

Saskatchewan Trail Association (STA) – Trail Etiquette.

Trail etiquette should be a major part of any trail users experience.

Trail etiquette can be described as the polite way to use trails. When traveling multi-use trails, you may encounter many different forms of trail use, such as hikers, bikers, horse back riders, snowmobilers, etc. Therefore the user must adjust to different regulations (who passes first, who slows down, who gets the right of way?).

A basic etiquette rule is ‘Wheels yield to Heels’. Keep this in mind when approaching other trail users. Bicyclists or ATVers yield to all other users while hikers, walkers, skiers yield to equestrians.

Trail User’s Safety Code

It is every trail users responsibility and right to ensure their own safety and expect safe practice from other trail users. Exercise caution at all times, follow guidelines and rules of the trails. Preventing accidents or injuries is the first step, acting responsibly if something does happen is the second. Always think clearly!

A Trail User's Code of Ethics

- Respects private property.
- Respects the rights of other trail users.
- Respect nature and the environment.
- Leaves only footprints, hoofprints or wheel tracks to tell of their passing.
- Never abuses a horse.
- Uses only the route identified as the trail.
- Always camps in authorized areas.
- Never drinks alcohol while in public.
- Always proceeds slowly in heavily used or congested areas.
- Tries to help anyone in trouble or with less experience.
- Avoids showing off.

A Trail User's Guide For Environmental Awareness

- Do not litter. What you carried in, you can carry out. And if you have room pick up what others have carelessly left behind.
- Do not smoke while using the trail – or use designated areas. Be careful to butt out, completely. You don't want to be responsible for a forest fire.
- Leave your campsite neat and tidy. Return your site to as natural looking as possible.
- Do not damage crops or property adjacent to the trail. This also applies to lawns while using trails in residential areas. In other words, stay on the trail path.
- Deviations from the path lead to unnecessary destruction of vegetation and may even lead to soil erosion.

A Trail User's Guide to Public Awareness

- Be friendly towards other trail users. Stop, speak, answer questions, whatever it takes to present a good image of all trail users.
- Present a neat appearance. Remember who you might be representing while in public.
- Confine alcohol use to your camp area (if alcohol and drugs are not completely prohibited).
- Respect private property. Get permission from landowners to use their land. Leave gates as you find them and don't bother livestock. Never cut fences.
- It is recommended that all equestrian and motorized trail users carry 3rd party liability insurance.
- Any equestrian or motorized vehicle user under the age of 16 should be accompanied by an adult.

A Trail User's Guide to Campsite Etiquette

- Be self-sufficient for all your needs. Bring your own food, toilet and camping supplies as well as all equipment you might need.
- Water is usually provided but be considerate of rural water supplies.
- Campfires are permitted in designated areas only. Check with your hosts or Forestry officials before lighting one.
- Keep your campsite clean and take your garbage home with you.
- Respect your hosts wishes regarding dogs. Do not bring any dog if the hosts have asked you not to. If dogs are allowed in camp, they must be leashed at all times. Remember if the dog must be left in camp, provide the necessary comforts to keep the dog happy and quiet until you return.

A quick summary of trail etiquette:

- Give the right-of-way to smaller and slower users.
- Stay right when approaching oncoming users.
- Stay on the trail surface.
- Obey signs.
- Do not climb fences or take shortcuts.
- Respect the privacy of landowners bordering the trails.
- Leave wildlife and plants for others to enjoy.
- Take only memories - leave only footprints!

See Links

Saskatchewan cyclists can find an expanded version of etiquette, which includes advice about equipment, road traffic, and general cycling rules, on the Saskatchewan Cyclist Association (SBA) website. Cross-Country and Mountain Bikers have web pages of their own.

Equestrians can find more details on the Saskatchewan Horse Association (SHA) website. Besides general trail etiquette, there is information on trail equipment, treatment of horses while on trail, role of Trail Boss, etc. Also, the Arab Horse Association (AHA) has a website that gives information on endurance riding in addition to general etiquette.

Canada Parks and Provincial Parks websites have etiquette guidelines for their trails and campgrounds.

A search of 'trail etiquette' on google brings up hundreds of websites, thus add words for the type of trail use e.g. cycling, back-packing, etc.