HOW TO:

# GROUP DRIVE WITH THE BUCKEYE MIATA CLUB

BY GARY CLARK

April 4, 2024
This document is not copyright protected and may be shared freely.

Gary Clark
Social Director 2024
Buckeye Miata Club

# INTRO

Group drives with the Buckeye Miata Club are a fun day, or week, of driving your sports car with like minded people who share your interests. Always a great time!

- **Every group drive needs some organization** to ensure both safety and enjoyment. This booklet is the guide for participants. The leader of a group drive has many considerations beyond the other members on the drive. Those are shared in a separate booklet that should be reviewed and considered by those who are leading group drives. There is also a separate guide for leading driver meetings before an event.

- **If you are new to group drives,** this booklet will get you up to speed. **Even if you have previous experience,** this booklet shares how the Buckeye Miata Club organizes and leads their group drives so that we all work together to ensure a fun and safe day. Every drive leader wants every event participant to enjoy the day and return home safely.

# AVOID COLLISION AT ALL COSTS

Sailors learn this one during their 'Right of Way' classes. It applies just as clearly to group driving. Ok, class dismissed. Just kidding, but really most of the guidelines in this booklet are here to help you do just that - avoid collision. You'll also have a more enjoyable day too.

**Your role in the group.** It is important to understand that one of your roles as a group driver is to help the group as a whole move smoothly. It is an interesting exercise in group dynamics- join the Borg! What you do effects everyone behind you for sure; but the leader and the driver in front of you are also effected. We'll explain further later.

**Set your expectations.** It is important to understand the purpose of the drive so you can set your personal expectations. Where are we going, who are the other drivers, what is the stated purpose for the drive?

Suppose the drive description said 'a lazy drive along the river on shady narrow lanes'. You should expect to put your top down and enjoy the view and time with other members at the shady stops. This is not a time to be annoyed when the car in front of you slows to point to the ducks on the river. Just look at the ducks and maybe go 'Quack Quack'.

Conversely, suppose the drive description said 'This drive is to the most twisty and technically challenging roads in Ohio. These are the best Miata roads in the world for skilled drivers.' You should expect to be able to maintain legal speeds on those twisty, challenging roads. The group leader will expect that all of the group drivers will move along with the group safely while having a big grin on their faces. Everyone should drive their own cars though in a manner that they are comfortable. The group will still follow this group driving guide; so you won't lose the group.

# THE MEETUP

**Before you arrive at the Meetup**
**Car** - Check your tire pressure, and gas up your car.
**You** - Empty your tank, get snacks & water.
**No alcohol abuse or drugs that could impair your driving** before or during the drive.

**The Drivers Meeting**
will start about five or so minutes after the meetup time. The group leader will talk about driving safety, group driving guidelines, radios, fuel and pit stops, the route, issues along the route, drive times, and the destination..

**Car Organization**
The group leader may split the group into sub-groups, if necessary.

Note who are the group leader and sweep car. An experienced group driver is the sweep car at the rear. You should not position yourself behind the sweep car. The sweep car has a radio and will be the one who will break from the group to look for wandering cars or to assist with breakdowns etc.

If this is your first group drive, or your first with BMC, you should position yourself in the middle of the group; not at the rear.

Chat with the drivers who will be in front and behind you. Do they have radios? Confirm with your follower that you are watching out for them - they are your buddy.

**Communications**
The club uses walkie-talkies on Ch7 during drives. Radios are not required but they are convenient and safer. The drive leader and sweep, and others, are communicating if a car is stuck in traffic or at an intersection. They give notice of road hazards and 'watch outs'. They also point out attractions along the way. Color commentary along the way is no charge.

**Start**
Don't jockey for position during or after the start.
When leaving the parking lot, don't just follow the group; make sure you have clearance to enter the roadway. Give other cars room to pass; don't enforce that the group stays together too much. The group leader car will slow, or stop up the road, if necessary, to allow the group to reassemble.

# NAVIGATION

**We won't lose you**
There is no reason for you to be concerned that you will lose the group and be left behind. There is no need for unsafe passes and speeding to catch the group. We're all having a relaxing, fun day. No anxiety needed. Just follow these guidelines.

**If the leader car makes a wrong turn** and goes 'off-course', just follow them; this happens often and is just part of the 'three hour tour'. It is their job to reroute. Who knows they might have spotted a new tour attraction. Don't worry; those with radios will have no doubt loudly questioned the leaders sanity right away anyway. You'll likely hear a comment like 'hey have you been drinking again?'.

**Turns and intersections:**
Always turn on your turn signal ASAP. At any turn, make sure the driver behind you sees you turn and has their turn signal on too. Wait to be sure that they see you make the turn.

Follow the **Buddy** system and **Back-Marker** system.

**Buddy System**
Each car has their own lead and follower. Each driver, other than sweep, is a lead car for their follower. Your follower is your buddy. You are your lead car's buddy; they are looking for your turn signal too. You are responsible for your followers ability to find and follow the group. Always turn on your turn signal ASAP. That tells the driver in front of you that you know the group is turning. It also tells the driver behind you the same thing. Look to see if the driver behind you has his turn signal on too. That's because you are to keep track of the car behind you, while following the car in front of you.

