

Some DO's and DON'Ts of Trail Riding

DON'T take a fat, unconditioned horse fresh out the pasture and expect him to put strenuous days without reasonable preparation.

DO spend adequate time riding between outings.

DON'T be late arriving at the starting point of the ride.

DO be mounted and ready to leave at the designated starting time.

DON'T ride up too close behind another rider. Your horse may step on the lead horse and pull his shoe off or injure him, and you or your horse could be kicked.

DO maintain a safe distance between your horse and the one ahead.

DON'T be a dead weight on your horse's back.

DO change position occasionally. (Some riders will stand up briefly to give their horse some relief).

If your horse has a tendency to be cranky and/or a kicker, **DON'T** ride him so close to the group that others are in danger.

DO tie a red ribbon in his tail as a warning. Remember that a kicker is an undesirable choice for trail use, and you will be responsible for any problems he causes.

DON'T mount or dismount on the downhill side.

DO mount and dismount on the uphill side. It is wise to practice mounting and dismounting from either side at home before the ride.

DO check your cinch to be sure it is snug before steep ascents and descents.

DON'T wait until the saddle slides up on the horse's neck or back to his tail before deciding it was necessary.

DON'T pass the Trail Boss (the leader of the ride). It is a matter of good trail manners; besides, though you may think you know where the ride is going, you may not. It is annoying to have to call riders back when they have taken a wrong turn in the trail

DO stay behind the Trail Boss unless he or she has indicated otherwise.

DON'T pass other riders at a gallop. You may upset many horses as you speed by. It is especially unnerving to those riding young or green horses that could become extremely excited. You could cause a serious accident.

DO pass only on sections of the trail that are safe to do so, and pass quietly.

When crossing a road requiring traffic control, **DON'T** waste time.

DO cross as quickly as possible so that the normal activity on the road can resume without unnecessary delay.

DON'T sit to one side in the saddle. You will be gouging your horse in the back.

DO sit up straight with your weight evenly distributed.

DON'T leave gates you have found closed open.

DO leave gates you have found open — open! They could be the only access to water that livestock in that area may have.

DON'T leave litter or garbage on the trail or in the camp area. **DO** carry out with you what you carry in.

DON'T lag behind the other riders. Most rides have a drag or safety rider. If your slow pace holds him back to the point he/she loses sight of the riders ahead, and if the area is so frequently used that tracking is difficult, you could be the cause of the group becoming separated.

DO stay up with the group or at least keep them in sight.

DON'T start out any reasonably long trail ride without some means to tie or secure your horse.

DO carry either a halter and lead rope or hobbles (or both).

On a hot day, at lunch or rest stops, **DON'T** make your horse stand out in the sun if there is shade available.

DO be as considerate of your horse as you are of yourself.

DON'T tie your horse too closely to a strange horse.

DO select a spot that is far enough from the next horse so there will be no chance of injury from kicking.

DON'T tie your horse with a knot that is difficult to untie or one that will tighten.

DO use a horseman's or bowline knot so that he can be released in an instant in case of an emergency.

DON'T tie your horse with a rope that is long enough for him to step over.

DO allow just enough rope so that his nose reaches the ground.

DON'T water the horse immediately on arrival in camp, especially if he is hot.

DO water him along the trail. In camp, after he is cooled out, give him small amounts until he is satisfied.

DON'T unsaddle the horse immediately after arrival in camp.

DO let him stand 15 to 30 minutes tied but still saddled. This will reduce the likelihood of "heat bumps" which are caused by a sudden release of pressure when the rider dismounts and unsaddles.

DON'T feed the horse immediately on arrival in camp. Digestion requires blood, and if the horse is fatigued, he needs the blood to replenish his system. Too many demands upon his system may give him colic.

DO let him rest, and then feed him a small amount of hay, with the major feeding later in the evening.

If you use a hay net, **DON'T** hang it so low that the horse can paw into it.

DO secure it so there is no chance, even when it is empty, for the horse to step through it.

DON'T feed your horse on the trail more than he is accustomed to at home. If anything, feed him slightly less and his chances of colic will be less.

DO give him his largest feeding at night, rather than in the morning just before a day's work.

If you capture a horse that has escaped during the night and you don't know where he belongs, **DON'T** tie him to a picket line or too close to other horses. If he pulls back on the rope, he might pull down the entire picket line.

DO secure him apart from the other horses.

DON'T be a chronic complainer. All the comforts of home will not be available on the trail.

If you can't cope with a few inconveniences, **DO** stay at home!