

B-SIG Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to pre-register?

Yes, you must pre-register online to participate in the B-SIG. Online registration will become available in early February. There is a limit to the number of riders that we can accommodate and spaces fill up fast. Online registration will most likely close by late February. If registration is full, but you are given the option to put your name on the waitlist, you should do so. We often have last minute cancellations, and quite a number of those waitlisted actually do get into the program.

Do I need to sign up for a specific speed group (16, 17 or 18)?

No. In fact you can't. Part of the first day of the SIG will consist of having you ride 6 laps around Prospect Park, approximately 20 miles. We'll time you and, based upon your time, we'll assign you to a specific group. You'll be notified of your assignment prior to the second week.

What if I'm too fast or too slow for my assigned group?

Over the years, we've found that the timed laps method is pretty reliable. It's not infallible, however. Therefore, over the first couple of rides your leaders will observe you and move you to a more suitable group if they deem it appropriate. By the second or third ride, the groups will be pretty well "dialed in" with riders of very close skill and speed levels.

Can I request to be in the same group as my spouse/significant other/friend?

This is up to your individual leaders ... but it's generally not a good idea unless both riders are at the same skill and speed level. Even in cases where the faster or more skilled rider is willing to "tone it down" to ride in a group with their partner, we find that over the course of the 10 week program, the more skilled/faster rider becomes frustrated as they realize that they could have made greater use of their SIG experience, and made better progress as a rider, if they had been in the more appropriate group.

Can you give me a brief overview of how the B SIG is organized?

The B SIG is organized into 3 different pace levels -- 16, 17 and 18. (Bear in mind that in NYCC lingo, a pace level - 16, 17 or 18 - refers to the level at which the group can cruise along for extended distances over reasonably flat terrain. That's very different from an average speed, which is typically at least 3 miles slower.) Within each pace level, we'll place you in an individual team consisting of +/- 12 Siggies, a team leader and 2 - 3 co-leaders. Most of your interaction in the SIG will be with your leader and co-leaders, and of course the other riders in your group. Each pace level also has a captain who acts as sort of administrative head of each level.

The B SIG lasts for 10 weeks. The first week consists of an indoor orientation session lasting 60- 90 minutes, followed by a classification ride of 6 laps in Prospect Park. The next 9 weeks are a series of progressively longer rides.

We will also emphasize a specific skill each week. In fact, there's a formal "curriculum" for the B SIG, which is laid out in the B SIG Riders Guide. Before each ride, there will be a short

class to review that week's topic. You'll be responsible for reading the materials for each week's topic. (Don't worry; each lesson is only 4-5 pages.)

The skills are set up to be cumulative and progressive, like the rides themselves. This, combined with the fact that your group will consist of other riders more or less at the same level as you, will facilitate your progress and development as a rider over the 10 weeks.

The final ride of the SIG is the gorgeous graduation ride, highlighted by a climb to the top of Bear Mountain, a late lunch in Cold Spring and a Metro North train ride back to Manhattan.

Shortly after the graduation ride, you'll have a graduation ceremony at a monthly NYCC meeting.

Finally, there are a number of special events throughout the SIG calendar that you'll find out more about once the SIG gets underway.

Do I need to go on every ride?

B-SIG participants are permitted two absences from the 10-week series. You will need to attend at least 8 of the group rides to graduate from the SIG, including at least 1 of the first 2 group rides. If you know before signing up that you will need to miss more than 2 weeks, or both of the first 2 group rides, we would appreciate your not signing up and taking a place away from someone else.

In addition, if you do miss a ride, we strongly encourage you to try to make up that week's ride if at all possible. The rides are progressively longer and harder, so it's important to keep up.

Do we ride in inclement weather?

In the case of bad weather, the weekly Saturday ride will be postponed until Sunday. Missing a Sunday ride will not count as one of the 2 permitted absences. Inclement weather cancellation conditions are detailed in the B-SIG Riders Guide. We add one extra week into the B SIG calendar just in case an entire weekend has to be cancelled. If we don't need that extra week for a make-up, we'll use the 11th week for an optional extra ride.

Do I have to wear a helmet?

Yes, you must wear a helmet to participate in the B-SIG. No exceptions.

Do you permit aerobars?

No. If your bike is fitted with aerobars, you'll have to have them removed before the start of the SIG. No exceptions.

What time do the rides return to the city?

That's probably the most frequently asked question. Unfortunately, it's one of the hardest to answer. Here are some *very* general guidelines.

