

BETTER MANNERS. BETTER ADVENTURES.

A Practical Guide to Trail Etiquette for Dog Owners



Trails are shared spaces and bringing a dog means taking responsibility for how your dog affects everyone using them. Good trail etiquette is more than following posted rules. It means keeping your dog under control, respecting other people and dogs, limiting disturbance to wildlife, and leaving the environment as you found it.

These habits reduce conflict, protect your dog from preventable encounters, and help preserve continued access to dog-friendly trails.



THE EIGHT RULES OF TRAIL ETIQUETTE

01 KNOW THE TRAIL

Check whether dogs are permitted, where leashes are required, and whether seasonal closures or wildlife restrictions apply. Follow trailhead signs and current land-manager rules.

02 CONTROL YOUR DOG

Use a standard leash unless off-leash use is specifically allowed and your dog can recall immediately around people, dogs, wildlife, bikes, and horses. Keep your dog in eye sight at all times.

03 ASK BEFORE APPROACHING

Do not allow your dog to approach a person or dog without clear permission. A friendly, loose, or off-leash dog is not an invitation to greet. Some people may be scared or allergic and other dogs may carry disease, illness, or be aggressive. All people and dogs deserve to recreate in shared spaces.

04 PACK IT OUT

Pick up waste immediately, seal the bag, and carry it to an approved trash can or home. Never leave it beside the trail—even for short periods of time or if you intend to retrieve it later. Leaving waste on the trail, even for short periods of time, may impact the environment, wildlife, or other trail users enjoyment. There are smell proof containers you can carry to pack out waste easily.

05 YIELD AND GIVE SPACE

Step aside early, shorten the leash (or temporarily leash your off leash dog), and keep your dog close without blocking the trail. Give uphill hikers and cyclists room to pass. Give horses significant space, keep your dog quiet, and follow the rider's directions.

06 PROTECT WILDLIFE

Leash your dog when wildlife is visible or likely. Never allow stalking, chasing, barking at, or investigating animals, carcasses, nests, or dens. If wildlife appears, create distance and leave calmly; turn around when you cannot pass safely. Be bear aware! Carry bear spray, know how to use it, and know the signs of bear activity. Keeping your dog within eye sight at all times can help prevent negative wildlife interactions.

07 PRESERVE LAND AND WATER

Stay on established trails and prevent digging, trampling vegetation, widening muddy sections, or entering restoration areas. Keep your dog away from sensitive shorelines and shared water sources, and manage repeated barking.

08 KEEP YOUR DOG IN SIGHT

Choose a route suited to your dog's health, fitness, experience, and training. Bring water, extra waste bags, identification, a standard leash, and first-aid supplies. Practice recall, wait, emergency down, leave it, quiet, and calm passing before relying on them outdoors. Always keep your dog within your line of sight—even where off-leash use is permitted. You should be able to see, monitor, and immediately direct your dog before they encounter wildlife, other trail users, hazards, or changes in terrain. If you cannot maintain visual contact and reliable control, use a leash or long line.

TRAIN FOR THE ADVENTURE

Choose an adventure suited to your dog's health, fitness, experience, and training. Bring water, extra waste bags, identification, a standard leash, and first-aid supplies. Practice recall, wait, emergency down, leave it, quiet, and calm passing before relying on them outdoors. Reliable recall, calm passing, wait, leave it, and an emergency down help you manage real-world situations and give your dog more freedom safely. High Peaks K9 can help you build the skills your dog needs for confident, responsible adventures.

Ready to prepare your dog for the trail? Visit highpeaksk9.com to explore training options and additional resources for safer adventures.



DISCLAIMER: This material is provided by High Peaks K9 for general educational and informational purposes only. It is not veterinary, medical, legal, or land-management advice and does not replace posted regulations or guidance from trail authorities. Always follow local leash laws, closures, and site-specific rules, and consult a licensed veterinarian regarding your dog's health, fitness, and individual needs. Dogs may respond differently to training methods and outdoor environments. High Peaks K9 makes no guarantees regarding individual results. In an emergency, contact the appropriate veterinary, medical, or emergency service immediately

