

# Unwritten Rules

Here are some of the important things to know for new riders – this list may keep you from making an unwitting faux pas on the trail

BY JENNIFER ALLEN

**I HAVE COMPILED A LIST** of “unwritten rules” for endurance. (Thank you to all the contributors!) If you’re new (or even if you’re not), don’t get too upset reading all of these. This article may frighten you into believing you’ll do something wrong and make endurance riders mad! Have no fear—most people are generally forgiving and want to see you succeed and learn.

Plus, some of these might be classified more as “pet peeves” and less as unwritten rules. Nevertheless, I included them. My reasoning is that “nobody makes a rule unless somebody does something stupid.” So, these people wouldn’t say these things unless somebody has done it to them. Just observe some common courtesy while in camp and on the trail and you will be fine!

## At the Check or in Camp

- \* If you ask to ride with somebody (or are a junior), your “sponsor” should go in the pulse box and over the line first.
- \* If your horse just “has to” drink out of someone else’s bucket in camp make sure you refill it right away.
- \* Many times, people are preparing their own cooling stations with water buckets at vet checks. Don’t use their water! And if you do, immediately refill.
- \* Don’t help yourself to someone else’s gear/water/sponges at holds without checking first. Especially sponges—good way to share skin nasties!
- \* Bring an extra flake of hay so when your horse “shops,” there can be hay for all.
- \* Don’t bump or run your horse into other horses at the vet check when they are pulsing down (or any time, for that matter). This is bad sportsmanship and it’s somewhat obvious you are attempting to sabotage that horse and rider.
- \* At the holds, do not let your horse eat all of someone else’s mash, grain, hay whatever, especially if it’s obvious that the horse it’s been put out for hasn’t come through the hold yet.
- \* It’s OK to snatch a handful of hay from my bag at a vet check . . . but only if there’s

plenty there and you have intentions of sharing, too!

- \* Don’t ask if tack is on or off at a vet check. If nothing is said, you assume that tack can be left on. But it will always be off for final vetting.
- \* If you have been riding with someone and come into a vet check and your horse is pulsed down, wait for the other person before leaving the vet area.
- \* Keep a leash on your dogs. Most people don’t like them running around their horses (even if they’re dog-tolerant), eating the horse’s feed, their dog’s food, or their food, and peeing on their hay.
- \* Don’t ask the person next to you to clarify something said at a ride briefing while the briefing is going on. Wait until the end.

## On Trail

- \* If your competitor comes up behind you in a creek and their horse starts drinking, don’t blast off. Ask if it’s OK to leave (and even wait a few swallows before asking). Don’t be offended if they ask you to stay for a minute. (“Welfare of the horse!”)
- \* Slow down for all riders, unless you know them and their horses well; endurance riders usually have the right-of-way.
- \* Don’t block another rider who has obviously caught you. If somebody caught me, they are obviously going a faster pace than me, so I will always ask, “Would you like to pass?” Ride your own ride.
- \* When you are coming from behind, say, “Passing on the left (or right),” and allow the person time to move their horse over for you.
- \* Don’t pass someone, only to have your horse slow down and irritate the horse you passed by finding you grazing around the corner or moving slower again.
- \* If you have a horse come up behind you and the rider asks to pass, don’t say “no.” Find a place to pull out of the way but don’t hog the trail. It’s not always the people passing that are rude trail hogs out there.
- \* Try not to play jack rabbit. It can be really

irritating for someone to pass you, then walk, pass you, then walk . . .

- \* The person that dismounted to open and close the gate will be waited on by all that passed through while gate opener waited for them.
- \* When going up or down a steep hill, give the horse in front of you a bit of space so you don’t trample them. Some horses are slower or faster on hills.
- \* If you happen to be going down a long or steep hill, walk a bit at the bottom until those following get to the flat too.
- \* Always allow enough space (the ability to see the horse’s back feet in front of you)
- \* My horse is not your horse’s brakes!
- \* Do not let your horse nuzzle or chew on another horse at water troughs, or bump/run into a horse at the trough. It’s annoying to the horse and can be dangerous. This includes chewing the ears of the horse with its head down, drinking.
- \* Don’t sponge out of the tank. It makes the water salty and icky for other riders’ horses. [This depends on the ride—some rides will allow it; personal preference if you want your horse drinking out of the trough.]
- \* If you commit to ride with others, ride to the speed of the slowest horse. Also, if you’re riding together, stay together at the vet check.
- \* If you ride with someone for a major portion of the ride but make them do all the leading, don’t race them in at the finish line. The exception: if you try to do your share of the leading but they just speed up. Then have at it—just don’t make them pull you around and then take advantage of them.
- \* Don’t assume someone wants to “chat” just because you are riding with them. People often need to concentrate on the trail, the horse, etc., or may not hear well through their helmet.
- \* The understanding is that if you come upon endurance riders on the trail, you ask if you can join their group and not just tag along. And said group has the right to also ask you to move on if their horses are being affected by you joining them. ☐

Jen was introduced to—and subsequently hooked on!—endurance riding in 2007. Since then she has logged 2,395 endurance and 1,185 limited distance miles. Some of her endurance adventures and experiences can be found at her blog, [midwestendurancerider.wordpress.com](http://midwestendurancerider.wordpress.com).