

# Trail Ethics for Trail Runners

These rules are meant to be used as a “baseline” regarding trail use ethics for trail running.

1. LEAVE NO TRACE. Do not run on unpaved trails when conditions may cause you to leave evidence of your passing. Using trails during wet conditions will accelerate erosion and maintenance costs.
2. STAY ON EXISTING TRAILS. Creating new trails or shortcuts negatively affects future users.
3. PACK OUT WHAT YOU PACK IN. Litter along the trail decreases the enjoyment for all.
4. BE COURTEOUS OF WILDLIFE AND ALL OTHER USERS.  
Anticipate other runners, bikers, hikers, equestrians, or wildlife around corners or in blind spots.
  - **Horse Encounters:** Use Caution when approaching horses and riders. Horses commonly spook when surprised by runners. Help avoid potentially dangerous incidents by letting the rider and horse know you are approaching from behind. Ask the rider for instructions as to how to pass. When approaching horses head-on, stop and let them pass unless told otherwise by the riders.
  - **Mountain Bike Encounters:** If you are on a known MTB trail or "multiple use" trail, do not wear headphones. Anticipate bikers approaching very quickly from behind, down hills, at intersections, and around corners. It is best practice to step aside or off of the trail, and let the bikes pass.
  - **Wildlife Encounters:** NEVER chase, injure, kill, harass, or take any action against wildlife. As the name implies, wildlife are "wild" animals. Many of them, (including deer and squirrels), can injure you severely or even kill you. Be very careful not to step on frogs, turtles, or snakes. Be wary of poisonous snakes. Copperheads and several species of rattlesnakes call the Midwest home. If you encounter a snake, stay at least 6 feet away and let it slither off of the trail, or go back the way you came. If you step around a snake and “through the weeds” you will potentially find more snakes.
5. LEAVE NATURE WHERE YOU FIND IT. Please leave the wildflowers, animals, insects, and natural vegetation for others to enjoy. If you want souvenirs, take a camera and snap a few shots.
6. TAKE CARE OF OTHERS IN NEED. If you find someone lost, injured or “out of sorts” during your trail run, ask if they need help. It’s a good idea to have the park ranger’s number and a cellphone handy on a trail run, especially if you are running alone.
7. FOLLOW ALL PARK & TRAIL RULES. This is a no-brainer, but everything from vehicle speed limits to actual trail use rules should be followed. Rules can vary between jurisdictions.

Ben Holmes, Kansas City Trail Nerds trail running group, May 2007 [www.psychowyc.com](http://www.psychowyc.com)

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