

KISSENA

Welcome!

You have joined a fifty year tradition of bicycle racing and we hope you find this manual a useful introduction to racing and riding for Kissena Cycling Club.

“Everyone starts in the sandbox...”

We recognize that experts are made, not born - so take full advantage of this compilation of our collective wisdom. Much of it was gained at the school of hard knocks and we hope that this helps you learn faster than we did.

Be sure to pass it on with a smile and plenty of patience when the time comes...

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Code of Conduct

“Don’t do anything that would embarrass you, your family or your team.”

Remember, when you put on your uniform you are representing the entire club, past and present, as well as the sponsors who are proud to put their names next to ours.

Racing in local parks is a privilege, not a right, so please obey all local park rules.

Kissena has a proud tradition of racing strong, smart and honorably¹. We take pride in being ‘good wheels’ that our competitors fight to follow in races and safe, prepared riders in training.

What gear do I need?

“An ounce of prevention...”

You should always come prepared to a race or group ride with the following equipment:

1. Clean and well maintained bike
2. Flat kit (spare tube, tire levers, CO2 or pump, money)
3. Your phone in a waterproof case (ziplocks work great)
4. Appropriate food and water for the ride
5. Season and condition appropriate tires
6. No headphones
7. A well fitting helmet *on your head!*

Everyone is expected to arrive for races/rides with a clear head and condition/ skills appropriate for the ride:

¹ George Hincapie notwithstanding

1. No riding under the influence
2. Know your limits - the 130 mile Cat 1 “hammer-head special” is not for everyone
3. Group/Bunch riding or racing while distraught or distracted is a recipe for disaster.

How to Ride in a Group “Bunch Riding”

Whole books could be written on how to ride in a bunch, but the Morning Glory Club in Toronto has a great primer.

[Morning Glory Riding Rules and Ettiqtte](#)

Nutrition aka “Food and drink”

You could fill a small library with the books written on nutrition for athletes but here are the Cliff Notes:

1. Feeding yourself properly in a race or on a group ride is your responsibility. Only practice (self-experimentation) will tell you how much **you** need and can digest under which efforts
2. You don't really need to eat or drink during any event that lasts an hour or less
3. On longer rides you should be replenishing (drinking) about one bottle per hour just to keep up with fluid loss from sweat/breathing
4. Most people seem to max out at about 1 gram of carbohydrate/kg/hour
5. Never try a new (untested on you) nutrition strategy **on race day**²
6. Proper recovery food is critical - the good news is that chocolate milk works very well

² No matter how many warnings, everyone does this once...

Crashing

“It is not a matter of **‘if’** it is a matter of **‘when’**...”

Crashing is a part of riding and racing. Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Wear a goddamn helmet - it shouldn't need saying but when you are racing or training in team kit, you are expected to wear a helmet.
2. If you are in a bunch and a crash happens near you, do everything you can to **avoid gawking** - your bike goes where you look and if you are looking at a crash you likely to *become* a crash. Don't be afraid to shout “eyes front!” to remind others whose heads may be turning.
3. Wear a [Road ID](#) or similar product.
4. Make sure you have a reputable shop check your bike afterwards - between the adrenaline and the exhaustion of a race it is VERY hard to check your own bike carefully for damage.
5. Road rash - there is lots of commentary on how best to treat it but the two most important rules are:
 1. Keep it clean
 2. Keep it moist
6. Injury and Insurance: [Lucarelli and Castaldi](#) sponsor our park races year in and year out (they also race in them) and they are fantastic advocates for injured cyclists - if you do need help contact them as soon as possibly after your injury.

Flat tires - how to

“Flats happen”

If you are on your own or on a group ride, remember to measure twice and cut once - i.e. once you have the tire off run your finger around the inside to make sure there isn't a bit of glass or metal there that will puncture your next tube.

If the tire is badly damaged you can often fold a dollar bill to make an inner patch that will get you home.

Lastly, be careful to double check you have reseated the tire and tube carefully before inflating.

In a supported race there are protocols on how to flat and get a spare.

