

Florida Sport Horse Club Trail Etiquette Guidelines

Trail etiquette is mostly common sense and safety precautions, but sometimes it helps to have a reminder of some commonly accepted practices. These guidelines are meant to be flexible tips to help club members have a good time while remaining as safe as possible on the trail.

- 1. Be on time.** Be saddled, mounted and ready to ride at the appointed time.
- 2. Stay behind the Trail Boss** unless given permission to pass.
- 3. Do not leave the group** without notifying other riders.
- 4. Don't pass, come up behind, or run toward others at a high speed.** If the horses in the group are surprised or become frightened, they might spook and someone could get hurt.
- 5. Don't make loud noises on the trail.** Many trail riders are looking for quiet time with nature. Be considerate and don't yell unless there is a problem.
- 6. Leave gates as you found them.** Many trail areas double as cow pastures, so always leave the gates open or closed as you found them.
- 7. If you carry a crop,** make sure it stays close to your side and does not wave out to other horses.
- 8. Ride at the ability level and speed of the least experienced rider or horse.** Do not ride too quickly or take trails that are too challenging for their comfort level and experience.
- 9. Speak up** if the group is moving too quickly or slowly—others may feel the same way, and the group could be split to accommodate the needs of all.
- 10. Keep at least one to two horse lengths between you and the horse in front of you.** This will allow you to view the trail ahead and prevent your horse from being kicked.
- 11. If your horse is a known kicker, tie a red ribbon in its tail.** Never assume that all riders know what the red ribbon means; if a rider moves too close, let him or her know immediately that your horse may kick.
- 12. Be watchful for trail hazards and relay them to those following you.** Be specific when describing the hazard, such as: "Deep hole on the left side of the trail; stay to the right," or "Watch out, there's a low hanging limb ahead. Duck!"
- 13. Many trails are also enjoyed by those who hike, bike or ride ATVs.** As a general rule, **all users should yield to horses.** Be prepared for any reaction your horse may have to others. Always speak to those you meet in the hope that they will return the greeting and your horse will recognize them as human. It is not discourteous to ask those you encounter to yield; however, it may be in everyone's best interest if you move off of the trail to allow them to pass if they choose not to.
- 14. When watering horses** from a creek or other watering source, take turns and do not ride off until every horse has had an opportunity to drink. A thirsty horse will not drink if he is left behind.
- 15. If someone needs to dismount** during the ride, everyone should stop and wait for the rider to remount before resuming the ride.
- 16. Remember that you may not be able to always ride in your favorite position in the line.** It's good for a horse to learn to ride in front or in back of others. Be flexible and make room for other riders in the line.
- 17. Be a good Samaritan.** If you encounter someone having trouble on the trail, offer to stop and help. Remember, it could be you needing assistance next time.
- 18. Be environmentally friendly.** Carry out what you carry in. Do not ride off trail or cut across switchbacks unless it's approved by the riding area management.
- 19. Be responsible with your horse's manure.** Either leave it in the bushes or take it home with you, rather than leaving it in the parking lot where others will step in it.