



# Grand Teton HOG Ride Guide

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Grand Teton HOG Chapter group riding guidelines. This document will provide information for all riders participating in the organized GTHOG rides to maintain safety and enjoy a great group riding experience.

Group riding is a unique experience. In a group ride, the responsibilities are somewhat different from a solo ride, or even perhaps a ride with a friend. The group safety is considered first, so some possible modifications to your normal riding style may be needed. In general, however, common sense prevails, and the guidelines herein should never supersede your own personal safety or the safety of others in the group.

The guidelines herein set the framework for a safe, enjoyable, and memorable group ride. All riders are expected to understand and adhere to these guidelines. If you have any questions or concerns about anything in this document, please let your Chapter Director know so they can be addressed.

## All Group Riders' Responsibilities

All GTHOG group riders agree to

- follow these guidelines to ensure a safe and enjoyable ride; however, always use your own judgement in applying rules to any situation and never compromise your own or others' safety,
- follow the instructions, commands, and signals of the Road Captains in all situations, for the duration of the ride, unless those instructions, commands, or signals place the rider or any other individual in an unsafe situation,
- assume a specific position in the group, if requested,
- sign a waiver, if requested,
- leave the group, if requested,
- maintain their motorcycle in good working condition so the entire ride can be accomplished without issues.

## Useful Information

Each rider is required to know the laws for each state within which we will be riding; these include helmet, exhaust, eyewear, headlight, etc. This link is a useful reference for a number of motorcycle laws by state: <https://motorcycleinfo.calsci.com/PrintLaws.html>.



## Ride Organization

The ride start location and KSU (Kick-Stands Up) time will be communicated by the Lead Road Captain as early as possible. Plan to be at the start location **fully fueled** and be ready to ride by the KSU time. If you have any questions or concerns about the ride, be sure to ask the Lead Road Captain before the KSU time so as not to delay the ride.

If you have a preference for the inside or outside, near the front or rear, or to be near another rider, now is the time to discuss with the Road Captain. The Road Captain has the discretion to place any rider in any position in the group. Positions within the group should be maintained throughout the ride (unscheduled and emergency stops excepted, discussed below).

## Ride Briefing

About 5 minutes prior to the KSU time, the Lead Road Captain will perform a Ride Briefing for the group. Please be sure to be present for the briefing – your absence will disrupt and possibly delay the ride. This briefing will inform the group of the ride plan, destination, route, planned stops, etc. Any special requests should be brought up here.

## Novice Rider Position

During the ride briefing, the Road Captain will typically ask if any riders are novice or uncomfortable with the riding protocol. **No rider should ride above their ability or comfort level**, so this is the time to let the Road Captain know. Novice riders will be placed at the rear of the group, just in front of the Sweep Road Captain. This will allow the group to stay together and tight, and any separation caused by the novice will not affect the group.

## Hand Signals

The Road Captain will use certain hand signals to give the group a heads-up on something coming up. Each rider in the group should repeat these signals, so the riders behind them will be aware as well.

A standard set of hand signals is shown in Figure 1. In addition to these, GTHOG uses the left arm pointing over the head to the right to indicate a hazard coming up on the right side, such as a pedestrian, bicyclist or auto beside the road.

