

8: OFF-STREET BICYCLING

THE BASICS OF USING TRAILS SAFELY

KING COUNTY'S REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM has hundreds of miles of multi-purpose trails linking communities, recreational areas, and rural lands. While they are a relief from autos, remember: Bicycle collisions happen on trails as well as on streets. Here's how to ride trails safely.

Be Courteous: People on trails don't always know which side to travel on ① and when to yield. So the most important rule for everyone is: Act courteously. When in doubt, give the other person a break.

Ride Predictably: Obey the speed limit. Ride straight and at a steady speed so people can stay out of your way. Always look back before passing or turning. And use hand signals (see page 13) and make noise with your voice or a bell, horn, or whistle.

Where to Pass? Slower trail traffic should stay right, except to pass—just like traffic rules for the street. And you usually should pass others on the left. When there's not enough room on the left, pass on the right. Always signal so people behind you know which side you'll pass on. Always slow down a lot when passing small children walking or biking—you might not be able to predict their next move.

Calling Out to Others: Call out "passing on your left" or use a bell before you pass another cyclist, skater, or runner to warn of your approach. ② Don't wear headphones so that you can hear others passing and warning you.

When to Yield: ③

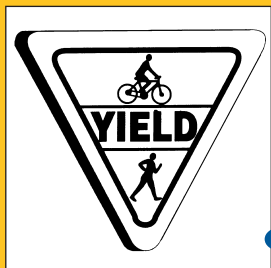
- ▶ When you enter a trail, or you're on a trail that crosses a street or another trail, always be ready to slow down and yield to cross traffic.
- ▶ If cross traffic has a stop or yield sign, they should yield to you.
- ▶ If there are no signs, you should yield to the person who reaches the intersection first.
- ▶ Yield to anyone who looks like they won't slow down for you. If there's no room to pass, yield to slower-moving people in front of you. And if you're about to stop, move off of the trail.



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Do No Damage: Don't ride off designated trails into mud, dirt, or grass, or over seedlings, or lock your bike to small trees. You'll compact the soil and kill trees.

Problem Areas:

- ▶ **Sharp turns.** Paths often have blind turns where you can't see oncoming pedestrians or other traffic. ④ Slow way down and stay on your side!
- ▶ **Crowds.** Where they run along beaches and other gathering places, trails are often filled with pedestrians. In crowds, go slow and make noise.
- ▶ **Sand, ice, and snow.** Paths covered with snow, ice, sand, wet leaves, or gravel will make you slide. ⑤ Avoid sharp turns and sudden braking.

DIRT TRAIL BICYCLING

Cycling on dirt trails and other rough terrain requires special tactics to keep you from wiping out.

Position: On rough terrain, here's how you can absorb shocks better. ⑥

- ▶ Take most of your weight off your seat, letting your legs and arms absorb the jolts. For really bumpy or steep terrain, lift higher off your seat.
- ▶ Keep your knees and elbows slightly bent.
- ▶ Move your butt forward on ascents and backward on descents to keep your weight centered over your pedals.

Turning: ⑦

- ▶ When turning, put the outside pedal down (close to the ground) and put most of your weight on it. If your inside pedal's down, it might scrape the dirt and cause you to wipe out.
- ▶ When you're leaning your bike into a turn on loose dirt or gravel, keep your body straight with respect to the ground. This reduces the chance that the bike will slide out from under you.

Braking:

- ▶ Keep your hands over your brake levers.
- ▶ When braking, apply the back and front brakes at the same time. On descents, apply slightly more pressure to the back brake. Too much front braking can flip you.
- ▶ Don't force your bike into a skid by locking up the wheels with your brakes. Instead, apply your brakes periodically to stay at a controlled speed.
- ▶ Don't brake in the middle of a sharp turn. Slow down enough before the turn to stay in control.
- ▶ Trail riding is rough on brakes. Inspect, clean, and adjust your brakes often.



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Staying in Control:

- ▶ Always control your speed so you can stop suddenly to avoid a collision.
- ▶ If your bike starts to bounce around uncontrollably, stop! If you can't, force yourself to fall where you can avoid hitting objects.
- ▶ When falling, push yourself away from the bike and try to roll. On descents, you can push off backward and let the bike ride out from under you.

Ruts and Bumps: ❶ Roll through ruts or over obstacles by shifting your weight as follows.

- ▶ After your front wheel's entered a rut, take your weight off of it as it comes up the other side. Keeping your weight on the wheel might cause it to dig in.
- ▶ When riding over an obstacle like a rock or log, pull up your front wheel to climb over the obstacle. (You can make your front tire spring up by pushing down, then pulling up in one quick move.) When the front wheel starts down the other side, shift your weight to the front wheel so the rear wheel rolls over the obstacle easily.

RESPECTING TRAILS AND THEIR USERS

KING COUNTY'S REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM is used by thousands for a wide variety of purposes. The trail system includes both paved and soft-surface (gravel) routes and is shared by cyclists, hikers, walkers, joggers, skaters, equestrians, dog sledgers, and others. You should respect the rights of fellow users. Here are some rules of etiquette:

- ▶ Don't exceed 15 MPH or use motor vehicles.
- ▶ When encountering another person on a trail, make noise (with a bell or your voice) far in advance so they know you're there. Show courtesy by asking if it's OK to pass, and pass on the left.
- ▶ Always yield to equestrians and hikers, and to other users where signs tell you to. ❷
- ▶ When approaching an animal, slow down. ❸
- ▶ If you ride with a pet, keep it on leash and obey the scoop law.
- ▶ Trails are closed a half-hour after sunset and open a half-hour before sunrise.
- ▶ Don't ride through muddy soil; you'll leave permanent ruts. ❹ Don't skid, which erodes soil.
- ▶ Don't ride off of existing trails or on closed trails. Respect private property.
- ▶ Use lights and reflectors before dawn and after dusk.