

Trail Etiquette Reminders



Here are some trail etiquette reminders:

- Need to bring negative Coggins/health papers if traveling out of state, in state, negative Coggins needed only
- Wear an ASTM/SEI approved helmet
- Check cinch/girth before mounting/during ride
- Keep kickers in back; identify them
- Riders should not pass at a different speed than gait you are traveling at
- Let others know when passing and what side you will pass on; choose a clearing
- Keep at least a horse length back
- If passing a branch, do not let it swing back into next rider's/next rider's mounts face – can lift it straight up
- Do not hold onto a branch until you fall off!!
- If you hear a strange noise, turn your horse to face it when you hear it which will help the horse identify it and may prevent it from running off
- Hikers and bikers and vehicles should yield to you but may not: be prepared!
- Put riders with less experience in the middle of the group
- If you need an equipment adjustment, let lead rider know and stop the horses to fix it

- Never tie a horse with the bridle reins and tie only to safe/secure items on trail
- Lead horse should be well-trained
- Lead rider should be experienced and know where they are going
- Lead rider should block the trail with mount if in a safety situation or for tack adjustment while backup rider attends to situation
- Lead rider should alert other riders to gait transition, stops, wildlife, hazards on the trail
- Stallions, if allowed along, should be ridden in front and by person experienced in riding/handling stallions

Advice for crossing a road:



- If riding on road, ride facing traffic
- Wear clothing that is visible
- Consider a reflective vest
- Have horse acclimated to traffic
- If riding in a group, have last rider come to front and stand on yellow line, blocking road and stopping traffic for others
- Have everyone else walk directly across the road
- Be prepared for honking, stones flying, etc.

Advice for crossing streams:

- Have horse negotiate water in arena prior to going on the trail
- Sandwich effect – put the horse unfamiliar with water behind a horse that is familiar with water and in front of one that is familiar with water
- Look straight ahead

- Allow horse to touch water with hoof, take a drink, encourage it to go forward

Advice for riding uphill:

- Traveling uphill changes the horse's center of gravity, therefore lean forward slightly to center your weight over the horse
- Stay out of horse's way
- May need to use a breast collar to keep saddle in place

Advice for riding downhill:

- When going downhill the horse's center of gravity will change, the rider should lean slightly back to center your weight over the horse.
- Trust horse
- Look up and ahead

Advice for encountering wildlife/other trail users:

- Sudden emergence of wildlife/other users may cause a horse to spook
- Horses are prey animals therefore they have a flight instinct
- Keep a bold horse at the lead of the ride
- Teach horse to recover rapidly through ground handling and exercises
- Turn horse toward a noise if you hear it

Source: <https://horses.extension.org/>