

# Essential guide to road cycling hand signals and calls

## Communication is key!

To newcomers it can be surprising, and potentially confusing, just how noisy a group of cyclists can be. With various signals and calls to warn the group of the hazards cyclists are exposed to, it's vital you know what each one means, while being able and confidently make a call when you're the rider on the front.

The nature of riding in a group means, if you're not on the front of the bunch, you may not always see a hazard, but a well-drilled group using signals and calls correctly will ensure all riders remain safe on the road.

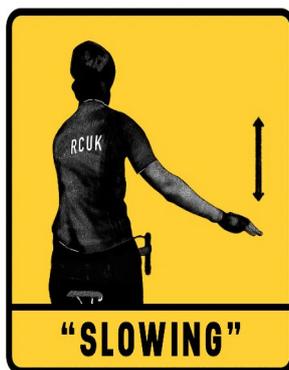
## Signals

### Slowing

With your arm outstretched, palm-down, so cyclists behind you get a clear view of your hand, move your arm and hand up and down at the wrist to indicate that you're about to slow. Use this indication when you're confident that you're going to be pulling the brakes in order to significantly slow your speed. This signal can quickly be changed into a stopping signal. See below

*Optional call: "Slowing!"*

In addition to the signal, and if braking is more urgent and you haven't got time to indicate safely, call out "Slowing!" loudly.



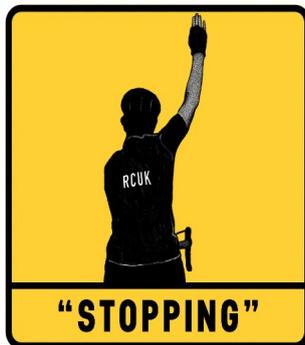
### Stopping

Either raise a hand straight above your head or alternatively hold your right arm outstretched and palm facing back, to indicate that you expect to stop. This indication supersedes the indication and call to slow.

*Optional call: "Stopping!"*

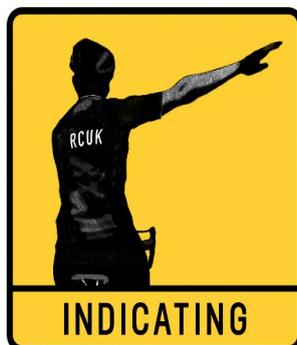
While optional, the call of "Stopping!" can be absolutely necessary if the nature of the stop is sudden or sharp, and if you therefore haven't got the time to make the signal. This can make the

difference between a safe stop and a potentially very dangerous situation, so ensure the call is **loud**, sharp and urgently made with as much notice as possible.



## Indicating

An essential signal for all road users. Outstretch your arm, elevated to 2 o'clock / 10 o'clock to indicate your intended turn. Ensure you make this indication **before** you edge out to the middle of the road in the case of a right turn, so other road users have plenty of notice of your intentions. Always have a quick look behind you to make sure those other road users have seen and reacted to your indication.

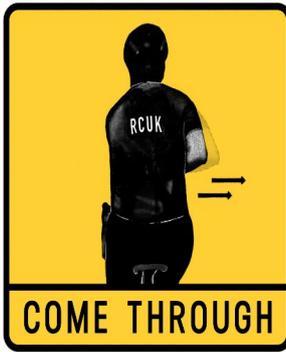


## Come through

We've all been there, where we've been doing far more than our fair share of the work at the front of the group, and have seemingly been left out to dry.

While riding, flick your elbow out on the side you want the wheelsucker(s) to come through, it is safest on the right hand side in the UK. Ease off the pedals very slightly; they'll get the message.

When coming through to take your turn at the front, **do not** burst through at increased speed. You have been resting and the rider at the front is probably tired!



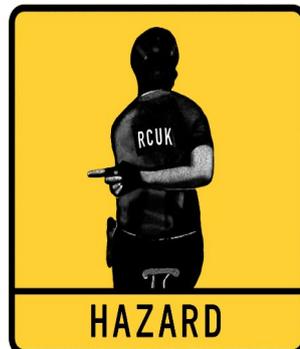
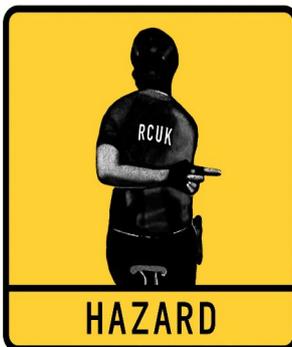
## Single file

Usually a group of cyclists will ride two by two rather than (what could be a long) single file, as it is easier for cars to pass. Where the road is narrowed e.g. by parked cars, switching to single file is advised. This can be indicated by the ride leader holding up a single finger and optionally calling “single file/single up”. To revert to two by two, the leader will indicate this by holding up 2 fingers (!) and calling “pair up”.



## Oncoming hazard – Move right or left

As you approach a physical oncoming hazard, take the arm on the side of the hazard behind you and point across your back in the direction the cyclist behind you will need to move in order to avoid it.



