

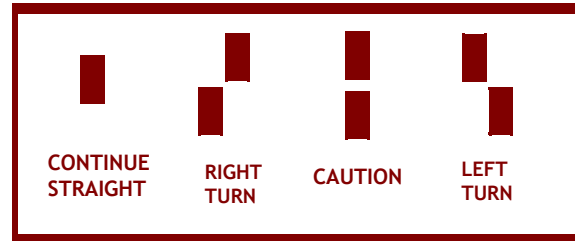


## Trail Blazes

A blaze is a marking, usually painted, to reassure the trail user that they are indeed following a trail and not a skid road or deer trail.

Blazes direct travel by their arrangement (see blaze examples below). Blaze colors may vary. Yellow indicates hiking or cross connector, orange indicates state forest hiking trail, and red indicates shared use.

It is recommended that all trail users carry a map of the trails that they are using, which are typically available through District Forest Offices or State Park Offices.



CONTINUE  
STRAIGHT

RIGHT  
TURN

CAUTION

LEFT  
TURN

STATE FOREST HIKING TRAIL - HIKING ONLY

LOCAL DISTRICT HIKING TRAIL - HIKING ONLY

CROSS COUNTRY SKI TRAIL - OTHER NON-MOTORIZED  
USES PERMITTED UNLESS POSTED

SHARED - USE (NON-MOTORIZED) - HIKING, BIKING,  
HORSEBACK RIDING PERMITTED

# Trail Use Etiquette



Promoting user compatibility through understanding and cooperation



## Our Trails

Whether your outdoor interest is scenic beauty, natural history, bird and wildlife watching, exercise, or just wanting to get away from it all, you've found the right place. Pennsylvania's trails offer all these things and much more.

The pathway to hiking — Pennsylvania's most popular, versatile and accessible outdoor recreational activity — can be found along the state's thousands of miles of trails, which lead to beautiful vistas and waterfalls, past wetlands bubbling with life, or through shady, old-growth forests.

While some trails are scenic and leisurely, others offer self-guided education or rigorous exercise opportunities. Hiking is the most popular use of Pennsylvania's trails, but bicyclists, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, and hunters also find great pleasure in our vast network of trails.

In order to maintain the recreational and educational qualities of the trails for all uses, users must not only follow the rules and regulations set up to protect the land, but also practice proper trail etiquette. This brochure provides direction on how to interact with other trail users so everyone has an enjoyable outdoor experience.



## Trail Tips

Most DCNR lands with trails are open to hunting. If hunting along a recreational trail, be sure of your target and what lies behind it. Make sure to be extra vigilant.

When using the trails during hunting season, it is advisable to wear fluorescent orange. This will allow you to be identified more easily as another human.

Help to keep the trails clean. Dispose of any trash you may have and kindly pick up any that you may see along the trail. Keep the trails clean for yourself and other users!

Help protect the beauty of the trail by following *Leave No Trace* practices — leave nothing on the trail but footprints, and take nothing from the trail but memories.

You can expect to see a wide variety of wildlife when you are out on the trails. Please remember that you are the visitor in their home.

## Be On Alert

Meth labs have been found in remote areas. A typical meth lab is a collection of chemical bottles, hoses, and pressurized cylinders. The cylinders can take many forms, from modified propane tanks to fire extinguishers, scuba tanks, and soda dispensers. The tanks contain anhydrous ammonia or hydrochloric acid — both highly poisonous and corrosive. If you encounter materials such as these along a trail, do not touch them. Report the location to DCNR staff as soon as possible.

Sharing trails helps build a trail community by increasing the need for all users to cooperate to preserve and protect a common resource. Encountering other users on a trail offers the opportunity to meet and talk. Without that opportunity, it is difficult to establish mutual respect and courtesy for others along the trail.

## Trail encounters while...



### Bicycling

**another biker approaching from the same direction:** call out, “on your right” or “on your left,” if you wish to overtake or pass the biker in front of you to let them know on which side you will be passing them. Use extreme care and pass only where there is room on the trail to safely do so. If you are being overtaken by another rider and hear, “on your right” or “on your left,” maintain course on the trail or move to the side opposite the call-out to permit the other rider to pass safely.

