



Harley Owners Group

Chapter #1590

Chapter Member Orientation Guide

and

Group Riding Information

Welcome Member,

On behalf of the officers and members of the Heart of Dixie Chapter (HOD) of the Harley Owners Group, (HOG®) we welcome you. As a member, you will have many opportunities to become actively involved in chapter events. You may assist, design and/or lead a ride, assist with events, or become a chapter officer.

We have chapter rides, meetings, picnics, parties, Ladies of Harley (LOH) events, Meet and Eat functions, and charitable events that allow us to come together and have fun. These activities are designed for all members to socialize and network around our common passion for riding (and eating!!).

Please visit the chapter web site at www.heartofdixiehog.com and our Facebook page Heart of Dixie HOG@hodhogpelham for detailed information on all facets of chapter membership, chapter calendar and event listings. You won't miss out on any fun.

This Chapter guide is designed to help the new HOG® member become familiar with HOG® & Chapter operations. Becoming involved in chapter activities & events will allow you to enjoy your membership to the fullest.

Please feel free to ask any officer or road captain if you have questions concerning the chapter or your membership. They will gladly help you understand the functions of HOG® & welcome you into the family. This handbook hopefully will answer most of your questions.

First of all, one point of confusion for many new members is the distinction between National HOG® and your Chapter membership. Your National HOG® membership allows you to attend all events sponsored by HOG® which include rallies & pin stops. You also receive the HOG® magazine five times a year along with a lot of other benefits, such as discounts with Best Western Motels, AT&T, and Harley Insurance to name a few. Please go on line www.harley-davidson.com for detailed information regarding your National Membership and renewal. You must have a valid National HOG® membership before you can have a Chapter Membership – if your National HOG® membership expires or lapses, your Chapter membership will be invalid until it's renewed.

Your local chapter membership lets you attend all closed rides & events. Chapter membership is a calendar year membership from January 1st until December 31st. If you join in December for the following year you can enjoy a five dollar discount to your yearly Chapter dues. After December or if you join anytime during the year, the dues are \$25.

The chapter is one of the most important benefits of HOG® because: It brings us together with other Harley enthusiasts; it gives us a group to ride with; we learn safe riding techniques; we meet new friends; we travel to new & exciting places, especially restaurants and points of interest.

We have a meeting once a month and it is usually the first Thursday of the month. Food is usually served before the meeting for an additional charge. Food is served at 6 pm, new member orientation is at 6:30 pm & the meeting is at 7 pm. Occasionally we have a meeting on a Saturday, but all information is located on the chapter website. All chapter business, upcoming events & guest speakers will be presented at the meetings.

One of the events at a Chapter meeting is a 50/50 drawing. Tickets can be purchased at the meeting and the money raised is a form of raising funds to help with chapter expenses. Participation in this is voluntary with 50% of the funds are distributed to the ticket winner & the other 50% stays in the chapter.

Other events at Chapter meetings are door prizes and birthday announcements. There will be prizes for eligible participants.

Money raised through dues, fundraisers & other events go to pay for the chapter's expenses. These expenses include charities, parties, picnics & day to day operating expenses for the Chapter.

Finally let's talk about Chapter rides. This is where the fun part comes in. Almost all of our group rides leave from Heart of Dixie Harley Davidson & upcoming ride info is posted on our chapter website. They

leave at varying times & distance travelled varies also. Most information concerning ride & destination will be listed on the website. If you have questions regarding the ride, the Road Captain's name and phone number is listed for your reference. Be sure to arrive a few minutes before the rider briefing with a full tank of gas and an empty bladder. Also bring your current HOG® National Card with current Chapter sticker for the Road Captain to review – if you can't show you are a current chapter member you may have to sign a Guest Waiver.

This Orientation Guide will acquaint new members with the Heart of Dixie HOG® Chapter and group riding conduct. This guide is not meant to teach anyone how to ride. It presumes you have basic riding skills and that you are licensed to operate a motorcycle in the state of Alabama.

New and seasoned riders appreciate safe riding, and enjoy riding more when they know what to expect. This guide will provide basic information critical to a shared riding experience. We developed our practices to keep the group riding experience fun and safe for all. Riding with a group is exciting, but can also be dangerous if everyone is not riding in a safe and organized manner. Each rider is a key component within the group. Without a common understanding of necessary information, dangerous conditions can occur. We need to understand and abide by these guidelines.

