

Virago Star Owners Club

Ride-Out Advice

The drop-off system

The “drop off” system of group riding ensures progress whilst allowing the group to stay together even though there may be quite some distance between the Ride Leader and the Back Marker.

The whole idea behind the drop off system is to provide a series of moveable signposts for all the riders in the group to follow, irrespective of any gaps which have occurred on the ride, so that riders don't have to “keep up” with the rider in front. It acknowledges the fact that the ride can get strung out over a long distance due to a variety of reasons e.g. road works, traffic lights, give way junctions, roundabouts etc. Also, not all riders will have access to a map case or Sat Nav on their bike and might be on unfamiliar roads. It allows the less experienced rider to ride at their own pace without worrying about keeping up, getting lost, or which way to go.

Understanding the system is important, as every rider needs to do their part to avoid anyone getting lost

How It Works

Each group will have a designated ‘Ride Leader’ and a ‘Back Marker’. The positions of these two riders will not change throughout the run. They will be introduced to all the riders in the group at the start of the run, when the leader briefs the group on the ride.

Whenever or wherever, there is a change of direction at junctions, and all roundabouts, the rider, (now referred to as “Marker”), immediately behind the leader will indicate the direction taken by the leader. He stays as a Marker for all the following bikes. To do this, the Marker should pull in at the side of the road, in a safe place where he/she will be visible to the rest of the riders, so the direction can be indicated to all the following riders. It is most important that the Marker stops in a position where:

1. It is safe to do so.
2. They do not put themselves at any risk.
3. They do not obstruct any other road users.
4. The rest of the ride can see them clearly as they approach the direction change.
5. The Marker should clearly indicate the direction taken by the leader, using, if necessary, indicators, hands and or bike.

When the Back Marker approaches the Marker, the Marker should take up position in front of the Back Marker. The Back Marker should leave enough space for this to happen. **If it is not safe to pull out in front of the Back Marker, then the Marker should re-join the traffic when possible and take up position in front of the Back Marker as soon as it is safe to do so.** It could happen that the number two rider (The Marker) forgets to mark a direction change – in which case the next rider (Number three) should take it upon themselves to be the marker, and mark the direction change to prevent the chain from breaking.

This approach involves the entire group, and the Marker gets rotated from front to back and naturally moves up to the front again.

Some points:

- If you are unsure on any aspect of the ride, always ask advice or clarification. Safety is always paramount.
- Please arrive with a full tank of petrol and an empty bladder. Inform the Leader if you are running low on petrol during the ride.
- If you are unsure as to whether you should mark a junction and then mark it anyway. It is better to mark a junction that doesn't need marking than not to mark one that does.
- A roundabout, or crossroads where you do not have priority, should be marked by parking in a safe visible position on the exit. Should a junction or roundabout not be marked, the default action is to continue straight ahead.
- There is no need to play catch-up. With the drop off system there will be a Marker waiting for you at the next junction.

- Everyone should keep a safe distance behind the rider in front. A staggered riding formation may be adopted where appropriate to aid forward visibility and transit through traffic lights. Avoid 'follow my leader' riding/convoy style riding, which could lull you into unsafe/unaware riding – **ride your own ride**.
- When you are the Marker, wait for The Back Marker to arrive, even if this takes a long time. There may be a breakdown further back which you are unaware of. If necessary, switch off your engine. If you leave your position everyone behind will suffer and the run will fall apart.
- The group may sometimes become very 'strung out', causing anxiety to some riders. The Leader may then decide to stop, in a safe place, to allow the group to reform before continuing.
- If you want to leave the group, inform the Leader and The Back Marker at a rest stop. If unavoidable, you may pull into the left in a safe, visible position and wave other riders past; when the Back Marker arrives, he will stop and you can then inform him/her that you are leaving the group.
- Riders are reminded that they must obey all relevant UK road traffic laws and, when appropriate, those of other nations. They are to observe the Highway Code and heed the warnings displayed on roadside signs and signals (e.g. Local and national speed limits).
- And finally, be sure to listen to your Ride Leader before the start of the ride to ensure he has not made any changes to these procedures. Obeying these simple rules will ensure that our ride outs will be safe and pleasurable.

You the rider are deemed to always be in control of your motorcycle during this ride and during all other group activities. You are entirely responsible for your decisions and actions, and you must always obey all traffic regulations.

All club ride-outs and events are attended at the members own risk. If you are in any doubt, please do not attend.

The Leader's Role

1. Plan a route for the abilities of the expected riders, with suitable stops for refreshment and refuelling.
2. Brief ALL riders before the off.
3. Ride smoothly and at a steady pace.
4. If you don't have a bike behind you to act as marker for a change of direction, stop in a safe place and wait until one arrives.
5. Unless there is a deviation from the obvious straight-ahead route, you do not need to mark the junction except at roundabouts when the exit should always be marked.
6. Always leave a marker at a change of direction, even if you think all riders are in sight of each other.
7. The responsibility for the safety of the markers is their own. You can help them mark the route effectively and safely by giving them plenty of warning that you require them to stop.
8. If it becomes apparent that the group has come to a halt because a rider has had problems, retrace the route until you discover the cause of the hold up and take appropriate action. Ensure that those who have stopped beyond the hold-up are kept informed of the situation.

Tail Rider/Back Marker

1. As you approach the marker bike, slow down to enable them to pull out. If it is not safe to pull out in front, they will re-join the traffic whenever possible.
2. Watch out for any rider who feels that the pace is too quick and is signalling for other bikes to overtake, allowing themselves to stay at the rear of the group in front of you.
3. Keep an eye out for riders in front of you who are clearly riding inappropriately, or who may be out of their depth. In conjunction with the ride Leader, identify appropriate actions to address the situation.
4. Watch out for any bikes that have pulled over for any reason and stop to find out what the problem is.
5. Be aware of other bikes who are not part of our group, as these may wish to make more progress than we are making. We should not hold them up.