Road Race:

Put your arm up, call out “Flat!” and shift into your smallest cogs (front and rear) and drift to the RIGHT HAND SHOULDER of the road. Being in the small cogs will make it easier to get the wheel off. The wheel car will show up and you can enjoy some “pro” support.

Once the wheel is replaced take a moment to **CHECK BRAKES AND SKEWER** so that you aren't chasing back with a wheel that isn't properly attached to your bike.

Criterium:

Same drill (arm up, call out “Flat” etc) except in most Crits you can take a “free lap” for a mechanical and jump back in when the pack comes around again - so there is much less chasing. Keep in mind the free lap rule usually expires several laps before the finish.

The Rules - Velominati

<http://www.velominati.com/the-rules/>

Lingo/Vocabulary - Velominati

<http://www.velominati.com/the-lexicon/>

How to Race

1. Get a USAC [license](#) (Make sure the team says “Kissena Cycling Club”)
2. Go to [Bike Reg](#) and register for the race you want
3. Show up on time with a legal bike - pin your number(s) on the correct side and pedal really hard when the whistle blows
4. Obey the rules and respect your competitors - it’s a small world

Open vs Closed Races

Keep in mind that although most races are “open” i.e. anyone can enter, in New York there is a large club called “[CRCA](#)” that holds races just for its members (mostly in Central Park) who belong to “sub teams.”
(All of Kissena’s races are open.)

Show Up Early

It is always good to get to the race early. Leave yourself enough time to sign a waiver, pin your number on (if you’ve never done this before it will take longer than you think) and make a hurried stop (or two) at the portapotty.

Legal Bikes

Generally any modern road bike (not a [TT or Triathlon bike](#)) you buy at a shop will be legal but there are a couple of things that *really* matter:

1. “Bar ends” these are the plugs that fill the holes at the ends of your handlebars. Without these your handle bars can become “human core samplers” in a crash that leave devastating injuries.

2. Helmets - totally necessary. Make sure yours fits right.
3. Headphones - totally illegal.

The Rules

Racing bikes is fun - TONS OF FUN. So much fun we spend embarrassing amounts of time and money on it.

Like anything though, there are rules. Here are some of the important ones. [The full list is here](#)

1. Joggers lane: you **MUST NEVER RIDE IN THE JOGGERS LANE** during, before or after a park (Central/Prospect, etc) race. The relationship between bike racers and the City Parks goes back many years and is fragile. You do not want to be “that guy” (or gal) that broke the camel’s back by breaking park rules. This is harder to do when you are new and that open, uncrowded space beckons you as an oasis away from the spinning wheels and elbows of the peloton. **RESIST THE TEMPTATION!**
2. Joggers lane: you **MUST NEVER ATTACK THROUGH THE JOGGERS LANE** during a race. People will complain, they *will* report you and you *will* be disqualified and your team *will* have to decide if you really belong on the roster.
3. On longer road races there is often a “yellow line” rule because the race cannot close the roads. **TREAT THE YELLOW LINE AS IF IT WERE A JOGGERS LANE.** Not only do you risk disqualification and bringing shame to your team... you also risk a head-on collision with oncoming traffic. Be smart. It’s just bikes.
4. It is **ALWAYS A FAMILY SHOW.** Keep your junk in your bib shorts. If you gotta wee, find a porta-potty. There is no faster way to the bad side of a race promoter than to get him or her in trouble with the locals by pissing on or in front of someone or something you weren’t supposed to. There is no faster way to the door out of any team than to piss off (get it?) race promoters.

5. **BE KIND TO THE OFFICIALS** (and obey their instructions). Nobody knows why they do it, or how, but boy are we grateful. Ungodly hours, few thanks and cold coffee... bless their hearts for doing it! We get to race because they are willing to run the races for us in remote, fog filled, and chilly parks.
6. **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP IN THE SPRINT AND HOLD YOUR LINE.** Do not look down. Do not swerve. Do not "[close the door](#)." Do not take your hands off the bars. Do not use your head (or any part of you) as a weapon. The people we are racing with will be back week after week, month after month and year after year. Your team does not want to be known for causing crashes, your family does not want to get "that call" and you do not want to be "that guy."
"It's just bikes - be safe."