Definitions

Head Road Captain: Responsibilities include but are not limited to: overseeing all riding criteria for chapter rides, maintains matrix for rides and membership participation, keeps chapter members and Road Captains up to date regarding changes in techniques in coordination with the Chapter Safety Officer, may be involved in educating chapter members about group riding techniques, may act as a guide for organized chapter rides, helps select additional Road Captains for the chapter, and works with the Chapter Director and General Manager of the Dealership regarding any riding/personal issues that may occur. Posts all closed rides on HOD HOG® website.

Road Captain: As designated by the Head Road Captain. They will help plan and lead authorized chapter rides providing the ride destination, the route, ride length, average speeds, and planned stops en route, etc. The Road Captain will provide assistance and information as needed to riders during the ride, and to the Head Road Captain who will officially post the ride.

Sweep: A rider, designated by the Road Captain, who will traditionally ride at the end of the group. The Sweep is responsible to notify the Road Captain of the status of the group when the group travels through an intersection or makes a lane change. The Sweep initially acquires a lane during lane changes when possible as directed by the Road Captain, they will stop and assist riders who may pull out of a group ride with an emergency, and notify the Road Captain of any changing conditions that may affect the riders.

Preparing to Ride

Mind-Set: Your mind-set must be prepared for safe riding. There's a lot to focus on when you are on a ride, especially a group ride. If your mind isn't on the ride, it puts you and those around you at risk. You need to know and ride in sync with your skill level and personal preferences. Understand the ride before you show up and make sure you are comfortable with the details.

You should know if the ride is too long or too short for you, if the weather too hot or too cold. Some rides are all interstate highways and some are all back country roads, while others are mixed. If you're not comfortable with running at interstate speeds for three hours, don't go on that ride. We're trying to plan rides for all tastes, and we strongly desire your input and ideas. Before each ride the Road Captain will discuss the length of the rides, average speeds, time to run, and the exact destinations. If you need additional details or information, contact the Head Road Captain, or Road Captain, for the ride you are interested in.

Punctuality: Arrive early for the ride; 15 minutes ought to do it. You will notice that we plan a rider's meeting 15 minutes before the departure time. Every chapter ride involves participants signing in ahead of time, and being present for the rider's meeting. If you arrive at the time the ride departs, you will cause a delay in the departure time. Please respect others by being ready to ride at the scheduled time.

Mechanical Safety: Before the ride, always give yourself enough time for the basics. Check your bike every time and every ride. Remember TCLOCK (Tires, wheels, controls, lights, accessories, oil & fluids, chassis, brakes, chain, sidestand) plus a general walk around.

Know the mechanical condition of your bike. Check your vehicle thoroughly. If something doesn't feel or sound right get it checked out, before the ride.

Personal and Passenger Safety: Dress appropriately for the weather. If you are cold and uncomfortable you may not be thinking about safety and that becomes a dangerous situation for you and everyone on the ride. Have what your passenger needs for comfort. For example, some experienced riders will tell you to wear a long-sleeved t-shirt or "golf sleeves" in the summer because it prevents sun burn and dehydration doesn't occur as quickly. You know what your personal physical needs are, and those of your passenger – listen to them. **Always come for a ride with a full gas tank and empty bladder.**

If you or your passenger have or are experiencing physical issues that may cause you to have to stop before a scheduled stop, please let the Road Captain or the Sweep know of that possibility before the ride starts – you may even want to ride near the back of the group so as to not alarm everyone else if you have to pull out of formation. It's OK – we're all human and we understand these things can occur – please don't be embarrassed. The goal is to have fun, enjoy each other's company and be as safe as possible. With a little communication and planning, it will make your ride less stressful and enjoyable for all.

Miscellaneous Considerations: Cell phone, water, snacks, rain gear, first-aid kit, basic tools, sun block, Chap Stick, and other personal items as necessary. You know it's the little things that make the ride comfortable.

Pre-ride Meetings

During the pre-ride meeting, the Road Captain will provide an overview of the trip: designation, stops, length of trip, and special conditions. The Road Captain will also designate the "Sweep" rider who will traditionally ride at the end of the group. The Sweep is responsible to ensure no one gets left behind. If for any reason the group is divided, the forward part of the group will find a safe place to pull over or reduce speed and wait for the remaining part of the group. If someone breaks down, or pulls over for any reason, the Sweep will pull over with them to assess the situation. At no time should you pull over. Stay with the group until a safe place is found to pull over. If the Sweep needs assistance he/she will radio or otherwise advise others to assist. This prevents creating an unsafe condition along the side of the road, which can needlessly endanger many.

