summary

- Provide **ICE** (In Case of Emergency) contact details to the ride **Leader**. If you are new to the Group, or to Group riding, let them know and they can help settle you in (they may advise you to position towards the rear of the group, for example).
- Note who the **Leader** and **TEC** are, the number of riders in the group and the **Rider ahead**.
- As junctions come into view, look for a **Dropped Off** rider marking turns (simple, unambiguous junctions might not be marked - in which case, go **straight ahead**).
- Use **The System** to form a **Riding Plan** to take the route indicated by the dropped off rider whilst navigating the junction safely and courteously.
- As riders ahead of you are dropped off, you will approach the front of the group. When you are directly behind the **Leader** you will be next to be used as a **Drop Off** marker. Be ready.
- The **Leader** will use you as a **Drop Off** marker by pointing to a **suggested** waiting position as s/he approaches, passes through or exits a junction. This position is *advisory*; **you**, the **Rider**, must consider if it is a safe, legal and suitable position. It is important though, that you are **clearly visible** for the rest of the group to see at normal riding pace.

- Once Dropped Off, give a **clear indication** of the route to follow to arriving riders.
- **Count** riders as they arrive and **look** for the rider who *had* been *ahead* of you, so as to be ready when the **TEC** arrives. Re-join in front of the **TEC** when the rest of the group have passed by.
- **Don't panic** if no one arrives for a few minutes and don't leave! Weight of traffic, town riding, country roads and rider variations can lead to gaps of several minutes.
- **Overtaking** is not the norm *within* the group. But **do** consider waving faster riders past if you feel you are holding up a group of more rapid riders on open roads.
- You **do not** need to keep other riders in sight; **ride your own ride**. However, take safe opportunities to keep the group compact in built up areas and on multi-carriageway roads.
- Keep coming on social rides! Group rides are an enjoyable way to maintain/improve your skills.
- If you have any questions, ask an Observer.