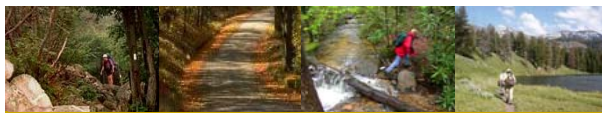
**another biker approaching from the other direction:** dismount and clear the trail if you are traveling downhill to allow the uphill biker to continue his climb without breaking stride. If you are traveling uphill, make sure the downhill rider is giving way before continuing your climb. If in doubt, give way and clear the trail.

**an equestrian:** look up occasionally while you ride because you might be approaching horses that may not hear you. Speak to the rider as they approach. This lets the horse know that you are a human and not a predator. Dismount and get off the trail on the lower side to allow the rider to pass. Do not make direct eye contact with the horse as it nears or passes. This is perceived by the horse as a threat. Predators stare before they attack. Do not attempt to touch the horse unless invited to do so by the rider.

**a hiker:** dismount to pass the hiker unless the hiker is obviously giving way to permit you to continue your ride.

**a hunter:** acknowledge the hunter with a silent nod and continue on your way. Do not intentionally interfere with a hunt. This is illegal in Pennsylvania and punishable by law.

**wildlife:** continue on your way. If you wish to observe the animal, do so safely — no sudden stops when riding with other bikers. Never pursue wildlife. This is illegal and unsafe. If you see a rattlesnake crossing the trail, simply wait for it to move off of the trail or go around it, giving it a wide berth.



### Hiking

**another hiker with a dog:** speak to the hiker as they approach. This lets the dog owner take appropriate action based on their dog’s behavior and lets the dog know that you are not a threat or prey. Do not make direct eye contact with the dog. This is perceived as a threat by most dogs and they may react defensively. Do not attempt to pet the dog unless invited to do so by the owner, and even then, only carefully. Allow the dog to first smell the back of your hand. If the dog is off the leash, stop and allow the hiker to regain control of their pet.

**a bicyclist:** step off of the trail and allow the biker to pass.

**an equestrian:** speak to the rider as they approach. This lets the horse know that the hiker is human and not a predator. Step off of the trail on the lower side to allow the rider to pass. Do not stare directly at the horse as it nears or passes — this is perceived by the horse as a threat. Predators stare before they attack. Do not attempt to touch the horse unless invited to do so by the rider.

**a hunter:** acknowledge the hunter with a silent nod and continue on your way. Do not intentionally interfere with a hunt. This is illegal in Pennsylvania and punishable by law.

**wildlife:** remain quiet to observe the wildlife. If you are uncomfortable with the encounter, do not attempt to hide (predators hide before they attack) and do not attempt to run away (many animals will chase after things when they run away). Speak to the animal; most animals are afraid of humans and will leave the area.



### Horseback Riding

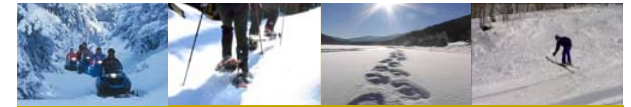
**all other non-motorized trail users:** you have the right-of-way in nearly all situations. However, you know best how your horse will react in different situations. Take appropriate action to keep all encounters safe. Speak to others if they have not spoken at your approach. If other users move to the high side of the trail, ask them to move to the lower side, explaining that horses perceive animals above them as predators.

**wildlife:** observe the animal safely or continue on your way. If you decide to observe the animal, do so safely. Again, you know best how your horse will react to wildlife, so you should plan accordingly.



### Hunting

**all other non-motorized trail users:** acknowledge the other trail user with a quiet nod or speak to them if the encounter warrants it. If the other trail user is negative about your recreational pursuit or becomes abusive, simply move on. Do not escalate the situation. Remember that most citizens support hunting as a recreational activity, but some do not. Be the best ambassador you can for the sport of recreational hunting.



### Winter Recreation

In winter, hikers and snowshoers should not walk on cross-country ski trails, as this ruins the track for skiers. Walk to the side of the set ski track.

Non-motorized trail users should be alert to approaching snowmobiles and give way to allow the snowmobiles to pass.

Snowmobilers using multiple use trails need to be careful around turns or other areas where you cannot see far ahead. Give yourself plenty of time to slow down or stop, should you encounter another user.

Before heading out for some fun winter recreation, be knowledgeable of the weather conditions. For current winter conditions, visit DCNR’s website: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/winter/wintera.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/winter/wintera.aspx).

*For tips on how you can do your part to help conserve Pennsylvania’s natural resources, log on to [iConservePA.org](http://iConservePA.org)*