Managing the Group

If there are a large number of riders, (i.e. 15 or more) the group may be broken up into two (or more) smaller groups. This is done to make the groups more manageable. Trying to get 25 or 30 bikes through an intersection or onto an interstate as a single group is next to impossible. In addition, a long string of riders trying to stay together will usually result in the "rubber-band" effect where the riders in the back are speeding-up to stay with the group and then grabbing the brakes to avoid rear-ending the guy or gal in front. If we need to break-up into multiple groups, we will try to maintain 8 to 10 riders per sub-group. The Road Captain will make sure that the leaders of the sub-groups are aware of the route to be taken and will provide them route directions. Each group will not require a sweep rider; the sweep rider will ride at the end of the last group.

Ride at Your Skill Level

Know your limitations this is one of the most important concepts we'll discuss. Be honest with yourself and the group about your riding skill level. If you fail to recognize your level of skill, you can place yourself and others in danger. We were all inexperienced at one time. None of us were born experienced riders. This group may be where your journey begins. If you're a novice rider, or new to group riding, please let the Road Captain know when you arrive for your first ride. It will help ensure a fun and safe time for all. We want everyone to have a safe and positive experience.

Read the road: Look for silt, gravel, large pot holes and other obstacles which pose a hazard. If you are comfortable signaling the potential hazard to those behind you, then do so, but don't overdo it and point out every minor item on the road.

Be Responsible: You are responsible for yourself and your passenger. Regardless of what another rider does, never put yourself in a dangerous position. Take the time to verify safe conditions and the opportunity for accidents are minimized. You must be aware of surrounding conditions at all times.

Nobody is Left Behind: New riders are often concerned they will get left behind, or lost from the group. Please be assured that no one will be left behind. We employ various techniques, i.e., the breadcrumb technique for blind corners or keeping the group together. The Sweep will assist in overseeing the group staying together. The use of CB radios between the Road Captain and Sweep is now fundamental in this process.

Staggered Formation

Staggered Formation (Figure 1) –Group riders need appropriate spacing and a staggered formation is a way to achieve maximum safety. (Sometimes we also use single file to safely pass physical obstructions, bicycle riders, parked trucks, or single lane bridges, etc.)

Roadway Positions: The Road Captain will take a position at the front of the group on the left side, closest to the center line of the lane. Approximately one second behind and to the right, closest to the right side of the lane is the next rider. Directly behind the Road Captain, with a two second interval is the third rider, and to his/her right, one second behind is rider number four and so on.

Safe Distances: Although considered the minimum, you should try to maintain this timing/distance as close as possible throughout the ride. No one is expecting perfection, especially through narrow turns or other conditions. This is one of the most difficult control issues for the novice or inexperienced group rider, as it takes continuous concentration – like flying in formation. In order to check your spacing simply pick out a fixed point on the

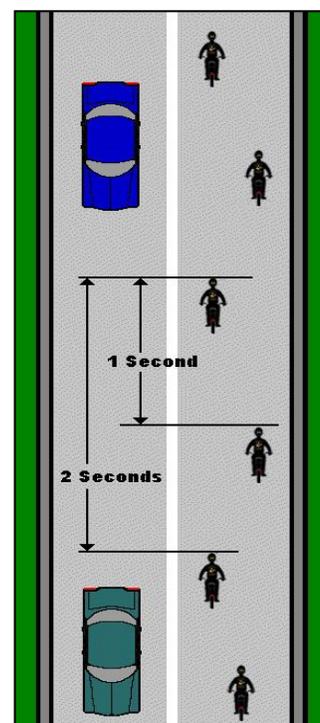


Figure 1

road or at the side of the road and when the person in front of you passes this point just count one one-thousand, two one-thousand, and then adjust your distance accordingly. If you're constantly falling back and then speeding up, this will have compounding effects further back in the group. Conversely, if you're constantly too close to those in front of you, your safe distance is diminished and this creates a great deal of discomfort with those around you. Drifting into or toward the center of the lane, or changing sides randomly, left or right, can compromise the safety of others, and destroy the formation.

Formation Continuity: This formation ensures adequate stopping distances in case the person in front of you encounters a problem. It provides room for the rider on opposite sides to move toward the center of the lane, and provides safe positioning. Riders should attempt to remain in the same position throughout the ride.