Racing Etiquette

It is amazing how much tradition there is to racing, and how many unspoken rules there are. Here are some of the ones you should know even from day one:

1. Cycling is a team sport, so *share the winnings* - you can't win cash until you are a Cat 4 but even a cliff bar can be split amongst the team that helped you earn it.
2. Do not swerve to avoid imperfections in the road. You *will* cause a crash. Ride over and through potholes, dropped bottles and small varmints.
3. Do not overlap wheels.
4. If you flat, or break your chain (or otherwise have a mechanical that prevents you from riding) do not swerve - just raise your arm and *slowly* move to the right side of the road and let people pass you.
5. Move to the outside/back of the pack before you farmer-blow.
6. Do not litter - put the power bar wrapper back in your jersey pocket - the extra gram won't slow you down :)
7. No swerving/wheel chopping! This isn't the warmup lap at Le Mans. If you want to drop someone then pedal harder.

How to Pin Your Number

1. Make sure you know which side to pin it to! Hint, ask an official.
2. [Read this tutorial](#). You want to sew the number to your shirt with pins.

Categories

USAC has [five categories](#) of racers (broadly speaking) where “Cat 5” racers are novices and “Cat 1” racers are really, really good. Beyond Cat 1 are the Professionals.

You will have a different Category fore each Discipline of Racing (Below)

Generally you can upgrade from 5 to 4 by completing enough races; after that you have to place and earn points to continue advancing.

Disciplines of racing

Road Racing

There are three main kinds of road race in the New York area:

1. Park races (central and prospect park) are held on weekend mornings - very early to avoid joggers and are anywhere from 20 to 40 miles long. These races usually favor sprinters because the climbs aren't very long.
2. “FBF” or Floyd Bennet Field races are criterium races (3 or 4 corner) held at the the [abandoned airfield](#) on the east coast of Brooklyn. Strong winds favor experienced, strong riders. These races are widely regarded as outstanding places to learn how to race. The pavement is very uneven so flats are common; bring extra tubes.
3. Out of town races - these are all the races you need to travel to. Generally these are longer, hillier road races and stage races that more closely resemble the races you see on TV.

Track Racing

There are really only two shows in town for track racing:

1. [Kissena Velodrome](#) also affectionately known as “old lumpy”
2. [Trexler Town](#) “T-Town” Velodrome

Cyclocross

“CX is Boss!” Cyclocross is America’s fastest growing competitive cycling sport. Held in parks in the fall and winter months it has been described as

...a steeplechase with modified road bikes on a 2km course over hill and dale; others consider it muddy hell. Its roots can be traced to the early 1900s, when French army private Daniel Gousseau would ride his bicycle along horseback-riding friends through the woods.

Mountain Biking

The “real” Knobby Tires! Off road, rough terrain - none, some of full suspension bikes.

Maintenance

Bike Parts

There are a lot of big & little parts on a modern bike and it helps to know what they are called. [Performance Bikes](#) has a great glossary.

Riding in the Cold

Winter riding should be approached just like Rain riding with a few extras (I've included the relevant bits from Rain Riding)

Fingers, toes and neck

Good gloves, good booties. Few things are as miserable as cold feet and fingers. Cold (and heat) injuries make you more prone to them in the future so if you've had frostbite (or worse) prior take extra care. (I have a thumb knuckle that

got frostbit riding to high school - 25 years ago - with no gloves and to this day it is the first piece of my hands to get cold) Some people bring a second set of dry gloves with them in case the first get wet. A good neck gaiter can also be a lifesaver.

Core

Keep your core warm. Proper layering is a topic unto itself that you can read up on all over the internet. Remember WET KILLS so you want to have a layering strategy that keeps you dry and warm.

