

## Top Ten Road Riding Tips

### Number Ten: Safety First

A mirror goes a long way toward safety on the road. I just got a radar for my bike (which is awesome), but old-school mirrors are also a good way of knowing what's coming up behind you. Don't forget to pack ID, a tube and CO2 canister, money and a phone as well. CAA Bike Assist is my back up plan, for extra peace of mind.

### Number Nine: Size Matters

Take the time to have your bike properly sized. If you have any aches and pains when you're riding that you're not supposed to have (i.e., neck, arms, back...) chances are these can be fixed with some changes to the way your bike is set up. A proper sizing will probably take around an hour with a specialist at a bike shop. It's time and money you won't regret spending.

### Number Eight: Communicate With Your Group

When you're riding in the front of a group, you are the 'eyes' of the people riding behind you. Indicate obstacles like pot holes or gravel using hand signals or in a pinch, yell it out. Let them know if roads you are crossing are clear, and when you are slowing or stopping. Riders further back can let the front of the group know about cars approaching from behind, and if anyone is 'falling off the back' of the group.

### Number Seven: Watch the Wind

Keep in mind that you can avoid dealing with some wind by strategically positioning yourself so that the rider in front of you blocks the wind. Depending on the direction, that might mean being right behind a rider, or more to the side. Of course you'll need to take your turn being the leader too! If you want to get really slick, adjust your rides to suit the wind. That might mean picking more sheltered routes on a windy day, or making sure you save the tailwind for the way home.

### Number Six: Spin It Out

It's a lot easier on your legs to spin more quickly, especially going up hills. Grinding it out in a big gear is okay once in a while, but over a long ride, your legs aren't going to be happy with you!

### Number Five: Change Positions

Try to tuck sometimes on the flats or going downhill, or stand to push up a hill. Changing positions can help with speed, but just as important, it gives you a chance to stretch out your body, which is a beautiful thing on longer rides.

### Number Four: Get the Gear

It's surprising what you can fit into the back pockets of riding jerseys. Don't worry about taking extra clothing, like a wind jacket, arm warmers, Buff... depending on the weather. Be prepared, and just stuff gear into your pockets if you don't need it.

### Number Three: Don't Forget the Food and Drinks

Make sure you have more than enough food and drinks, just in case. If you only have one water bottle holder, I recommend getting a second one. And keep a stash of high energy food in your back pocket. Remind yourself to eat and drink before you feel like you need it.

**Number Two: Off Season Training**

If you're looking for a way to stay in shape during the off season, consider extending your wheel time with gravel, mountain or fat biking. Or ask Santa for a smart trainer for your indoor winter riding. Virtual programs like Zwift provide a great workout, with tons of variety. You can even create opportunities to meet up virtually with your real life biking friends.

**And the *Number One* most important thing to know when you start riding:****Ride With A Group**

Caledon Cycling Club is the best! It's been sad that club-sanctioned group rides have become a casualty of the pandemic, but hopefully they will start up again sometime soon. Sunday club rides are fun, social and a good workout. Special location rides and events add to the adventure. Everyone is kind, supportive and patient, which makes it the perfect place for a new rider to thrive. Lastly, I'd like to give a shout out to my biking friends for helping me brainstorm ideas for this letter (and making biking so much fun!)

Yours in biking,

Jackie Brown