You should attempt to develop a comfort level with either side of the lane; however, if you are not comfortable with one side or the other, position yourself accordingly at the start of the ride. Should something occur during the ride which forces a rider to drop out for whatever reason, maintain your position until the next stopping point or until a safe adjustment can be made.

Changing Lanes

One of the most difficult maneuvers to master is the **lane change with a group** – partly because we don't get to practice it much, and executing it is time-consuming. Imagine you're driving in your car in the number one lane, and as you start to pass a group of fifteen motorcycles on your right, in the number two lane, suddenly the motorcycles change into your lane without any warning and without hardly signaling their intention. Suddenly it looks like a mob that's out of control and without any leadership – “every man for himself” – you have to brake hard to avoid hitting one of the motorcycles or possibly more - with this dangerous display of a lack of skill and control, accidents can easily occur, not to mention the negative impression left on others.

Oftentimes, riders are so excited or concerned they'll miss a turn or lose position, they rush to move over as soon as they see the signal from the rider in front of them. Often times they don't completely check the lane, or worse case, cut someone off. This can create an extremely dangerous situation because of other vehicles (cars and trucks) behind them and the size of our group. This is how the maneuver should work:

The Road Captain signals the intention to change lanes and notifies the sweep on the radio if available. As the signals move rearward and/or the Sweep is in radio communication with the Road Captain, the Sweep sees and/or hears the intended direction, then he/she will move over as soon as it is safe along with the other riders. The last rider to move over is typically the Road Captain, ensuring visually and/or via radio that all have moved over without incident. Although it sounds easy, it rarely works out this way.

Alcohol Policy

In order for the chapter to meet its vision to “Ride and Have Fun”, we all need to behave in a safe and responsible manner. This includes responsible riding habits (i.e. no wheel-stands riding down Rt 280), dealing responsibly with other members, and being responsible in your use of alcohol.

The policy of the Heart of Dixie Chapter, Harley Owners Group, #1590, regarding alcohol is:

- If it is determined by the Road Captain that someone has been drinking before a chapter ride, they will not be permitted to join the ride.
- Anyone drinking during a Chapter ride will be asked to leave the ride by the Road Captain and will not be allowed to continue with the group. We can't prevent someone from using the same route the group takes, but we will insist that they don't ride in proximity to the group. If necessary, we will attempt to obtain alternate transportation if it is determined they can't operate a motorcycle safely. Ultimately, the party in question is primarily responsible for their transportation and safety.
- The ride is not considered over until the published final destination has been reached and kick stands are down, or the Road Captain determines the ride is over.
- All participants on the ride are responsible to find their own route home after the ride is completed. Return route information will be provided. Those riders returning together do so at their own choosing and not because they don't know how to return individually.
- This policy will be discussed during the pre-ride meeting to ensure everyone is reminded of the policy.
- **This is a zero-tolerance policy that applies to members and guests.**

Again, this policy is based on everyone being a responsible adult and not doing anything that would endanger themselves or any other members during chapter events. The bottom line is that we want group riding to be an enjoyable experience for everyone. Concerns about alcohol use by other members during a ride do not help make this an enjoyable experience. Our policy is that any alcohol use be restricted until after the ride is completed.

Final Thoughts

This guide has attempted to acquaint you with some of the information you'll need to successfully participate in group riding with our HOG® chapter, and identify the characteristics of a safe motorcycle operator. Also, Figure 2 shows the most commonly used hand signals for your reference. In addition, it is suggested that you view the following:

Motorcycle Safety Foundation Guide to Group Riding Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erpkyD7SMfw>

TCLOCK Motorcycle Review Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGyJNzKT9Xo>

Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) Home Page:

<http://www.msf-usa.org/>.

If you cannot click on the above links to access the content, copy and paste the link into your browser.

Motorcycle safety courses, in our area, are offered at the Heart of Dixie Dealership, and the University of Montevallo.

Heart of Dixie Dealership offers the Harley-Davidson Riding Academy New Riders Course which is equivalent to the MSF (Motorcycle Safety Foundation) Basic Riders Course. Successful completion of this course qualifies you for the motorcycle endorsement for your Alabama license.