Tires

Get some puncture proof (resistant) tires like Gatorskins as flats are both more frequent in the wet and the consequences are worse in the cold. Standing around on a winter day waiting for a friend to fix a flat as the sun quickly sets is flirting with hypothermia. Run the pressure a little lower than usual to help with traction, but not so low as to make pinch flats (when your wheel hits an obstacle and the rim itself punctures the tube) likely.

Eat and drink

While training in the cold you burn way more calories just keeping your body warm. Don't expect your peak power outputs in the very cold air as your body has other things (like surviving) to donate energy to. You also lose a ton of water to the dry winter air. For some reason most people find it hard to eat and drink in the very cold - so make it a task and commit to getting it done. Running out of calories on a cold day is no joke. Don't be afraid of the calorie bomb at your rest stop.

Come prepared

Do NOT head out on a winter ride without a spare tube, pump and CO₂, adequate clothing and food. If you have questions about what you should wear, ask a teammate. In the summertime not riding with a spare tube is

inconsiderate; in the winter it is dangerous. Some people carry 2 of each after Thanksgiving.

Wet is deadly

Do NOT let yourself get all sweaty and then chilled. This means you will have to either:

- a) find a magic winter suit that keeps you dry in all conditions or
- b) learn to feather your layers like an expert. When you start to overheat unzip, delayer, etc to keep yourself from getting wet.

This is a very important consideration if you flat in the midst of a savage interval. Clothing material matters – *cotton is the clothing of death*.

Pick rest stops wisely

If you have to stop try and pick carefully. Indoors make sure to get those layers OFF quickly so that you don't get sweaty (see WET above). Keep indoor stops short to avoid warming up and/or running out of daylight. If you're outdoors and have to stop in a hurry try and find a spot that is in the lee of the wind and preferably in the sun.

Hypothermia

Learn the signs and symptoms of hypothermia, and understand their consequences. Hypothermia is a **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**. Think about treatment options based on where you will be on your ride.

The most dangerous [symptoms](#) while on a ride are:

- 1) Loss of coordination
- 2) Confusion, difficulty thinking and poor decision making

Alcohol, drug use and age (over 65) are all risk factors as well. Old and liquored up is no way to go through life, son.

Stick to the plan

Given the poor decision making that comes quickly with hypothermia try to come up with a plan before you ride and stick to it. That plan may be as simple as:

If we're not back to the Alpine ranger station by 4pm we're pulling into the nearest store and calling a wife/family member/shop buddy for a pickup.

or

We won't do Alpine in either direction without one fresh tube and co2 each

or

If someone gets "too cold" we're turning them back with 2 teammates

or

We won't do River road on the way back unless we get there by 3pm

Having a plan that was thought out in the luxury of your living room (or coffee shop) with zero stress and all your wits about you beats HANDS DOWN whatever scheme you may come up with 3 hours into a cold ride where you didn't quite eat or drink enough and the sun is looking low.

Fenders

Buy one that protects the rider behind you (not just one of those "beaver tails" that only keep you dry) and learn how to install it. Nothing screams "I don't like my teammates!" like someone showing up for a group ride in the rain without a

fender. Nobody wants to eat your rooster tail of road sewage, so be considerate. Get a front fender to keep your legs dry.

Handling

Slow down and anticipate. Everything happens a little slower in the rain and snow, except falling. Your brakes can take a little longer to grab, you can't accelerate as fast and people turn more gingerly.

Metal

All those metal grates and plates on the ground can become slick as ice in the wet.

Spare the whip. When you jump on the gas you increase the likelihood of slipping out your rear wheel so pay attention and feather the power.

All these handling warnings apply not only to you but the other riders and drivers around you. Everyone has a little harder time in the wet and snow so give them that extra few seconds, inches etc.

Other riders

Keep an eye on the people around you. You may be sitting pretty but if the wheel you are following is about to do something silly because s/he is too tired, cold or wet then your day can be just as ruined as if you'd failed to prepare.

Riding in the Heat

As the hotter days of summer descend on us, it's a good time to review the dangers of heat and how to avoid them.

