

New York Cycle Club

C-SIG FAQs

Our C-SIG training classes start in March! If you are still hesitant about joining, we say “Go for it!” To help you decide, here are answers to some frequently asked questions we have received by e-mail and phone.

Do I just show up, or must I register for the C-SIG?

In addition to joining the Club, you must register in advance for the C-SIG at our C-SIG webpage. February is a good time to register for SIGs. It gives us an idea of how many people want to join. It also gives us an accurate email address so we can get in touch with you, and an emergency phone number, in the event of injury on the ride. After pre-registering, the C-SIG starts with an Orientation Meeting and a Classification Ride in March. The Classification is an evaluation of your cycling endurance, not a race. To participate in the C-SIG, it is essential that you do both the Orientation and the Classification. **Orientation will take place indoors on Saturday, March 12, 2016 starting at 9:30. The Classification Ride will take place on Saturday, March 19, 2016 starting at 9:30 (Rain Date: Sunday, March 20, 2016).**

What if I can't make every ride?

Because the C-SIG is a progressive series, we expect you to attend all 8 Saturday rides (or Sunday rain dates). Each week we teach new skills and ride a little farther and a little faster. So if you miss classes, it's unfair both to you and to your group when you fall behind in skills or endurance. We do allow for **two** absences. We know that life happens! But you must contact your ride leader in advance if you have to miss a class.

Please note: Participants must attend at least 6 out of the 8 rides. And if you miss the Orientation on March 12, plus one of the first two rides (March 26, or April 2); OR if you miss the first two of the first three rides (March 26, April 2, April 9), you will not be allowed to continue..

If you know, or think it likely, that you will miss more than 2 rides of the 8, or miss any 2 of the first 3, please wait until next year and give the space to someone else who can commit to the series.

C-SIG Ride Schedule for 2016 - (8 Saturdays): March 26 – May 14

How much biking experience do I need to join?

Many people have questions based on their own situation. For example: I'm a runner but new to biking; I just got a new bike; I'm an experienced rider but haven't ridden much in the past few years. All of these people can benefit from the SIG.

There are three minimum requirements for joining the C-SIG.

- First, you must know how to ride a bike (no, we're not kidding!) and be able to control the bike. This is for your own and the group's safety. During the SIG, you will get lots of time to improve your bike-handling ability.
- Second, you must be able to maintain a minimum average speed of 10 miles per hour for **5 laps** of the Prospect Park 3.35 mile loop. We'll divide riders into groups with different riding speeds, depending on each rider's Classification time. Last year's C-SIG group ranged from 11-15 miles per hour at the beginning. All groups start slower and ride for fewer miles, then gradually build up speed and distance.
- Third, you should be willing to commit to attending all 8 weeks, to follow instructions from your ride leaders, and to have fun. Being a beginner cyclist is an advantage, in a way. We like to start at the beginning and train you our way. Having no previous bad habits to overcome is good!

I'm an experienced rider but really want to learn more about the fundamentals of cycling. Will the C-SIG be too slow for me?

The C-SIG tries to give you a thorough grounding in all aspects of cycling, including basic group riding techniques, basic bike handling skills, and helps you develop a good relationship with your equipment, and with your body on the bike, including posture, pedaling, etc.

The B-SIG assumes you are somewhat experienced in shifting, braking, group riding fundamentals, and familiar with your equipment, either from the C-SIG or from your own experience, and moves forward from there to intermediate group riding techniques and longer and hillier rides.

The speed of the fastest C-SIG group is usually approximately the same as the slowest B-SIG group, but with less distance and fewer hills as appropriate for a novice. Keep in mind that, due to demand, you can only do the C-SIG once. Many graduates of both C- and B-SIGS participate in the various century and other events over the summer, as well as the numerous weekly NYCC rides.

Do I need special equipment?

You must wear a helmet on all rides and bring a spare tube that fits your size tires. Also at least one water bottle and a portable bike pump. If you have not yet bought a pump or bike tools, you can hold off until the C-SIG starts, when we'll talk about this.

It is a good idea to make time before the SIG starts to get your bike in good working condition: brakes adjusted, chain cleaned and lubed, tires pumped to recommended pressure.

Many cyclists visit their bike shops around now, when it's not too busy. A tuned bike should be good for several months of carefree riding.

Do I need a certain type of bicycle?

The C-SIG focuses on group road cycling skills and a road bike is highly recommended although hybrids and mountain bikes will be accepted.

If you are participating in the C- SIG with a hybrid or mountain bike, thinner and smoother tires in lieu of knobby tires are recommended to save energy. Any bike shop can advise you on the range of tire widths available for your wheel. Consistency and predictability are the foundation of safe group riding, therefore bikes with significant differences in handling from road bikes such as recumbents, tandems, single-gear bikes, and BMX bikes as well as aero bars, panniers and baskets will not be permitted in the C-SIG.