Early in the SIG, the rides are on the short side and usually conclude by around 3pm. (Bear in mind, that's an estimate for getting back to mid-Manhattan, not getting to your home.) By

the middle of the season, most groups get back between 4 - 5. The last 2 or 3 rides will probably not get back before 5. As with any ride, however, mechanicals, flats, health, weather and other issues can delay our anticipated return time, sometimes significantly. Therefore, you'll need to stay flexible. A good rule of thumb is to avoid making late afternoon or early evening plans on SIG ride days.

Will I ride with the same group each week?

Yes, and with the same set of leaders. You'll be grouped with riders with similar ability and speed levels. We find that groups progress faster and have more fun when everyone is at a roughly similar level.

How many riders are in a group?

A typical B SIG group will have 12 riders, one leader and 2-3 co-leaders .

What if my classification time is too fast or too slow for the B-SIG?

We will try to arrange for you to move up or down to the A or C SIG if your lap time warrants doing so and if there is room in those programs. On the other hand, we often have some riders who could easily qualify for the A SIG based on their speed, but prefer to stay in the B SIG in order to hone their skills further. In addition, a few individuals may be moved into the B from the A or C SIG over the first few weeks. Due to calendar issues and the way the programs are set up, however, it's usually more difficult to move up to the A SIG from the B, than to go from the A to the B. Therefore, if you really think you might qualify for the A, we suggest you sign up for the A. You and your A leaders will have a good sense after the first ride whether you should be moved to the B.

Do I need to have a road bike?

Most B SIG participants will have road bikes, but hybrids and cross bikes are permitted. However, your bike must have smooth tires and proper gearing, and not have suspension.

Can I use a tri-bike?

Yes, you can use a tri-bike, but only if you remove any aerobars. No exceptions! You will need to ride with your hands on the handlebars at all times in the group-riding style practiced by the B-SIG.

Can I use a fixed gear or single speed bike?

No. Most of the skills covered in the B-SIG require a bike with front and rear brakes, gearing and a freewheel.

Do you ride in those tight formations, with each rider inches behind the wheel of the rider in front? That seems scary!

That's called pacelining. We do teach pacelining in the B SIG, but not until about the 5th week for most groups. We'll have a class beforehand to teach the technique and then practice slowly on an 8 mile stretch of wide, straight and flat road. After that, whether and how much each individual group will actually ride in pacelines will be up to the group's leaders and their assessment of the group's ability and desire. (And, of course, we'll only do it where it's safe to do so). Not to worry, though: Since the SIG is specifically designed as a

progressive series, with each week's skills building on what you'll have mastered in prior weeks, you'll actually have 90% of pacelining technique down, without knowing it, before you even get to the formal class on pacelining. In short, everyone will come away learning how to paceline, but only those groups who have the necessary skill and desire will be using it, and only where it's safe to do so.

What else do I need to do to prepare for the SIG?

First, you must be a member of the NYCC.

Next, whatever type of bike you chose to use, the most important thing is to make sure it's in good working order by the time the SIG begins. This is very important! There's a maintenance checklist for this in the *B SIG Rider's Guide*. Don't wait; the time to check out your bike and make any adjustments is before the SIG begins!

You'll also want to make sure that you have warm riding clothes, since the weather can be quite chilly the first several rides. Pay particular attention to fingers, toes and your head!

Finally, of course, it's a good idea to start getting in shape before the SIG begins.

Can I repeat the B SIG if I'm already a graduate?

Yes, but, past B-SIG graduates are given waitlist status for placement into groups until newcomers are accommodated.

What actually happens after I register?

You'll get an automated response acknowledging your registration. That email - and numerous ones that follow - will give you all the detail about what to do next. If the program is filled up, be sure to register for the waiting list, as most folks on the wait-list do wind up getting in.

All of this is free?

Sort of. While there's no monetary cost for the SIG, we do require you to make certain commitments as your payback for all the SIG offers. First, you must be committed to the 10 week program (subject to the absence policy). Second, you must commit to the safety rules established by the club and the B SIG program. While we love to have fun (and the SIG will be a blast), we take safety very, very seriously. If at any time your leaders find that you are riding in an unsafe manner or in a manner that could jeopardize the safety of the group, we will ask you to leave the program. Third, you must accept the fact that, in being part of the SIG, you are acting as an ambassador of the club, and of cycling generally, and you must commit to conduct yourself accordingly.

Finally, you have to commit to giving back to the club in some manner. Becoming a ride leader (and you *will* be a qualified ride leader if you complete the SIG) is a great way to show your appreciation. But there are plenty of other opportunities to contribute as well, and we'll go over them during the program.

HOPE TO SEE YOU OUT THERE!