

TRAIL RIDING ETIQUETTE RULES & REGULATIONS

- It is advisable to have information regarding the horse attached to the saddle or saddle pad.
- All riders must wear an ASTM-approved helmet and footwear with a heel.
- At least 1 rider in the group must carry a cellphone. Please have the ringer turned off and phone on vibrate. Hang your cellphone on your person, not your saddle. Please make sure the local ranger number is on the speed dial in case of an emergency.
- Please arrive at the parking location of the ride to allow for plenty of time for tacking up/socializing.
- Inform the trail leader if this is your first time at the location; first trail ride or if you are riding a green horse. If anyone is having trouble with his or her horse, is a novice, or has a green horse, please be extra considerate. Please tie a red ribbon on the tail of a kicker and a green ribbon on a green horse.
- The trail leader must discuss the terrain and what is expected on the ride with all members of the group BEFORE we set out. Make sure everyone understands what everybody else is capable of.
- Get in the habit of bringing water for your horse and self. Most locations do not provide access to a water supply.
- Wait until ALL riders have had a chance to mount and settle on their horses before riding out. Most horses will want to move off when the group leaves, and a horse feeling he's being left behind could cause him to buck his rider off.
- The trail leader must signal their intentions to everyone BEFORE they act. If you are leading the group, tell them at what point you are going to change gait, ask if they are ready, and when you get all positive responses, go forward with what was planned. This must be passed down the line until a positive response is given by all.
- Be aware of the horses around you, especially when the group is slowing to the walk. **Don't let your horse run up the butt of or run past another horse.**
- Do not pass the lead rider unless instructed to do so. Also, do not fall behind the "drag" rider (last scout rider bringing up the rear of the group) without letting him know you are doing so.
- NEVER PASS another horse at any gait (especially at the canter) without notifying the rider you are doing so.
- Maintain one horse-length distance between each horse to avoid being kicked or bitten. If you cannot control your horse enough to maintain the distance, politely ask the other rider to move out of the way at the first safe opportunity, then move your horse an appropriate distance from the other horses.
- When the trail leader slows down or stops, put up your hand up in the air as a visual signal at least 2-3 strides before, and THEN slow down or stop. This allows those behind you to be reactive and not plow into your rear.
- Call back to other riders of hazards in the trail such as holes, drop-offs, glass bottles, wire on the ground, low branches, snakes or cars. (ware hole) Don't hold onto branches as you go under or past because this causes the branch to sling back into the face of the next rider or horse.
- If you cross an obstacle (steep bank, creek, etc.), pause where you won't get run over until the horses behind you are fairly close, and then ride on. Horses are prone to worry about being left behind, and a dangerous section of trail is the last place you want them fretting.

- **Walk across pavement.**
- **Leave gates as you found them. If someone dismounts (i.e. to open a gate), move out of the way and wait until he or she is mounted before riding on.**
- **Do not run where you don't know the footing. Walk edges of fields, stay on the marked trail, do not create your own trail ride off the beat path. Ride in single file formation. On wide firebreak or fireroad trails, riders can ride side by side as long as they don't interfere with other users or get off the main trail. It's nice to ride beside a friend and point out sights along the route.**
- **RIDE WITH COMMON SENSE. Pay attention to the horses near you, especially if they are green/nervous/etc. so you are ready for anything. Recognize the capabilities and limitations of the other horses and riders. If you are the lead horse and are traveling at a fast gait, you need to be able to look over your shoulder and make sure everyone is following. Don't just get in the lead in a canter and turn a deaf ear to those behind you**
- **Any trail can be a multi-use trail. That means, keep your eyes and ears open for hikers, bikers, dogs, wildlife, etc. Especially when moving faster than a walk. Mountain bikes can be very scary, especially if they come from behind. It's considered impolite to fly around a corner and run over some hikers on the trail. DO be sure to thank people who stand aside for you to pass--you are an ambassador, and how politely you act will be a big factor in how many non-riders support horse access to trails in the future.**
- **The right-of-way rule is that biker yields to hiker. And both biker and hiker yield to horsemen. Although this is considered a trail rule, common courtesy and common sense should prevail and apply on all trails and in all situations.**
- **Give someone time to navigate an obstacle and make it through before you start your horse into it.**
- **If someone decides to go back, make sure they tell the rest of the group so you're not riding around searching for them.**
- **If you're at a trailhead, clean up your manure and bring it home if there's no manure disposal area. Don't sweep your manure out of your trailer and leave it at the trailhead. Nothing gives a worse impression to other users than piles of manure all over.**
- **Horses that are buddies should be kept together on rides. Buddies can be real problems if split up. So let buddies be together -- in the front or the back.**
- **Remember to be polite to other riders and your horse while enjoying the countryside. Keep a positive attitude even while things are not going exactly as planned, and you will find that you can enjoy a pleasant ride with a group of fellow horsemen.**