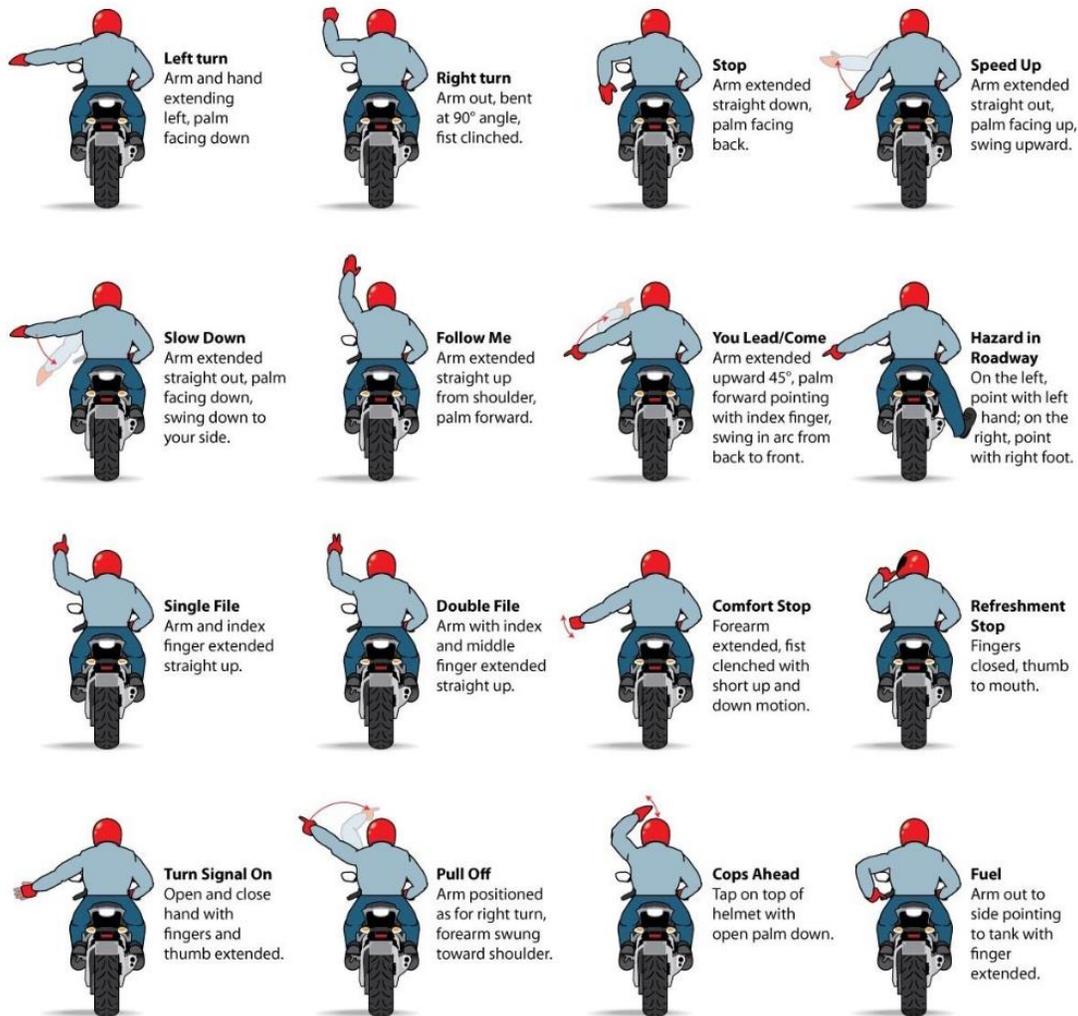


Figure 1. Standard rider hand signals.

## Rider Formations and Distances

### Riding Speed

The Lead Road Captain will typically set a speed consistent with the local speed limit as well as the abilities of the least experienced rider in the group. All group riders should endeavor to maintain a consistent speed with as little “rubber-banding” as possible. Try to maintain a consistent 2 seconds from the rider directly in front of you, as described below. Keeping the group together and “tight” is important to minimize dangers of another vehicle attempting to pass or cut in to the group.



## Stagger Formation

The normal default riding formation is “staggered.” This position is shown in Figure 2. Each rider will attempt to maintain 2 seconds to the rider directly ahead in their “half-lane”. This will typically place them 1 second behind the rider in the stagger position ahead. Occasionally this spacing will vary to the stagger rider due to slight speed differences; the main point is not to ride up beside that rider. Each rider should always have an “out” to maneuver if needed to avoid a road hazard or as needed. However, each rider should maintain their half-lane if possible. Note that maneuvering to avoid a road hazard is possible because there won’t be anybody beside you. Also, braking to avoid a road hazard is possible because the rider behind will be 2 seconds behind. However, avoid braking and maneuvering at the same time if at all possible! This causes a major disruption in the formation and can be quite dangerous. A single-file formation with a minimum 2-second following distance is preferred on a curvy road, under conditions of poor visibility or poor road surfaces, entering/leaving highways, or other situations where an increased space cushion or maneuvering room is needed.

If the group has been riding in single-file formation, and the Road Captain wishes to re-form the staggered formation, he will show two fingers in the air. As always, this signal should be passed by each rider to the rear.

