

Trail etiquette can be boiled down to one phrase:

BE COOL

What does "cool" mean? Here are some guidelines:

1. First, treat everyone you meet on the trail like you'd treat your mother (if you don't like your mother, think of someone you really really like). Everyone is here to have a good time and being nice solves a lot of problems before they happen.
2. Yield. Yield. Yield. To pedestrians and equestrians. All the time. See "Yielding" below for a short and sweet definition of what it means to yield to different people.
3. If you are going downhill, yield to uphill bike traffic. It's much more of a pain in the butt to start going again when you are moving uphill than it is when you are going downhill.
4. Stay on the trail. It's way not cool to ride in the grass/bushes/cacti/prairie dogs or mud to pass by someone. Trails are too wide already.
5. Stay in control. If you come to a blind corner, assume an elderly angry lawyer is coming up at you. Don't ride beyond your limits.
6. Be nice to the animals. This is probably a no brainer, but c'mon - don't run over anything, chase anything, taunt anything or give anything the finger. They were here first and they are nice to look at.
7. Ride on trails that we're allowed to ride. We know, we know, there are a lot of great trails out there. Yes, it's unfair so many are closed to bicycling. But every year, when some of us are standing in front of the City Council or officials, our worst enemies are the people who poach trails. We promise we are fighting tooth and nail to get every linear inch of trail we can. Please don't mess it up.
8. Don't make a mess of our space. Some people say, "Leave no trace." That's almost right. We think it should be, "Make it nicer than before you came." Don't throw your mess on the ground, bleed brakes in the woods, knock down fences, remove Native American arrowheads or any other sort of shenanigans.

YIELDING 101:

First thing's first. "Yield" means that one party is allowing another party to go on without hinderance if they so desire. What this really means is "be cool" to other people. Imagine that your mom is the other person on the trail (unless you hate your mom, then imagine it's Russell Crowe or the Swedish Bikini Team or whomever you like). Be cool in a suave way that makes people think that mountain bikers are a sexy, friendly folk that know how to play well with others in the sandbox.

The Fruita Lean: If you are gonna yield, the way to do it is to get your wheels as far to the side of the trail as you can and stop. Then put your outside foot down (so it's off the trail by a couple inches). The folks out in Fruita invented this and it rocks to both give space and keep single track skinny!

Yielding to Equestrians: Bikers often scare horses. We are less familiar to them than hikers, so use caution. We recommend that as you approach an equestrian you call out a friendly greeting from far away. Slow the heck down, too. You want to start talking from about 50-75 ft away if you can. Like I said, horses spook easily, so try asking how the person on the horse would like you to get by. Would they like you to get off and walk (this is great for horses that are really skittish) or should you pass slowly at the next safe spot?

Yielding to Hikers: This isn't a race, so yelling "On your left!" probably isn't the best thing. In years of practice, we've found that the best thing to do is to SLOW DOWN. We know, we know, it's harshing your mellow, but good interactions mean more open trails. Then just say something like "Hi there! Great day." People usually wake up to your presence without alarm. We're starting a program to get bells on bikes. If you have one, you might dingle it nicely as a way to get attention. No, it's not your hall pass to rip past someone! It's not a laser beam that shoots them off the trail. Hikers have the right of way, so if they don't feel safe moving to the side of (or off) the trail for you, please wait it out. Ask if they mind finding a place for you to pass. Most of the time, people are cool. Yes, some people are jerks. Some hikers are jerks. Some bikers are jerks. Some chickens are jerked (but that's another story). The thing is that two jerks don't make for a nice person. Two jerks make for a fight. Go home feeling like Gandhi instead of like Tyson in those vile ear-biting days and we'll all be the better for it.

Yielding to other Bikes: Uphill traffic gets the right of way. If you're bombing down a hill, stop and let them by. Yes, we all have had many a buzz killed having to stop for uphill traffic. It happens, but it's much worse losing all momentum on a killer grind up the hill.