

Trail Riding: Tips from Other Users

TRAIL RIDING ETIQUETTE

- Being thoughtful
Be courteous and don't tailgate or pull tree branches. Allow the horse in front of you to completely cross a ditch or creek before you begin to cross. If passing riders in the opposite direction, don't allow your horse to nose the others as they pass. Don't litter.
Note: These are all good things to abide by while on the trail. You want to make it a pleasant experience for those in your group and for others who will be coming along the trail behind you.
- Group riding
When on a trail ride, riders near the front should wait until the last horse has passed through a gate or across a creek. Rear horses sometimes "panic" and will gallop to catch up with the rest of the horses.
Note: Always make sure you keep a group together. Sometimes it might mean taking a slower pace or a less tricky obstacle, but if it means keeping everyone safe, it's always the right thing to do.
 - If you need to change speed, warn everyone in your group so as not to startle the other riders or horses. Stay at the speed and level of the least experienced rider in your group.
Note: Always call out instructions before actually implementing them (e.g. "Everyone prepare to trot!" or "Stopping!"). This will make everyone in the group aware of what is about to happen and give them time to prepare themselves and their horse.
- Low-hanging branches
Wear a helmet and be aware of your surroundings, especially branches.
Note: ALWAYS wear a helmet.
- Decide how fast to go
One fall day several friends and I were exploring a new trail. One of my friends sent her horse up a steep hill quickly. My mare started having a meltdown at being left behind so I let her go. When she got to the top of the hill she gave a couple of "I feel good" bucks. I was thrown off and kicked squarely in the head by one of her hooves. Luckily I was wearing a helmet and only had a headache. Riding companions should always agree beforehand what kind of riding will be done that day or at the moment. I have stopped letting my horse takeoff up a hill at a canter and always wear a helmet.
Note: Determining good trail etiquette and group riding rules is extremely important. This will help to keep everyone involved safe.

Source: <https://equine.ca.uky.edu/saddle-up-safely/publications>