Performance

While most people know about the symptoms and risks of heat exhaustion and worse - heat stroke, not everyone knows how damaging even minor dehydration can be to your performance.

Losing 3% of your body mass through sweat can take [5% off your threshold](#).

Losing 5% of your body mass can lead to a catastrophic 45% loss in power.

That's what you can expect if you don't keep up with the increased fluid and electrolyte loss we all experience on these long, hot rides.

Guidelines for how much to drink range from 1 to 2 litres per hour depending on how much you weigh and how big a sweater you are but that is just the beginning of the story. You also need to replenish your lost electrolytes as well. There are lots of products on the market and I encourage experimenting until you find one that suits you well. Regardless of what you choose, plain water is a NO-NO in severe heat. Too much water without enough electrolytes can lead to a dangerous condition called [hyponatrimia](#).

Pay attention to your teammates and those around you. You may be doing ok but if the guy whose wheel you are sucking at 27 mph in a crowded pack is on the border of heat exhaustion you'd be best advised to stay clear of him as his coordination fades.

Heat exhaustion signs

- Profuse sweating (cyclists may not see this if the wind is strong enough)
- Weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Loss of coordination

You may be thinking "I experience all of these on most group rides!" but both Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke are no joke. They are both forms of Hyperthermia which can kill you. Learn the difference between a really hard ride and a serious heat-related injury creeping up on you. Ride often and observantly

with your teammates so you can spot symptoms before they get serious. Nobody ever begrudged a friendly “you drinking enough?” question from a teammate.

If you are in doubt, sit up, find a shady spot and catch up on fluid. A good question to ask yourself is “how many hours have we been out?” and “how many bottles have we drunk?” Assuming you are not drinking plain water you should be on a 1 bottle to 1 hour *minimum*.

Gear

Lastly your gear behaves differently in the heat too. If you max out your tire pressure inside your home before you venture out into the furnace, you run a greater risk of a blowout. Brakes and rims also get hotter than normal and the buckets of sweat you shed on your headset and top tube quickly find their way to your bottom bracket. Be sure to give your bike a good clean after a brutal day in the heat.

Other riders

Keep an eye on the people around you. You may be sitting pretty but if the wheel you are following is about to do something silly because s/he hasn't had enough to drink then your day can be just as ruined by the heat.

Riding in the Rain

Fingers and toes

Good gloves, good booties. Few things are as miserable as cold feet and fingers.

Tires

Get some puncture proof (resistant) tires like Gatorskins as flats are both more frequent in the wet. Standing around on a rainy day waiting for a friend to fix a flat is no fun. Run the pressure a little lower than usual to help with traction, but not so low as to make pinch flats (when your wheel hits an obstacle and the rim itself punctures the tube) likely.

Core

Keep your core warm. A rain slick will do if it is warm enough. Just as on a cold day, wet kills; if you work up a big sweat on a chilly wet day you don't want to stand still for too long or you'll cool off fast and be miserable.

Eyes

Wear glasses, even if they are clear. There is a lot of grit thrown up on rainy days so even with fenders your face will end up caked in whatever was on the road. You only have one set of eyes and unless the force is very, very strong with you it's going to be hard steering a bike safely without them.

Fenders

Buy one that protects the rider behind you (not just one of those "beaver tails" that only keep you dry) and learn how to install it. Nothing screams "screw you fellow teammates!" like someone showing up for a group ride in the rain without a fender. Nobody wants to eat your "rooster tail" of road sewage, so be considerate.

Handling

Slow down and anticipate. Everything happens a little slower in the rain, except falling. Your brakes can take a little longer to grab, you can't accelerate as fast and people turn more gingerly.

Metal

All those metal grates and plates on the ground can become slick as ice in the wet.

Paint

White & yellow painted lines on the road are often much slipperier than pavement so be careful when riding on or crossing them.

Spare the whip

When you jump on the gas you increase the likelihood of slipping out your rear wheel so pay attention and feather the power.

All these handling warnings apply not only to you but the other riders around you. Everyone has a little harder time in the wet so give them that extra few seconds, inches etc.