**Back-Marker**
At the start of the drive, the sweep car is the Group's Back-Marker. But, If your follower car misses a turn - stay put and visible at the intersection with your 4-ways on - radio the leader and sweep. *You are now the group's* ***back-marker.*** Your following driver should realize they can't see your car in front of them anymore and realize they missed the turn. Stay put and wait for when they turn around to look for you and where they missed the turn. The drivers behind them may have missed the turn too because they were following their own lead cars - unless they noticed you and turned. If the sweep car reaches you, they will stop and they will take your place as the group's back-marker again so you can proceed on to the rest of the group. Before you proceed, tell the sweep how many cars they are looking for. The car in front of you (your leader car) will have stopped up the road a bit too, to help you find your way back to the group. **Basically, 'Don't leave your wingman' (follower).**

**If you get 'stuck'** at a red light, busy intersection, train, etc, the car ahead of you (your leader car) will slow down or stop to wait for you. They will radio the leader and they will now be the group's **back-marker**. If the group made a turn, your leader car should still be sitting at the intersection waiting for you. Until you regain your leader car, check each intersection in case they are waiting for you at a turn. Radio the group leader if you think you've lost your leader car.

# DRIVING

### *Responsibility*

***You are still responsible for driving your own car.*** Regardless of what the group ahead of you has done, stop at red lights and stop signs. Don't blast thru yellows/reds just to stay with the group. Don't speed to catch-up with the group. The group will be slowing to wait for you. At a busy intersection or red light, the leader will already know that you will take time to get through and catch up. The leader will slow the whole group down to give you time - so no rush or panic needed.

## ACD - Assured Clear Distance

Maintain a minimum two second clearance which increases with speed and conditions. Keep the group together though; don't be 'that driver' who always lags way behind with the car in front of you always wondering what's wrong and the cars behind you worried that they are losing the group. This is not safer; it just causes anxiety within the group. Conversely, don't tailgate; you won't lose the group.

## Intersections

At intersections, watch for cross-traffic; don't just follow the group - drive your own car. Again, your lead car will wait for you. The group leader car will slow the group down at busy intersections so that you don't have to speed to catch up with the group. At four-way intersections, don't assume that the other car wants to wait for the whole group to go through the intersection. We often see friendly drivers do this; but don't make them do it.

## Passing and traffic

### Group passing

You should not pass other group cars unless a group car pulls over and waves you by. You should radio the lead car and tell them why the car stopped. The stopped car's lead car will slow and stop anyway; so there is really no reason to pass without finding out why they stopped.

You can change your position within the group line at any group stop; just discuss it with your new leader and follower cars so they know who their new buddies are.

If the group is passing a slow car, truck, buggy, bike, etc., don't just follow the group around; make sure you have room to pass. Wait for your lead car to complete their pass before you go. Watch behind you before passing in case an idiot is already passing. Provide the same clearance and courtesy that you would if you were alone. Again, drive your own car.

### Non-Group (NG) cars passing and NG traffic

On busy two lane roads with a lot of traffic, we should spread out a bit and make it easy for cars to pass. Always slow down to make way for passing cars. We may split the group into sub-groups to make this safer and more convenient for NG cars.

If you are 'stuck' behind a slow truck etc., don't worry. The sweep car is on the radio with the leader car. Your lead car is also watching for you and won't make a turn without waiting for you as the group's

new Back-Marker. You don't need to do an unsafe pass and speed to catch the group. The group leader and your lead car know you are 'stuck' behind the truck and will wait for you and provide a Back-Marker for you. There is no reason to worry that you will lose the group and get left behind.

### Leaving the group

If you need to leave the group, make sure the driver behind you understands that he should now follow the car in front of you. Don't leave everyone behind you confused. Remember, they will follow you! It is best to leave after a rest stop so that you can let the drivers ahead and behind you know. Also inform the leader car. Radios make all of this easier.

### Breakdowns & Personal or Medical Issues

**Car** - The leader car &/or sweep car will have an air pump and jumper cables or a car starter.
**You** - The leader car &/or sweep car will have a basic first aid kit. If you need to stop for a personal reason during the drive, let your follower car know. If you need assistance, let us know; we won't leave you on your own.

## WE'LL HELP YOU PLAN A DRIVE

Several club members have been group riding bicycles or motorcycles or group driving in cars for, well, forever. If you want to lead an event, let us know. We can even help with route planning and creating a GPS route. The Club has several members who can help with leading the drive and for organization on the day of your event. Just contact the Social Director.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- ***You are still responsible for driving your own car.***
- *Drive within your own abilities and comfort level. This is for recreation, not competition.*
- Don't tailgate; but keep the gaps reasonable; keep the group together.
- 'Don't leave your wingman' (follower). Help your follower to stay with the group.
- Your follower is your buddy. You should know where they are.
- We won't leave you behind; so no need for unsafe passes or speeding to catch the group.
- If you need to leave the group, make sure your follower knows or they will follow you.
- If you have car or personal issues, the group will try to help; we won't leave you on your own.

- **The club does not ask or suggest that members break any traffic laws, exceed the speed limit, or drive in a manner with which they are not comfortable.**