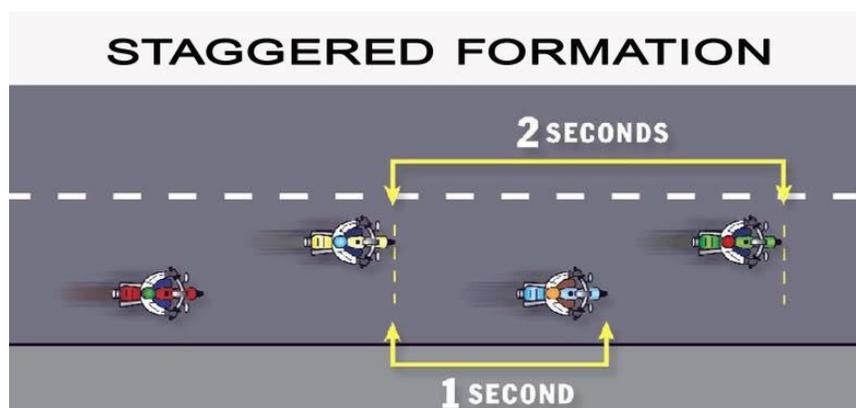


Figure 2. Standard staggered riding formation and spacing.

## Single File Formation

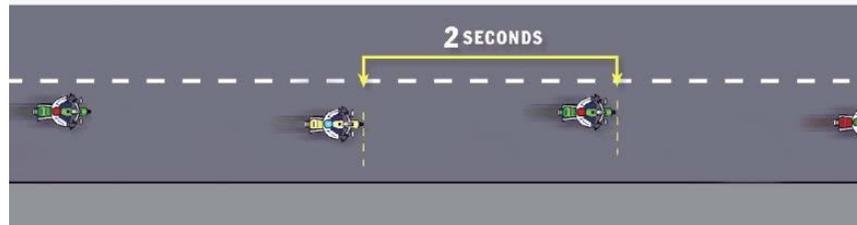
Occasionally the Lead Road Captain will signal for “single file” by holding one finger in the air (not that finger). This may be due to twisty roads, or perhaps the road condition is not ideal for staggered riding. As usual, all riders should repeat that signal so the entire group gets the single file command. Each rider moves into a single file formation and adjusts separation to 2 seconds.

Note that single file does NOT mean each rider MUST follow exactly in the tracks of the previous rider. This may be a good idea, as the previous rider will have better visibility to oncoming hazards, but always use the lane to maintain safety.

The main difference between single file and staggered is that in single file you are expected to use the entire lane to maneuver, whereas in staggered formation you are expected to maintain your half-lane whenever possible. In both cases, strive to keep 2 seconds to the rider ahead.



## SINGLE FILE



### Lane Changes, Passing, Urban riding

**GTHOG does not endorse lane splitting**, or riding between lanes of traffic. It is illegal in Idaho, legal in California and several other states. **GTHOG also does not endorse lane sharing**, or riding side-by-side. This reduces the ability of either rider to avoid road hazards, and can cause accidents.

#### Lane Changes

On a road with multiple lanes in the direction of travel, lane changes are initiated by the Road Captains. The Lead Road Captain will use his turn signal to indicate he wishes to change lanes. All riders should use their turn signal as well, but do not change lanes until the Lead Road Captain changes lanes. The Sweep Road Captain will see the signals and will move into the new lane to protect it, then the Lead Road Captain will move into that lane, followed by the rest of the group. As a group rider, your responsibility is to wait for the Lead Road Captain to change lanes before changing yourself. Try to make all lane changes smooth, without abrupt maneuvers.

Note that the Lead Road Captain may choose to remain in the right half-lane after making a lane change to the left. This allows him to better see the traffic in the right lane prior to moving back after making the pass. The rest of the group should remain in the same stagger formation that they were in prior to the lane change. This means the rider in the second position (or wing-man position) should remain in the right-half lane, and just back off to 2 seconds behind the Lead Road Captain as if in single-file formation. So, when the group moves from one lane to another, they remain in the same stagger formation rather than changing formation.

When the Lead Road Captain is ready to return to the original lane after making the pass, he will use his turn signal. All group riders should use their turn signal after the Lead Road Captain turns his signal on. The Sweep Road Captain will move back into the original lane first, to protect the lane for the group. As usual, wait until the Lead Road Captain changes lanes before following into that lane.

#### Passing

On a road with a single lane in the direction of travel, which includes many of our back roads in Idaho, passing another vehicle is done individually, not as a group. The Lead Road Captain will attempt to initiate the pass with as much room as possible for the group; however, it is vital that each rider evaluate the passing situation and act accordingly. **DO NOT "follow the leader"** in this situation. There are many cases where multiple riders will be passing at the same time – be sure to leave room after moving back into the right lane. Keep your speed up after making the pass to leave room for those



passing behind you to move over as well. Don't move over in front of the passed vehicle without leaving space for the others – you may trap them in the passing lane.

