

A-19 SIG FAQs

How FAST Does the A-19 Go?

Eventually, around 19mph, however, just like the A-Classic, one thing you will hear from us over and over is “Smooth is Fast... Fast is Smooth.” We focus on teaching skills that produce predictable, smooth riders. With the development of those skills the speed comes.

We do establish a pre-determined goal on the flats, but the leaders monitor their groups and determine the pace, weighing safety and skills development ahead of the “target” pace. Our major focus is on skills development. You will ride very slowly with us when learning to paceline – the time you spend riding that slow will help foster the skills you will need to ride 19+ by the end of the SIG.

What Training Will I Need to Maintain in Order to Keep Up?

You will need to do some work – much like getting to Carnegie Hall – to graduate from the SIG, you must practice, practice, practice. We can give you some basic guidelines.

- You need to put in time on the bike. Quality is more important than quantity. That translates to getting out during the week for laps in the park with fellow SIG participants and leaders. There will be several options (morning and evening) to choose from. This is your key workout. Riding 3 or 4 laps of the park in a paceline will foster the skills and build the endurance better and faster than any longer solo ride you might do.

As a bonus, if you can fit it in, add another quality workout such as hill repeats each or every other week. Adding a longer, easier recovery ride once a week (most do this on Sundays) is also good practice. If you are short on time, opt for the shorter more intense workouts over the longer, slower rides.

- An important part of training is rest and fueling. Eat and drink well throughout the week. There are many resources for this and we will offer some suggestions throughout the program.
- Follow a hard workout with an easy recovery day and by all means you should make Fridays a rest day. The SIG is a commitment – train smart and you will do fine.

What Kind of Shape Do I Need to be in When the SIG Starts?

Having a training routine over the winter and especially as the SIG season approaches is highly recommended. But the truth is many leaders and participants in the past have started the SIG with very few (if any) winter miles under their belts.

The good news is that for the first few weeks the pace is moderate as we focus on skills. Using these early weeks to build stamina and practice the skills you learn each week during the SIG will be essential to your successful completion of the program. So don't let a lack of winter riding stop you from joining, but be prepared to work hard and train smart for 12 weeks once the SIG begins.

What is the Mentor Program and How Does It Work?

At the start of the 3rd week of the SIG, we randomly assign each participant a mentor.

This mentor will have several participant mentees. Your mentor will be your advocate, your coach, your confidant, your liaison to the leadership group, perhaps even your personal trainer. Keep in mind we are not professionals. We are volunteers who have either graduated from the A-19 or Classic SIGs and/or have proven skills and leadership abilities to have been chosen to help lead. We have a variety of experience, expertise and skill levels.

While your mentor is there to help you in any way to compete the SIG, the other leaders are there as resources for you to call on as well. We want you to succeed. We will certainly do our part – you will need to do yours.

If you have questions, issues, concerns, suggestions or are having trouble with a particular skill – speak up.

How are Weekly Groups Assigned?

Randomly for the first two rides, after that, you will alternate riding with your mentor on the remaining rides. By mixing things up a bit, we try to parallel the “real world” of NYCC Club rides.

Riding with different people on a regular basis affords you the opportunity to learn how to gauge a group, each individual's strengths and weaknesses, and work together each week to make your group smooth and efficient. This includes riding with different leaders who might offer different perspectives and feedback about your individual development.

How Many Rides am I Permitted to Miss?

The success of the A-19 SIG program stems from the commitment made by each of the participants. Commitment fosters consistency, which builds strength, skill and confidence, ultimately leading to groups of confident, skilled riders who navigate the challenges of the road predictably and safely. Everyone needs to remain on the same page in training and skills in order to ensure the progress and safety of the group.

Participants are expected to attend all sessions. Participants with more than two absences may be asked to leave the program.

Will I Get Dropped?

Of course! (... do you have a sense of humor? The real answer is: hopefully you will not get dropped). No one gets left behind for mechanical issues – we stop as a group and help each other get back on the road. Some of us are more skilled climbers than others, some are better on the flats. At times people fall back on hills (up and/or down) ... on rollers.

We foster a team environment and try to help those struggling hang on. Within reason, we try to pull together to keep the group together. But we cannot hold the entire group back if a rider struggles to keep up week after week. This will be very evident and in the best interest of the group and the individual, we will recommend to (or ask) that person to move to another more appropriate SIG.

I've heard rumors that the A-19 SIG leaders are a bunch of hammer heads and just like to go fast. Any truth to that?

Not really sure where or how that rumor started – maybe it used to be that way ... maybe just one year it was true and the label was formed and stuck...

How about this:

- Read the Message Board (check out what some of the leaders are all about)
- Read the A-19 SIG description on the SIG page
- Read through these FAQs
- Ask around... talk to people who know us, who've ridden with us....

If you come away with anything closely resembling that picture then stay away. We're pretty sure you will not and we will see you at orientation – and hopefully graduation!

I am a female and fear I will be in way over my head with much stronger/faster/fitter guys. Should I even attempt the A-SIG?

Some of our most competent participants have been female riders. Many of them over the years have become leaders in the SIGs (as well as the Club as a whole, we DO have a female Club president you know).

Some recent female A-19 SIG grads are back this year to lead YOU, others are currently racing and doing amazingly well – their experience was priceless in building a foundation for safe riding.

We'll do everything we can to help you succeed. You'll never know unless you try ... so come on out and join us!

How is the A-19 Different from the A-Classic?

The A-Classic features slightly longer distances and a somewhat faster pace than the A-19. To succeed and get the most out of both the A-19 and the Classic SIG programs, we recommend you make a commitment to midweek training (see **What Training Will I Need to Maintain in Order to Keep Up?**). All things being equal (including your conditioning and athletic ability), the A-Classic will require more midweek training than the A-19 to prepare you for the greater demands.

What will happen if I start and struggle... how will I know if this SIG is right for me?

We rely to some extent on a “self-selection” process. No time trial laps in the park to determine if you should start in the A-19 or the Classic – we let you make that initial call. Once the SIG starts, you will probably know if this is right for you, but in case you have some doubts the leaders will help you decide.

Many people have struggled early on and come through in flying colors on the backend. There is movement among the programs in the first couple of weeks, so if you’ve chosen one and belong in another, the transition is simple and easy to make.

I’ve heard the SIGs really push you. How hard do they push and how painful is it?

“No pain, no gain,” is one over-used cliché. And while there is some truth to it, the “pain” level in the SIG is relatively low. Tired, sore muscles? Sure, you’ll have that. Exhaustion? No – that’s to be avoided at all costs.

What is Your Policy on Cell Phone Usage During the SIG Rides?

It is important to have a means of communication with you in case you get separated from the group; therefore, we highly recommend you bring your cell phone with you. However the cell phone must not in any way interfere with your ability to focus on the road and on the challenges of the rides.

Therefore, cell phones must be kept out of sight (they are NOT to be mounted to any part of your bike) and are not to be used while riding. At rest stops you can check your messages and make any calls you need to make.

This policy applies to any such devices such as radios, TVs, iPods, etc. Let’s let common sense prevail here.

Every spring, I see hundreds of NYCC cyclists on the road with their name on the front and back of their helmet. Is that really necessary?

Yes, it is. Everyone, including the leaders, needs to wear their names prominently displayed on the front and back of their helmets every week for the duration of the SIGs.

We need to get to know each other by name and it is especially important for leaders to be able to identify participants when giving feedback and instruction. Plus, it’s much nicer being called by name. We know you will agree once you start riding with us.