Courses offered at the University of Montevallo include the following:

Basic Bike Bonding Rider Course (BBRC)

The Basic Bike Bonding Rider Course is a 4-5 hour (approximately) riding course that provides practice in basic maneuvering skills. It is designed for students who have successfully completed the MSF Basic Riders Course or the Harley-Davidson Riding Academy New Riders Course. The Alabama Motorcycle Safety Program will provide the training motorcycles for the course.

Basic Rider Course 2 (BRC2)

Whether you have been riding for one year or throughout your lifetime, the BRC2 has something for you. This course is an additional step in Rider Education and Training and the perfect place to develop, discuss and/or improve your riding skills. During this course you will sharpen your skills for cornering, braking, and emergency maneuvers.

Ultimate Bike Bonding Rider Course (UBBRC)

The Ultimate Bike Bonding Rider Course (UBBRC) is a 4-5 hour (approximately) riding course that provides practice in maneuvering skills on your personal motorcycle. It is patterned after police training courses. It is designed for riders with an established skill set seeking to master slow speed maneuvering. It is led by professionally trained and certified instructors.

Advanced Rider Course (ARC)

The Advanced Rider Course (ARC) is the next step in Rider Education and Training and is designed for proficient and experienced motorcycle riders. This course is approximate 8 hours in length, and is the perfect means for further developing your rider self-assessment, risk management, rider behavior, riding strategies, and overall skill development, particularly in braking, cornering, and swerving procedures and techniques.

Please go on-line and contact the dealership or the University for details on these courses. You may also contact the Head Road Captain, Chapter Safety Officer, or Membership Officer for details.

Please plan to join us at the next chapter meeting, or the next group ride, or event. Don't be afraid to ask questions – we've got lots of experienced riders more than willing to assist you in becoming an active part of our group. See you on the road!

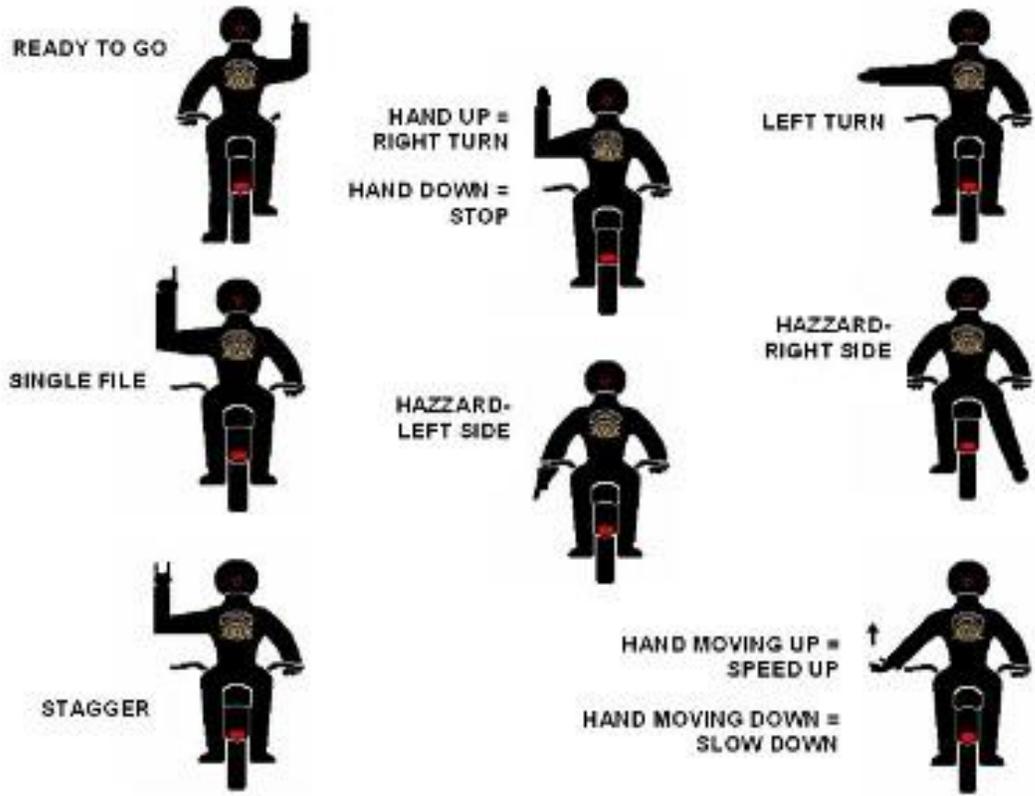


Figure 2