

Trail Etiquette

(Do's and Don'ts on the Trail)

Here are some tips that will make your trail ride fun, enjoyable, and safe.

1. Choose the route for the most inexperienced rider.
Familiarize yourself with the trail before you decide to ride it.
Know the difficulty level. Does it have stream crossings, steep hills, etc.
Take newcomers on the easier trails.
Save the routes with the most difficult climbs for the veterans.
2. Leave your dog at home.
3. Warn others if you will be riding an inexperienced horse.
4. *Check the weather before you leave for your ride.*
5. *Always ride with a friend.*
6. *Leave and arrive slowly.*
7. Trot over ground you have walked over.
Canter or gallop over ground you have trotted over.
Only ride as fast as the terrain permits.
8. *Groom your horse thoroughly, paying special attention to picking his feet and checking that his shoes (if shod) are on securely.*
Check all equipment including saddles and bridles to be sure all stitching is in good order.
9. The rider on the lead is responsible for warning the group, either by hand signals or verbally (ware/ hole) about upcoming obstacles, as well as changes in gait or the need to halt. re. *Low hanging branches, holes, hikers, other riders approaching.*
If you encounter hikers, ask that they keep themselves visible on the

trail and not hide behind trees or bushes. Establish a dialogue with them so that the horses can hear them speak. *Re. Hi, are you having a nice walk? What kind of dog is that?*

A question should elicit a response.

Establish a method for downward transitions. The lead rider notifies the rider behind him, then the second rider notifies the third rider and so on until the last rider knows. The last rider slows first and so on until the lead rider slows. This avoids a pile up.

Remember to turn in your saddle to talk to the person behind, as when you're facing forward he may not be able to hear you.

When crossing streams, or negotiating obstacles, the leader should remind everyone not to move off until the last horse has either drunk his fill or crossed the obstacle.

10. *When going up hill you should walk or jog.*

Do not run up hill.

Remember to move forward at the top of the hill so that the rider behind you can get onto level ground.

Do not run downhill. Walk downhill.

11. *Don't gallop through water, but do teach your horse to cross quietly so as not to erode the stream bank. If safe bridges are available, as in The Westwood Park, use them. Don't let your horse paw in the water, as this may mean your horse wants to take an unexpected bath with you in the saddle.*

12. *If a horse/ rider is having trouble, STOP. Do not continue with the hopes that he will work it out. Start the ride with the understanding that if anyone wants to stop for any reason, they should say "Stop" loudly and expect that all riders in the group will respond immediately. Re. If having equipment malfunction stop and fix it. Ask everyone to stop with you.*

13. *Do not chase a loose horse. Circle around if possible. He usually won't go far from his herd mates.*

14. *Always keep a horse's length in between your horse and the next rider. Don't let your horse 'snack' along the way. Remember whenever you're on your horse he is in training and every tree or bush is not a "McDonalds."*

15. Control your kicker. Tie a red ribbon on his or her tail.
16. Keep your horse secure at all times. Don't try and ground tie at the trail head or picnic area. Horses may wander off and get kicked or bitten by other horses.
17. Ask before offering assistance. re. Someone having trouble loading their horse.
18. Stay out of the way in the parking lot. Trucks and trailers are large and are no small obstacle in a crowded parking area. If no designated space, park as far away as possible and leave plenty of room to work safely around your horses.
19. Move your manure.
Make sure you clean up your manure in parking areas and put in appropriate containers, or scatter in the woods.
20. Stay where you belong.
Ride only on dedicated trails.
On private lands be sure to ask the owner's permission.
Skirt planted fields.
21. Keep your speed in check.
Just as you wouldn't want an ATV to hurtle past you on the trail, so must you respect walkers and hikers as well as other riders. A brisk gallop or canter may be appropriate at another time.
22. Yield the trail to allow others to pass.
Most well managed trails require other users to yield to horses, but anytime the conditions of the shoulder will allow it, step off the trail and turn your horse to face oncoming traffic. Many people do not know the trail etiquette and it is easier to yield than to wait for them to do so. It reduces the chance of confrontational situations with other trail users. Good public relations.
23. Be patient with people.
Not everyone in a busy park will behave as they ought to around horses, but angry words are not the best way to respond.
24. Stay out of the mud.
Horses can leave post holes.

Don't ride that day if you're leaving a deep foot print.

25. Complete every switchback

Keep your horse on the intended trail all around the bend.

26. Avoid riding single file where there are no trails.

Single file wears a rut in the land.

27. Leave the gates, fences, and other structures where you found them.

Repair any damage you cause. If you cannot repair, notify the land owner and offer to pay for repairs.

28. Pick up litter.

Carry a small plastic bag in your saddle bags to put your soda cans, and wrappers. Thrown shoes or broken glass pose a danger so must be picked up.

29. Avoid tying horses to trees.

Horses can kill trees in several ways. Pawing at roots, chewing destroys bark, and a struggling horse tied to a tree can completely girdle the tree. Tie your horse instead to a trailer, hitching post or picket line.

30. When your horse is dropping manure, have him continue at his present gait as that will distribute the manure along the trail and will not hinder hikers or walkers as much as would a pile.

We have to share the trails and we should be good stewards of the land so that we may have use of the trails in the future.

31. Bring your horse home cool. Walk the last 20-30 minutes of your ride.

Clean your horses feet and hose or groom thoroughly to check for any stones or cuts he may have acquired along the trail. Be sure to check him the next morning a well. As on a long strenuous ride some horse may strain or overdo and it won't show up until the next AM

Please note that boldfaced and italicized items are contained in the film.