

## Waitangi Mountain Bike Park Safe Riding Etiquette as @ 24/08/15

International Mountain Biking Association developed the "Rules of the Trail" to promote responsible and courteous conduct on shared-use trails. Keep in mind that conventions for giving way and passing may vary in different locations, or with traffic conditions. This is our primary riding etiquette for the Waitangi Mountain Bike Park. However below we have collated some more detailed information around the etiquette to be applied by users of the Waitangi Endowment Forest and in particular the Waitangi Mountain Bike Park

We live on an increasingly crowded planet and trails, whether we hike or ride them, are a refuge from the daily grind. And while these wonderful strips of bare ground in our open spaces help us escape from civilization, it often seems like the rest of civilization is escaping on them at the same time, creating the possibility of less-than-civilized encounters. This is where etiquette comes in.

Etiquette isn't just about holding out your pinky when you take afternoon tea; it has practical application on the trail. Even if you develop all the skill and fitness in the world, without proper etiquette, you can be a detriment to the sport. Before we hit the high points of trail etiquette, let's look at a few reasons why etiquette is important.

1. The most obvious reason is simply being a good neighbour to other trail users. We could go on at length about everything from civilized behavior to karma, but this one should be self-explanatory.
2. Even if you're not concerned about your fellow trail user, most rules of bike trail etiquette protect the rider as well. For instance, if you fail to yield to a horse, guess who wins? 1,400lbs of spooked animal can be dangerous.
3. Even if you're not concerned with your safety, trail etiquette is necessary to preserve access to trails and maintain the possibility of gaining access to new trails. Just like so much in life, a split-second decision for a quick moment of fun can have negative long term consequences—not just for yourself, but for all your fellow bikers. Not riding when it would damage the trail, or not ruining a hiker or equestrian's outing, is a courtesy to your fellow bikers (and yourself) as well as other trail users.



## Rules of the Trail

We can fully enjoy the sport and be good trail neighbours at the same time. Even some experienced mountain bikers have never been exposed to proper trail etiquette; for the new rider, they may have no idea there is such a thing. Take the time to share proper trail etiquette with new riders when you can. The single best source of trail etiquette and the basics we should all adhere to is the International Mountain Bike Association. Below are IMBA's rules of the trail: six easy steps to good multi-user trail relations:

- 1. Ride Open Trails:** Respect trail and road closures — ask a land manager for clarification if you are uncertain about the status of a trail. Do not trespass on private land. Obtain permits or other authorization as required. Be aware that bicycles are not permitted in areas protected as state or federal Wilderness.
- 2. Leave No Trace:** Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones. Don't cut switchbacks. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.
- 3. Control Your Bicycle:** Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations, and ride within your limits.
- 4. Yield Appropriately:** Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you're coming — a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Bicyclists should yield to other non-motorized trail users, unless the trail is clearly signed for bike-only travel. Bicyclists traveling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill, unless the trail is clearly signed for one-way or downhill-only traffic. In general, strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.
- 5. Never Scare Animals:** Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement, or a loud noise. Give animals enough room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain).

When hikers or mountain bikers encounter horses, they should step off the trail on the downhill side, talk to the rider and the animal (this lets the stock know you are a person). If the animal seems anxious consider taking off your backpack or helmet and dismounting your mountain bike. Keep talking in a calm voice as all the animals pass you by. The rider will let you know when it is safe to continue.

If you approach stock from behind it's critical that you announce yourself loudly but calmly so you do not scare the animals. Let the rider know you'd like to pass at the next safe location. Do NOT ride up quickly on stock. It's dangerous for you and the rider(s).

If a biker finds the need to cross a horse trail or shared forest road, they need to slow down ahead of time, get off, stop and look both ways for approaching horses before slowly proceeding. NEVER emerge unannounced or silently from the bush whether on a bike or on foot. Be aware at all times that horse riders and walkers may be using the forest too so be alert at all times.

Any bike tracks near to a horse trails will be marked with appropriate warning signs.

- 6. Plan Ahead:** Know your equipment, your ability, and the area in which you are riding, and prepare accordingly. Strive to be self-sufficient: keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

#### **Additional Guidelines**

Of course, not every situation you will encounter fits neatly into one of these six rules, and that's where a little common sense, and more importantly, the willingness to be the "good guy" comes in. Also, each of the rules above is, at best, a generalization, and there are exceptions. What follows now is just one man's modus operandi, and should not be taken as commonly-accepted practice. Just know that there are infinite variations, and you may have to improvise at any time. That's where the "good neighbor" mindset comes in so handy.

Frequently, walkers will step off trail to allow bikers to pass. This is not the time to get off the bike and inform them that they need not yield. Some may not know the "rule," yet others may simply wish to not disturb the biker's flow and, unfortunately, some are just plain afraid of bikers. In the case a walker yields the trail, a "thank you" goes a long way. Although the walker has yielded the trail, you should still slow down, almost to walking pace. Not only does this minimize the disturbance to the hiker who has yielded, it gives you time to extend that "thank you," and maybe even follow it up with a "have a great hike!"

When riding with a group, be aware of how many are behind you. As you pass a walker, say "three more," or whatever the appropriate number is. When riding alone, a "just me" will suffice to let the other trail user know the trail is once again clear.

A little local knowledge also goes a long way. Take the time to research trails. Take the time to talk to the locals if you're not familiar with a trail. Our locals love to share their knowledge: they're rightfully proud of their trails and want you to be impressed with them as well.

# Rules of the Trail

These guidelines for trail behavior are recognized around the world. IMBA developed the "Rules of the Trail" to promote responsible and courteous conduct on shared-use trails. Keep in mind that conventions for yielding and passing may vary, depending on regional traditions, traffic conditions and the intended use of the trail.

1

**Ride On Open Trails Only.** Respect trail and road closures — ask a land manager for clarification if you are uncertain about the status of a trail. Do not trespass on private land. Obtain permits or other authorization as may be required. Be aware that bicycles are not permitted in areas protected as state or federal Wilderness.

2

**Leave No Trace.** Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones. Don't cut switchbacks. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.

3

**Control Your Bicycle.** Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations, and ride within your limits.

4

**Yield to Others.** Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you're coming -- a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Bicyclists should yield to all other trail users, unless the trail is clearly signed for bike-only travel. Bicyclists traveling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill, unless the trail is clearly signed for one-way or downhill-only traffic. Strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.

5

**Never Scare Animals.** Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement or a loud noise. Give animals enough room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain). Running cattle and disturbing wildlife are serious offenses.

6

**Plan Ahead.** Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding -- and prepare accordingly. Strive to be self-sufficient: keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

Keep trails open by setting a good example of environmentally sound and socially responsible off-road cycling. For more information, visit [www.imba.com](http://www.imba.com).



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