

WMMBA Trail Etiquette

- 1. Greet fellow trail users.** It's just common courtesy. Whether it's saying "Hi", giving a smile, a nod or a wave (or all of the above), these gestures don't take much effort and you're immediately putting everyone at ease. Maybe you startled a hiker and they are about to snap at you for it. A well-timed cheerful greeting could diffuse the situation. Be positive and say "Hello" to your fellow trail users.
 - Be mindful of the diverse abilities, activities and riders that use the trails. Please allow at least six feet distance from the rider in front of you; their comfort and safety is more important than your Strava time.
 - Give a helping hand if you think someone might need it!
 - Our builders or trail maintenance crews are often out working – please slow down or walk your bike through these areas, and say hi!
- 2. Don't ride muddy trails, or widen the trail around puddles.** It's not ok to ride muddy trails no matter where you are. If you are leaving a rut in the mud, you are causing damage. Riding around the mud creates wider trails and damages sensitive vegetation on either side of the trail. This encourages other riders to do the same, making the problem worse. If you encounter a puddle or mud bog that is isolated, go through the middle of it.
- 3. Don't ride or build illegal trails.** Staying on the permitted trail tread is responsible trail use. Use your time and effort toward working with your local WMMBA volunteers who are fighting for your local access. All trail building is approved by the land owners, managers or municipalities. We, the WMMBA and its members, do not have authority to add or create new trail segments without proper approval. Remember, just a few irresponsible trail users can ruin access for all.
- 4. Pets.** Pets must be on a leash, secure, and under control by the owner at all times. Dogs are not allowed off leash at the following locations: Cannonsburg State Game Area, all Kent County Parks (Luton and Wahlfield), The Dragon, Grand Rapids Parks, Yankee Springs Recreation Area, Ionia State Recreation Area, Plainfield Township (Merrell Trail), East Grand Rapids. Note: just because a trail or location is not listed above does not mean dogs are allowed off leash. It is your responsibility to research and find out the pet rules for all locations you ride. Respect fellow users and follow the rules for the safety of everyone.
- 5. Respect signage.** Some trails are directional and they will be signed accordingly. Then there's the dreaded "trail closed" sign. It's happened to all of us. We drive all the way to our favorite trail, only to discover it's closed due to maintenance, construction, logging, fire danger, a local event or one of many other reasons. Be a responsible trail user and choose another option. Maybe now is a good time to

join your local trail organization (WMMBA) to lend the group a more powerful voice when it comes to negotiating trail access.

- Respect signage and trail closures. If the trails are closed, they are closed for good reason; and they will be there for you when they are ready!
 - If you come across a maintenance area, give the builders some space and please slow down or walk your bike.
6. **Get involved.** If you spend any amount of time shredding your local trails, remember they don't build and maintain themselves and you're enjoying their awesomeness thanks to the hard work (primarily by WMMBA volunteers) and dollars from others. You'll be making a deposit in the karma bank, feel better about yourself and hopefully make some great community connections if you donate your time to the WMMBA. We usually organize regular trails days which are crucial for keeping our trails maintained. If you don't have time to spare, a donation never goes unappreciated.
 7. **Respect the environment and the trail.** When you're riding, practice the "Leave no trace" code of conduct and don't litter. Beyond that, it's a big no-no to modify the trail in any way (ie. cutting corners or creating rogue lines, cutting or damaging trees). And always try to adhere to the "Ride, don't slide" guideline, even though that can be very difficult. It basically means don't skid all over the place. Respect the hard work of trail builders. If there is debris that has fallen on the trail, it's always good etiquette to move it aside, if possible.
 8. **Ride in control.** It's a good rule of thumb to anticipate there is someone around that next blind corner (because it's very likely there is!) and ride at a speed that will allow you to stop safely when needed.
 - Know your limits, and always ride within them. Most of our trails are multi-use trails, so be considerate to other trail users; it may not seem like you are going fast, but to hikers and trail runners, you are.
 - Scope out trail features beforehand, and follow a natural progression. If you are scoping out a feature, make sure you're not standing in a blind spot, and your bike is off the trail. Always be considerate of other riders.
 - Can you stop safely? Always be prepared for someone on the other side of a blind corner.
 9. **Right of way.** On a two-way trail, the uphill rider always has the right of way. Imagine how much harder it is to get rolling again if you're pointed uphill than if you're headed down. When it comes to other user groups, unless otherwise signed specifically as a bike trail, other non-motorized traffic has right of way, so be sure to yield. If you encounter a horse, dismount and move off the trail to let it by, since they spook easily, which is dangerous for everyone.

10. Caution When Stopping. If you need to stop for any reason, apply a bit of common sense – do not stop just round a corner, do not stop at the bottom of a drop or other similar feature, and find a section where the trail is wide enough you can pull over to the side (choose high side and not low side of the trail) and not be in the way of other riders. If you do encounter someone stopping in a less than ideal location, then be polite when telling them they have made a poor choice – When people are new to the sport, they might need some guidance, and a bit of friendly advice is always welcome.

11. Don't block the trail. Before you drop in, when you get to the end of a trail or if you stop for any reason along the trail, move yourself and your bike completely off of the trail to avoid getting in other people's way.

12. Passing riders. If you're riding and someone has caught up to you, it means they're going faster and you should allow them to pass the next chance you get to do so safely. On the flip side, if you catch up to someone, be polite and patient, verbally announce your presence or ring your bike bell, and allow them to indicate when it's okay to pass. Be sure to leave lots of space and don't forget to say "Thank you!"

- We highly recommend the use of a bike bell to alert other trail users you are approaching. They are highly effective out west and can be heard from a distance. Many bike shops sell them and they mount to your handlebar.

13. Slower Riders. Likewise, if you are a slower rider and you experience faster riders coming up behind you, don't panic. Just make sure you pull over in a safe location as soon as you get the chance and let the other rider pass.

14. Be prepared. It's always a good idea to inform yourself of the trail area you're planning to ride. Most trail systems have information available online and can be very helpful. Always good to know in advance about trail closures, wildlife alerts, trail conditions and weather. If you're new to a particular riding area, it never hurts to ask a local in the parking lot if there's anything specific you should be aware of. Chances are, they'll also give you tips on the best trails. Also, be self-sufficient when it comes to appropriate clothing, water, food and other supplies, as many areas have limited or no facilities. Make sure your bike is in good working order, your phone's battery is fully charged and you have taken safety precautions, like informing someone of where you are riding, as well as packing basic bike tools and first aid equipment. You should wear a helmet at all times.

- The best way to ensure you don't have any mechanical failures on the trail, is to tune your bike beforehand. We love ParkTools short informative DIY videos:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGCTGpvdT04Q5OLMUo0yzTOjLtv7yT47O>

15. **Buddy up.** When possible, it is always a good idea to ride with another person. If something was to happen (crash or mechanical) chances are it will happen to one and not both riders. This will provide immediate assistance from the other rider.
16. Do not consume alcoholic beverages at parks or trail systems where it is not allowed.

EARN YOUR TURNS

- Give back to the trails you ride and consider purchasing a WMMBA membership to help fund trail maintenance and trail building projects; membership info here: <https://www.wmmba.org/membership>
- Sign up for a trail day and move some dirt. Trail days are a great way to support the trails you ride, learn about trail building, and make connections in the community.
- If you don't have the time to help out on the trails, or are visiting from another region, you can also make a donation online. Donation options here: <https://www.wmmba.org/allyship>

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