



Trail Etiquette & Safety Guidelines

Tips for Hikers, Cyclists & Equestrians

General Guidelines & Etiquette Tips:

Respect the Trails. Clean up litter (pack out what is packed in), protect the trail environment, i.e. do not remove things that belong on the trails or blaze new trails.

Look and Listen. Become the eyes and ears of the trail system. Report problems, i.e. washed-out bridges or downed trees and debris, to the park's maintenance system.

Maintain the Trails. Give back to the trails you use--get involved with trail maintenance.

Share the Trails. Cyclists yield to all other trail users, and hikers yield to equestrians.

Be Courteous. On crowded trails, proceed single file.

Keep Things Moving. Slower traffic should keep to the right of the trail; faster users pass on the left.

Keep Things Clear. Do not pass on narrow bends; pass only when you can clearly see the trail and traffic approaching from the opposite direction.

No Surprises. When passing other trail users, provide adequate warning, and reduce speed.

Watch Out. Animals on the trails may act unexpectedly. If you are unsure about approaching someone with a horse or dog, ask the handler for guidance.

Watch Your Step. Tread gently when the trails are muddy; footprints, bicycle ruts, and hoofprints can damage the trails.

Watch Your Volume. If you choose to wear a stereo/headphone set, make sure that the volume neither prevents you from hearing what is happening around you, nor disturbs the other trail users.

Help Others. If you come upon an injured rider (horse or bicycle), get help immediately. If you come upon a riderless horse, do not approach the horse if you are uncomfortable with horses--seek professional help. If you choose to approach the horse, speak softly to let it know you are there--do not chase it. Approach it from the side.

In our increasingly urbanized society, more and more people are discovering the joys of public spaces and trails for their relaxation. Because of limited space, many trails are becoming "multi-use"--allowing for hikers, joggers, equestrians, and bikers.

When enjoying multi-use trails, it is imperative that each user respect the limitations and expectations of the other trail users of different disciplines. Many of the seeming insurmountable conflicts we are facing could be overcome if each user would take the time to familiarize him- or herself with the needs and objectives of fellow trail users. Each discipline has different needs for the enjoyment and safety of that sport. If we all work together, we can preserve multi-use trails for future generations to enjoy.

Etiquette for Hikers/Joggers

- Stay to the right of the trail. Pass on the left.
- Always yield to equestrians. If you see a horse and rider, say 'hello' in a calm, reassuring manner so the horse does not spook.
- If you wish to approach a horse, ask the rider for guidance. If you are with a child when you come upon a horse, hold the child's hand and stay toward the front (but not directly in front) of the horse. Do not approach a horse from behind. Most equestrians will gladly let you and your children pet their horses, but always ask permission first.
- Announce yourself when overtaking other trail users.
- When hiking/jogging with a dog, obey posted leash regulations. Keep a short leash on your dog when passing (or being passed by) horses, cyclists, or other pedestrians. Remember that other users may be frightened by your dog, and be unsure how to pass safely.
- Stay on marked trails. Do not cut new trails.

Etiquette for Cyclists

- Approach and pass other trail users with care--you are obligated to yield to all other trail users. When approaching from behind, announce yourself (and the number of other cyclists in your group) well in advance so that you do not spook other trail users, especially horses. Reduce speed in order to pass safely. Pass horses far to the left to avoid unintentional contact. Red ribbons in a horse's tail are an indication that it may kick if approached too closely from behind.
- Stay on approved bicycle trails.
- Obey posted speed limits and use common sense in crowded areas.
- Approach blind curves with caution--assume someone is coming in the opposite direction.
- Use the appropriate hand signals for turning, stopping, etc.
- Should your approach cause a horse to spook or become frightened, be considerate and stop. Wait for the rider to say that it is okay to pass.
- Be a positive reflection of the local cycling community.



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Etiquette for Equestrians

- Be sure your horse has the temperament and training for riding on congested public trails. Busy multi-use trails are not the proper place for schooling green horses.
- Advise other trail users of your horse's temperament, i.e. a horse with a tendency to kick should always wear a red ribbon in the tail, or a stallion should wear a yellow ribbon.
- Assume that not everyone will know what these ribbons mean, so be prepared to explain or take the necessary precautions to avoid trouble.
- Obey posted speed/gait limits, and use common sense in crowded areas (cantering/galloping on crowded trails endangers everyone).
- Move to the right to allow faster trail users to pass.
- Announce your intention to pass other trail users, and reduce speed in order to pass safely. Pass on the left only.
- Remove your horse from the trail if you begin experiencing behavior problems.
- Stay on equestrian approved trails.
- As a courtesy to others in your group, use appropriate hand signals for turning, slowing, etc. and give verbal warnings for dangers on the trail (i.e., holes, low branches, etc.)
- Remember that other trail users may not be familiar with horses or their reactions to new experiences. Your horse may be another trail user's introduction to horses and what you do is a reflection on the local horse community. Cheerfully answer questions about your horse. You are an ambassador for the entire equestrian community.
- If you trailer to a location, do not clean out your trailer in the parking area.
- On multiple-use trails, step off the trail (if possible) if your horse needs to relieve himself, or kick the droppings off the trail.

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Trail Stewardship

Maintaining equestrian trails is every rider's responsibility. Do not ride when the trails are wet. Do not litter. Do not leave straw and manure in the parking lot. Stay on the trail. Carry hand clippers to cut back growth. Carry a folding saw to remove broken limbs from the trail. Report problems to the park manager.

Volunteer

Check with your county's Parks and Recreation Office, or local State Park for volunteer opportunities. Volunteers are needed to build and maintain multi-use natural surface trails. Riding Clubs frequently hold trail work days. These can be fun and accomplish a great deal in just a few hours.

Grants

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

Administered by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), this program matches federal funds with local funds or in-kind contributions to implement trail projects. Projects can be sponsored by a county or municipal government, a private non-profit agency, a community group, or an individual (non-governmental agencies must secure an appropriate government agency as a co-sponsor). Federal funds administered by the State Highway Administration are available for up to 80% of the project cost, matched by at least 20% funding from the project sponsor. For more information visit: http://dnr.maryland.gov/land/md_trails/Funding_RTP.asp or phone: 410-545-8637 or 800-446-5962

Maryland Horse Industry Board Grant Program

The Maryland Horse Industry Board Grant Program helps to develop the Maryland horse industry by supporting research, education and promotion. For more information visit: http://www.mda.state.md.us/horseboard/pdf/grant_guidelines_2012.pdf or call 410-841-5798

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