

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Presented by Ponderosa Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Washington

Most of the trails we use are multi-use trails. We will meet hikers, bikers, ATV's, hikers with other animals like goats and llamas, as well as other equestrians and pack strings. We need to know the regulations and restrictions for the area we are using and acquire all necessary permits. Below are a few basic universal rules that all trail users should know, follow, and respect.

YIELDING RIGHT AWAY

- Bikers yield to Hikers
- Hikers and Bikers yield to Horses
- Hikers, Bikers, and Trail Horses yield to Pack Strings
- Horses going uphill have the right of way

ATV riders should come to a complete stop, turn off the engine and wait for the horse(s) to get a ways down the trail before proceeding

SHARE THE TRAIL

Be respectful of other users

- Stay to the right on wider paths
- Stopping for a rest – move off the trail so you are not blocking it for others (if possible)
- Greet the folks you meet – a simple “Hello”, “Nice Day”, or “Howdy” should suffice and a “Thank you” if they have to get off the trail
- Hikers should stand quietly while the horses pass, but may talk
- Hikers: ask them to say “Hello” so the horse knows you are a person especially if they have a back pack on
- Don't try to hide from the horse – he's predator oriented
- Hikers and bikers move off the trail to the down hill side (if safe)
- Horses tend to spook and head up hill, being on the uphill side can make you seem like a predator in the horse's mind
- Control all animals such as dogs, goats, llamas
- Pack it in, Pack it out

Equestrians may communicate instructions if the situation calls for something different than the standard protocol.

EQUESTRIANS

- Sign in at the trailhead – important so rangers know how many horsemen are using the area
- When parking at the trailhead leave room for others to park
- Keep the trailhead clean – pick up all manure and hay and toss it back in the trailer (this is a real big pet peeve with other non horse trail users).
- Keep your horse moving if he happens to take a poop – manure will biodegrade quicker if it is scattered than if it is in a pile (it may take a little training at first for this)
- Stay on the trail – do not cut switchbacks or take shortcuts
- If in the spring, wait until the ground hardens a bit before riding across the neighbor's field or in some of the soft local areas
- Stopping for a rest or lunch: move off the trail so as not to block it for others.
 1. Tie your horse to a tree 8 inches or larger
 2. Before leaving the rest/lunch area scatter any horse manure

RIDING IN A GROUP

- Make sure your horse is trained and conditioned enough for the ride terrain and length

- Horses that kick should wear a red ribbon in their tail; if your horse does kick be mindful of others around you
- To indicate a green horse, tie a green ribbon to its tail
- Be on time and ready to leave at the scheduled time
- Wait for everyone to be mounted before leaving the trailhead, gates, etc.
- If someone must stop or is delayed wait for them
- When traversing an obstacle leave plenty of space between the horses. Some horses will take a flying leap to get over things.
- No loose horses
- Avoid limbs in the face and knees of the rider behind you
- Dogs are best left at home for group rides and trails where there are restrictions
- Stallions are best left at home for group rides
- Do not tailgate – leave at least one horse length between you and the horse in front of you
- Do not canter up to a group or away from a group – it upsets the other horses
- Pass on the left – always let the person in front of you know you are passing by saying “On your left” and ask for permission and proceed only where it is safe to do so. They may want to turn their horse to face you prior to you passing. Because horses cannot see directly behind them, passing without warning could result in the horse spooking or bolting, injuring the rider or even you
- If possible, when your horse is acting up, move away from the group to ‘lesson’ him
- If you want to leave the group – ask the group to stop (until you are on your way far enough or around a corner) and wait while YOU leave. I’ve found this works well
- At a water hole – give everyone a chance to water without being rushed. Wait for others or the person behind you to finish before heading down the trail; don’t let your horse paw the water – he may be thinking about rolling, plus it muddies the water for the next person
- After ride when leaving the trailhead do not leave anyone behind

SAFTEY

- Take the time to start training and/or conditioning you and your horse
- Know your and your horse’s capabilities
- Carry a first aid kit for humans and horses, water, hoof pick, knife
- Special medical needs – if you have special medical needs make sure the ride leader knows in case of an emergency
- When bees are encountered on the trail yell “BEES” and run up the trail until the last rider is clear of danger
- Tell someone where you are going and about when you are coming back (Complete a Personal Emergency Plan)
- Locked vehicles – let someone who is riding with you know where your keys are in case of an emergency
- Pay attention to your surroundings
- Pay attention to those you meet on the trail – friend or ‘foe’ – learn how to get away
- Think SAFETY at all time

As with anything else, simple **common sense** and **courtesy** are the key ingredients to having a fun and safe day on the trail. Be **respectful of other’s rights** to use the trail and lead by example. It takes only one rotten apple to give the entire basket a bad reputation.

Thanks and have a good ride! Ponderosa Back Country Horsemen

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