

Whether you are riding bridleways and by-ways, forest fire-roads or dedicated trail centre routes, there are a number of measures you can take to ensure that you and other users have a safe and enjoyable time on the trails.

Slower riders

If you encounter slower riders, especially on single-track sections, be considerate and aware of the fact that they may be nervous or less experienced. Slow down, let them know you are approaching but don't ride aggressively on to their back wheel. Give them time and don't ride too close. A rider behind always sounds closer than they actually are and this may unnerve them. Keep communicating and, when a suitable place occurs for you to safely pass, let them know what side you intend to pass on e.g. "*on your right*" and for them to hold their line. Always thank riders for letting you pass.

Faster riders

If a faster rider comes up behind you, allow them to pass but only when you feel it is safe for you to do so. Don't panic; ride consistently and listen for any instructions they may give you. If the trail widens enough for you to pull to one side safely, indicate that you intend to do so and move predictably but don't feel pressured.

One way

Many of the routes at trail centres are one-way. Make sure you ride them in the correct direction. If you are forced to travel in the wrong direction, take extreme care and always give way to oncoming riders. Always dismount and, where possible when pushing, stay off the main riding line. Wanting to re-ride an especially fun or challenging section of trail is not a valid reason for riding in the wrong direction.

Don't obstruct the trail

If you need to stop for a mechanical problem, to reform a group or just to catch your breath, only do so where you can get off the trail and where other riders will be able to see you and pass safely. Consider the size of your group before you stop and ensure there is enough space for all of you.

Leave no trace

Make sure any empty gel or bar wrappers are securely carried in your pockets or rucksack until you can dispose of them in a suitable bin. Never leave inner tubes on the trails as these can be extremely hazardous to wildlife and livestock. Even apple cores, orange peels and banana skins shouldn't be dumped on the trail as, especially in upland areas, these can take a long time to decompose.

Locking your wheels and skidding excessively damages the trails, is indicative of poor riding technique and is ineffective for reducing speed. Work on your [cornering](#) and braking

technique, ensure your brakes are correctly set-up and that your tyres and tyre pressures are appropriate to the trail conditions.

Stick to the worn line and ride according to the conditions. Most trails, whether natural or man-made, have an obvious worn line and you should stay on this and not cause additional erosion. Don't cut corners or veer off line to avoid puddles or patches of mud. If you know that a particular trail deteriorates in wet conditions, avoid riding it. This particularly applies to natural trails in environmentally sensitive areas such as open moorland.

Respect other trail users

If you are riding on public rights of way, you can expect to encounter walkers, runners and horse riders. Ride considerately with them and your own safety in mind. [The law](#) states when riding on bridleways, cyclists should give way to pedestrians and persons on horseback, so always be prepared to slow down, give way and to communicate clearly and politely. You should take particular care around horses. Here is some [advice on conduct when encountering horses on the trails](#).

Respect ROW

In England and Wales, you have the right to ride on the following public rights of way:

- Bridleways
- Byways open to all traffic
- Restricted byways

Some rights of way have special agreements in place. An example is [Snowdon](#), on which certain routes up the mountain are open to cyclists only at specific times of day, and of the year. If you have any doubts about your planned route, check with a local contact in the area, such as a cycle shop.

You may also ride on the following:

- 'Routes with other public access' – the Ordnance Survey term for 'white roads' or 'green lanes'
- Unsurfaced roads
- Forestry Commission stone tracks
- Some unsurfaced Forestry Commission tracks
- Forestry Commission mountain bike trails
- Cycle paths and cycle tracks
- Some canal towpaths

There are a number of bodies who are lobbying for increased access rights for mountain bikers in England and Wales as the current rights of way distinction between bridleways and footpaths was made long before mountain biking even existed. The exact intricacies of the law are complex so you should assume that you don't have the right to ride on footpaths and should not do so.

In Scotland, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gave you some of the best access rights in the world. You have the right to be on most land and inland water for recreation, education and going from place to place, providing you act responsibly. For more information, here are further details of the [Scottish Outdoor Access code](#).

Shut gates

Always make sure that you shut and securely fasten any gates that you pass through. Even if you encounter a gate that appears to have been left open, if in doubt, close it.

Ride to your ability

By riding trails that are appropriate to your skill level and bike, you are less likely to hold up other riders, you will reduce your chance of having an accident and will enjoy yourself more. At trail centres, use the [gradings as a guide](#) but be aware that these aren't consistent throughout the country. If in doubt, ride a grade lower than normal to get a feel for the terrain. On natural trails, if you are unfamiliar with the area, consult with guide-books, local riders/bike shops or forums.