The Lead Road Captain may remain in the passing lane as long as possible to allow following riders to more easily see that the way is clear for them to pass. This is an aid; however, it is always the individual rider's responsibility to ensure it is safe to pass.

### City Riding

In town, the biggest risk is allowing space between riders which can let traffic separate the group. When this happens, the rider in front of the second group effectively becomes a Lead, but without full knowledge of the route or procedures. This can be a difficult situation.

1. If the group becomes split, or separated, and the front group is not in sight, the best thing to do is find a safe place to pull over (a parking lot, or someplace off the travel lanes) and let the Sweep Road Captain assume the lead. The first group will slow or stop ahead, and wait for the second group to catch up. There is no need to hurry.
2. In town, the best practice is to tighten the group as much as possible, while maintaining a safe separation. Maintain the stagger formation, but at slower speeds, the 2-second separation is a closer formation. This will typically keep traffic from splitting the group, but be sure to maintain awareness.
3. At stop signs or stop lights, we typically stop in a side-by-side formation, then as we take off from the stop, the stagger formation is formed again. This is the best way to keep the group together.
4. In any case, do not run stop signs or stop lights, or do any other illegal maneuvers. If you are caught by a light, and separated from the front group, don't worry – they will wait. If you lose sight of the front group, pull over in a parking lot and let the Sweep Road Captain lead the separated group until the entire group is together again.

### Gas, Food, Rest Stops, and Tolls

The Lead Road Captain will plan stops for gas, food, bio-breaks, etc. These may be discussed at the pre-ride briefing. Feel free to use the restroom, purchase food, water, etc., but try to be with the group when preparing to leave again.

### Unscheduled and/or Emergency Stops

Emergencies occur; they may be a flat tire, a poorly running engine, or just an urgent need for a bio break. If a rider needs to stop, he should slow and pull to the side of the road (hopefully in a safe location off the road), letting the rest of the group pass. The rest of the group should NOT slow or stop behind him; they should pass and keep up with the main group. The Sweep Road Captain will stop with the ailing rider and work out whatever help is needed. At some point ahead, the Lead Road Captain will pull off in a safe location with the group to wait for a report.



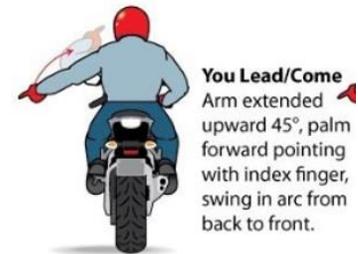
## Accidents

If an accident occurs, the unaffected riders in the group should continue ahead and pull over in a safe location off the road. The Sweep Road Captain will stop to deal with the accident. This minimizes the congestion and potential for additional accidents to occur. Wait for a Road Captain to assign duties, if needed, such as flagging traffic, calling for assistance, etc.

## Splitting off at end of ride

We will usually all meet at the beginning of the ride at the meeting place denoted by the Lead Road Captain when he submits the plan to the group. At the end of the ride, however, each member may split off as desired to go home rather than congregating back at the meeting place. Be sure to coordinate with the Road Captains, so they don't think you've fallen behind and waste time waiting for you to catch up.

When a rider leaves the group, the formation is disrupted. GTHOG recommends maintaining your half-lane, and the rider with the "hole" in the forward stagger position to motion for the next rider to pass in their half-lane. This is the only time when side-by-side is acceptable, and in this case it will only be for a pass in which both parties are well aware is occurring. Then, the next rider back should motion the other rider to pass, and after that rider moves forward, then the next rider in series will motion for the next rider to pass, and so on. Only one pass should occur at any one time, and they should cascade backwards as described. As a reminder, the motion for passing is shown here.



## Summary

Grand Teton HOG is dedicated to providing a fun and exciting riding experience for its members. By following the guidelines within this document, our rides will be safe and enjoyable for everybody. If anybody in the group has any concerns with any aspect of the GTHOG Ride Guidelines, let your Chapter Director know and it will be addressed. The Chapter Director, and all officers, can be found on the GTHOG website at [www.GTHOG.org](http://www.GTHOG.org), or by contacting Chester's Grand Teton Harley Davidson in Idaho Falls at [www.tetonharley.com](http://www.tetonharley.com) or (208) 523-1464.

Now come out and ride!