Etiquette For All

What does "yield" really mean?

Yield means slow down, establish communication, be prepared to stop, and pass in a safe and friendly manner. Hikers yield to horses, and bikes yield to hikers and horses as shown by the arrows on the multi-use yield sign.

Respect.

It's a simple concept: If you offer respect, you are more likely to receive it. All trail users have rights and responsibilities to each other, and to our trails.

Smile. Greet. Nod.

Every user on the trail is a fellow nature lover. Be friendly and expect to see other folks around every corner.

Stay on the trail.

Only use officially designated trails and obey posted closures and other signs. Don't go off trail, create new trails or cut switchbacks. Short-cutting switchbacks can cause extensive long-term trail damage.

Don't use wet trails.

If you are leaving deep prints (hoof, tire, or foot), or mud is sticking to your shoes or tires, the trail is too wet to use. When approaching puddles or muddy sections go through the center of the puddle to keep the trail narrow. Narrow trails mean less environmental impact and a close-to-nature feel.

Don't block the trail.

When taking a break, move to the side of the trail. Don't stop or lay a bike or backpack on the trail, especially on a blind corner.

Don't tune out.

If you wear earphones, keep the volume down or only wear one earpiece so other trail users don't surprise you.

Clean up after your dog.

If you hike or ride with your dog, bring waste collection bags to clean up after your pet and PACK OUT the waste. Nobody wants to encounter your dog's poop on the trail and it can contaminate streams.

Pack it in, pack it out.

Don't litter. Pick up and pack out any trash you may find, and everything you brought in. Every piece of litter removed reveals a little more of nature's beauty. This includes cigarette butts which also present a fire hazard.

Share and Care

We all share a love of nature, open space and trails. It's important that all hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers unite to support and care for our trails and public lands. Shared-use trails are cost-effective, minimize impacts on the environment, provide the most users with the most trail opportunities and build happier, healthier communities. We all value and support our public land managers and our trails community. Let's work together to keep our trails safe and enjoyable for all.

Pass it on!

When you're done reading, pass this brochure on to a friend or somebody else on the trail. Help us spread the word so that all trail users are working from the same playbook.

Remember, trails have inherent risks and dangers. Always be prepared, and use public trails at your own risk.

The Department of Parks & Recreation stongly encourages all trail users to read and exercise the guidelines in this brochure. Good judgement should be exercised at all times to ensure safety for all.

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Sharing Our Trails

Help keep our trails safer and more enjoyable for all!

What does this really mean?

Hikers

What can you expect?

Faster trail users. Listen for cyclists, runners, and equestrians approaching from behind, or those coming from ahead but out of sight. If you hear "on your left" from behind this means you should stay to your right to allow them to pass (and vice-versa).

Cyclists have a responsibility to yield and pass at a safe speed. Offer friendly communication to let the rider know when it's safe to pass. Give a verbal or visual acknowledgement, step to the side of the trail or wave the rider by on wider trails.

What is your responsibility?

Share the trail.

When hiking in a group, hike single file on narrow trails or stay to the right side of a wider trail or fire road, leaving room for others to pass. Make sure everyone in your group understands what to do when encountering other hikers, bikes, and horses. When hiking downhill on narrow trails, yield to those hiking uphill.

Don't tune out.

If you wear headphones, keep the volume down or only wear one earpiece so you can hear other trail users approaching and avoid being surprised.

Keep your dog on a short leash.

Obey posted rules about dogs and only take your dog on trails where dogs are permitted. Keep your dog on a short leash (6' or less) and under your control. Off-leash dogs can harm wildlife, and are in danger of snakebites and predators. Others may be frightened by dogs or be unsure of how to pass safely. Always clean up and pack out dog waste.

Yield to horses.

1. Immediately stop and wait on the downhill side of the trail.
2. Greet the rider. Horses can perceive hikers wearing tall backpacks, big hats or even walking sticks as threats. Your voice shows them you're human and you're OK.
3. Ask how to proceed. If hiking with a child, hold their hand when passing. Don't approach or pet the horse without first getting permission from the rider.

Equestrians

What can you expect?

Inexperienced trail users. While all trail users should yield to equestrians, many are intimidated by large horses, or just don't know what to do.

What is your responsibility?

Manage your horse. Train and familiarize your horse on wider multi-use trails with room to maneuver so the horse can become more comfortable with cyclists, dogs, backpack-wearing hikers, etc. Your horse should be comfortable with other trail users before venturing onto narrow shared-use trails. Consider desensitization training for your horse if it remains skittish around other trail users.

Negotiate safe passes.

1. Greet trail users early. Hikers and bikers yield to horses, but many novice trail users don't know what to do.
2. Where safe and appropriate, guide trail users to move to the downhill side of the trail.
3. Communicate with other trail users and let them know where to stand and/or on which side to pass you. Continue speaking with them until they have passed.
4. Expect the unexpected. Small children, the elderly and dogs can be easily frightened by horses and act unpredictably.
5. Only pass others at a walk, never at a trot or gallop.

Courtesy & Cooperation = Happy Trails

Mountain Bikers

What can you expect?

Surprised trail users. Fast-moving bikes can startle others, especially when coming around a blind turn or approaching from behind.

What is your responsibility?

Mountain bikers yield to hikers, horses and uphill-riding cyclists. SLOW DOWN around other trail users and anticipate people or animals around blind turns. Consider using a bell to help avoid surprising others. Be exceedingly friendly and communicative. On wider trails and fire roads keep to the right. Always ride under control and avoid skidding. Never put others at risk.

Passing Hikers:

1. Greet hikers early with a friendly "howdy" or "good morning."
2. SLOW DOWN to about the same speed as the hiker.
3. Pass slowly and be prepared to stop if necessary. Others' perception of a safe, courteous speed may be different to yours. Show your appreciation if they step to the side for you.
4. Expect the unexpected. People and animals can be unpredictable or easily spooked or startled by cyclists.

Passing Cyclists:

1. Announce your intention to pass with a friendly "Let me know when it's safe to pass."
2. Use the "singletrack yield" on narrow trails: the yielding rider should stop to the side, put one foot down and lean both body and bike away from the trail.
3. Give uphill riders the right of way when you're going downhill. It's much harder to get started again on a climb.

Passing Horses:

1. Immediately slow down and stop at least 30 feet from the horse.
2. Greet the equestrian and the horse. Speaking shows the horse you are human and not a threat.
3. Ask how or when to pass safely. Offer to get off your bike.
4. Pass slowly and steadily, but only after the equestrian gives you the go-ahead. Sudden movements or noises can spook a horse. Where possible, pass on the downhill side of the animal.

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