

# TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Hikers, mountain bikers and horse riders are increasingly sharing the trails. Some dangers exist when different users share the same trails. However, all recreationists who are aware of others and practice "*treading lightly*" will help reduce conflicts and environmental damage, making everyone's trip outdoors more enjoyable. In addition to the information below, there is a good article on trail etiquette on the [Bay Area Equestrian Network's site](#).

## TRAIL ETIQUETTE FOR EVERYONE

### 3 C's of Trail Etiquette

#### Hikers

#### Mountain Bikers

#### Horseback Riders

#### Trail Courtesy & Ethics for Everyone



## 3 C'S OF TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Certain etiquette practiced by all trail users is easy to do and contributes to a better outdoor experience for everyone. A simple way to adopt the essential habits is to remember the "**3 C's**" - ***Common Sense, Communication and Courtesy***".

### 1. COMMON SENSE

Common Sense begins with planning your trip and continues to your encounters with others on the trail. Although trail travelers' protocol calls for the most mobile to yield the right of way, assess the situations and use common sense to determine who can get out of the way most easily. In ideal cases, cyclists yield to everyone and hikers yield to horses. A loaded string of horses going uphill always has the right of way, and a cyclist climbing a steep pitch will appreciate the same consideration.

### 2. COMMUNICATION

A friendly word of greeting reassures horses and lets others know of your presence. Communicate with other trail users to warn them of dangers or adverse trail conditions, but also to share with them an exceptional view stop or picnic area that you found. It is a good idea to tell other travelers how many people are in your group, so they can prepare to pass the on the trail. Peer group policing is everyone's responsibility - if you see someone acting irresponsibly in the backcountry, warn him or her about the potential dangers.

### 3. COURTESY

Treat other trail users with courtesy. User conflicts can lead to trail closures - an unnecessary measure if people cooperate and practice the "3 C's".

## HIKERS

It is essential for everyone to be aware of the fragility of backcountry areas and to treat them with care. **"Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints"** is the backpackers motto which can be adopted by other trail users as well.

### Trail Tips for Hikers Encountering Horses

- Upon encountering horse riders, a group of hikers should all step off to the same side of the trail, the lower side if possible. Waiting on the uphill side may look like a predator waiting to pounce, and horses can be frightened by backpack equipment. Allow two to three meters for them to pass with a friendly exchange of greeting between hiker and horse rider to help calm the horses.

## MOUNTAIN BIKERS

Mountain biking is a relatively new way to enjoy the outdoors and is increasing in popularity. For the safety both of you as a rider and of others on the trail, certain aspects of bicycle travel require special attention.

### Trail Tips for Mountain Bikers Encountering Horses

- Always anticipate a horse or hiker around a blind curve and slow down. Prevent the sudden and unexpected encounters made possible by a bike's quick and silent approach by using your bell and a friendly greeting to let others know of your presence.
- Yield to hikers and equestrians. Get off your bike and move to the lower side of the trail to let horses pass because they are less easily spooked by an object lower than themselves. A clearance of two to three meters is recommended between you and the horse, depending on the terrain. In any case, follow passing directions given by the horse rider.

## HORSEBACK RIDERS

A steady, well trained horse is essential to a good trail ride. Encounters with other trail users will be smoother if your horse is an experienced mount.

### Trail Tips for Equestrians Encountering Other Trail Users

- When passing other trail users, steady your horse and give the hiker or cyclist clear instruction on how you would like them to stand clear. For example, ask them to stand on the low die of the trail, and to continue chatting.
- Yield to a loaded pack string, is the general rule. In steep rough country, downhill traffic yields the right of way to uphill travelers. But use common sense - whoever can pull off the trail easiest should do so.
- Warn others of danger on the trail. Wire, potholes and boggy areas can be a hazard to hikers and cyclists too.

## TRAIL COURTESY AND ETHICS FOR EVERYONE

- Check with local land managers for trail conditions and closures. Respect trail closures and use restrictions because sensitive environmental conditions or safety concerns may be the cause.
- Respect private property and "no trespassing" signs, and leave gates as you find them.
- Protect yourself from unnecessary slips and falls by staying on existing paths.
  - A successful trip is one without injury. You will also be helping to maintain your favorite trails by not short-cutting switchbacks and corners. It may be messy, but march or ride through a muddy spot and scramble over or under fallen trees to avoid causing multiple paths created by traveling on the edge of the trail.
- Look after the trails you travel on.
  - They are easily damaged and hard to maintain. When you encounter a trail maintenance problem, fix it if you can, if not, report it to the appropriate managing agency. The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC can assist you in determining who to contact.

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