## Pothole or hazard on road

If you are approaching a hazard in the road, for example a pothole, drain cover or object, outstretch your arm on the side that the upcoming hazard will pass your bike and point to the floor. This will sometimes be accompanied by a circling motion – if there's time.

*Optional call: "Hole!", "Hole Right", "Hole Left", "Drain"*

For deep and sharp holes in the road, a clear and **loud** call of "hole" or "holes" will help notify your fellow cyclists of the severity of the upcoming hazard. Also indicate the side of the hole if appropriate.

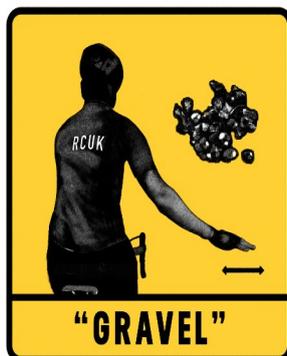


## Gravel/debris

For specific hazards where the effect will be a potentially slippery surface, for example gravel, mud, water, ice, take your outstretched hand, palm down and wave at the floor. This can also be used for a broken or unconsolidated road surface.

*Optional call: "Gravel!/Loose!/Ice!/etc."*

Calling out the nature of the hazard **loudly** can add extra important information to your fellow cyclists. Ensure you use clear, single word calls to avoid confusion.

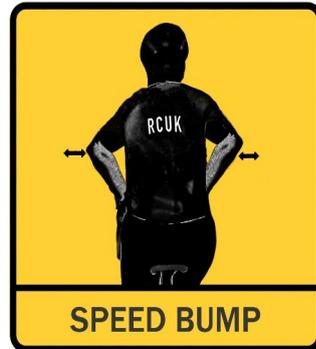
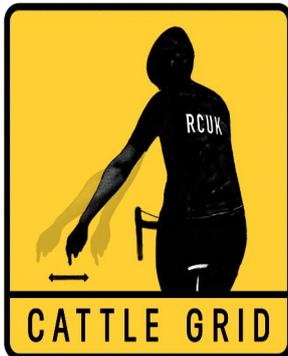


## Cattle grids, railway tracks, speed bumps

For hazards running across the road like rail tracks, cattle grids and speed bumps, take your hand behind you and draw a line horizontally back-and-forth across your back.

Specifically for speed bumps you can indicate by doing a double elbow flick.

If a hazard of this type is even close to being in line with the direction you're riding, such as tram lines, trace that line clearly in the direction it runs to point it out to your fellow cyclists and shout a warning. If a rider gets stuck in a tram line they will fall off unless they immediately bunny hop out of it.



### Thanks/acknowledgement

It's so easy to forget to do this, but makes the world of difference for road-user relations. If an oncoming vehicle has let you and/or your group have space to make a turn or have access to a narrow stretch of road first, acknowledge them with a raised hand of thanks and call "thank you" as you pass them. Making this sign obvious – for example with an additional smile or a raised thumb – can help 'humanise' you on the road, and conveys genuine appreciation for the actions of the other road user.

It's also a fine road cycling tradition, especially in the UK, that road cyclists acknowledge each other as they pass by. A nod of the head and smile, or a hand raised off the 'bar, will do the trick for oncoming riders, or just say "hello" if passing a cyclist on the same side of the road. Be nice out there!



# Calls

On top of the calls that function in tandem or in place of signals, here are others that rely solely on clear vocal communication.

## **“Clear left/right”**

Used when attempting to join the flow of traffic from a junction to indicate that the road is clear and the group can begin to move through the junction without stopping but, crucially, after slowing to check for traffic. As a result, this call should only be used when the junction offers a clear line of sight in both directions.

The absence of this call indicates the default position that a vehicle is approaching, and that it's unsafe to pull out of the junction or across the split road. Some riders also use a “traffic left/right” call to emphasise the presence of traffic in this situation, but make the call loud and understandable so not to confuse “car” with “clear”.

## **“On the left/right”**

For use between cyclists, this warns a rider in front of you where you are in relation to them on approach. For example, calling “on the right” or “on your right” as you approach a slower cyclist from their right flank, and vice versa.

## **“Car up”**

Warns of a car approaching from up the road, usually actively travelling towards the group. This call is used only when the road is narrower than a dual-direction single carriageway with enough space for vehicles to pass each other without avoiding action.

You can also tweak the call to indicate other common hazards in this scenario, such as bikes (pedal- or motor-powered), runners, tractors and horses.

## **“Car back”**

Warns of a car approaching from the rear of the group, which means it's also the only call which originates from the rear of the group. As a result, it's vital to call clearly so that other group members hear and pass it up the line as your voice won't travel as far forward against the flow of the bunch. Variations as with “car up” can be used, but in reality are only needed very rarely. It can be useful to warn the riders in front of you when a vehicle or peloton is passing or coming through e.g. “car/bikes passing on the right”

## **Navigation instructions**

We rely heavily of our cycle computers or mobile phones for navigation. Not everyone in the group will know the route or be following it on their device. Giving clear warnings ahead of turns, roundabouts, using cycle path or pavements can prevent half the group going down the wrong road!

Adapted from Road Cycling UK document

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