Most participants have road bikes, but the C-SIG can be done with hybrids. If you will be riding a hybrid, it is wise to tell your bike shop that you will be using it for a beginning road cycling class and ask them to put appropriate width tires on the existing wheels in place of extra-wide or knobby tires that come with some hybrids.

I'm getting clipless pedals. Can I start the SIG with them even though I haven't had time to practice using them?

If you are new to clipless pedals, it is best for you to start the SIG without them. They do take practice getting used to, and as we will be doing group riding, good bike control affects not just you, but others around you. Once the SIG starts, talk with your group's ride leaders for guidance on this and tips for making the transition to clipless, shall we say, painless?

How should I dress?

Dress in layers for cold weather: covered knees (tights plus windbreaker pants are good if it is in the 30s), layered tops with a windbreaker as the outer layer, gloves, something to cover your ears that fits under your helmet, two layers of socks and winter cycling boots or booties to cover your shoes. Many of you won't have cycling boots or booties, so try putting plastic bags over your socks inside your shoes or buy chemical toe warmers found at most sporting good stores. Keep in mind that even at, say, 40 degrees, with a combined 20 miles of wind and bike speed; your body perceives a wind chill temperature of 13 degrees! We will cover bike clothing in more detail during the SIG.

This is all free?

Well, not quite. We do say the SIG is free, but we require that you join the NYCC before the SIG begins. Later, we will also ask you to buy a Metro-North bike pass (we'll tell you how); it is \$5 and is good for a lifetime. The only other up front expenditure is the *C-SIG Orientation* (start of the C-SIG), where we ask you to pay \$15 to cover our expenses for the venue and lunch. During the SIG rides you will need lunch money and a valid MetroCard.

Additionally, we've added the requirement, similar to the B- and A-SIG, that you lead at least one club C ride sometime this summer following graduation. As mentioned on our homepage, we will give you lots of support on this!

We intend to provide you with the tools necessary to become capable and confident cyclists. We expect by the end of the SIG that you will make use of the skills you've developed and be equipped to lead rides for the Club.

How safe is group riding?

You're probably thinking of paceline riding, where you're inches from another cyclist's rear wheel and you keep your eyes on the road and that other wheel all the time. We teach single file group riding, and we start with a healthy gap between bikes. The gap will narrow over the course of the SIG, but you should be comfortable riding within the group. We spend a lot of time on audible and hand signals and correct positions on the road vis-à-vis left-hand turns, traffic circles, etc. Honestly, you'll feel like such a pro riding in a group.

Is it too late to get in shape for the SIG? How do I train?

If you can, try to get out and ride before March. There's nothing better than riding to train for riding! If you have access to a gym, the leg press, leg lift and hamstring curl machines are great for building leg muscles. Aerobic exercise on the treadmill or elliptical fitness cross-trainer will build lung capacity. At home, you can do squats, lunges, pushups and crunches to strengthen your legs, arms and lower back muscles.

How long does each ride last?

Plan to show up for the Classification Ride a little before 9:30am and to leave 2 to 3 hours later. Then, for 8 Saturdays, we'll ride all day, getting back around 5pm. So this is, in a way, the "cost" of doing a SIG – you hand over your Saturdays to us! Sundays are back-up days. But we don't think you'll regret it. You gain life-long skills and get to know a great bunch of fellow cyclists. (Not all rides will get back that late, but because of the possibility of mechanical problems or other delays, you should not count on being back before 5:00.)

Will I ride with the same people every week?

Yes, we divide riders into groups with different riding speeds, depending on each rider's classification time. You will ride with this group for the entire SIG.

How far and how fast will I ride?

Rides progress from approximately 15-20 miles to 55-60 miles. Groups typically begin at a pace of 11/12- 14 mph and progress to a pace of 14 – 16 mph towards the end of the C-SIG. (Pace is the speed ridden on flat terrain, NOT the overall average speed of the ride, which will be 2-3 mph slower.)

All groups start slower and ride for fewer miles, then gradually build up speed. The speed of the fastest C-SIG group is usually approximately the same as the slowest B-SIG group, but with less distance and fewer hills.

How hilly are the routes?

Generally flat and rolling terrain. Based on the Group's ability, some challenging hills may be included at the discretion of the ride leader. Ride leaders provide encouragement and regroup as necessary.

Can I repeat the C-SIG next year also?

The short answer is NO. Due to the popularity of the SIGs, we must limit participation to one time per person, thus allowing others the opportunity to enjoy the C-SIG experience. If you started the C-SIG but had to withdraw before the end of the series, due to injury or other excused absences, your case will be reviewed by the C-SIG leadership team and you may be allowed to retake the C-SIG.