

Cross-Country Ski Trails and Etiquette

How Cross Country Ski Trails Work

At Nordic ski areas the cross country ski trails are machine groomed for skate and classic skiing.

Classic skiing is done in the tracks and skate skiing is done where the snow is groomed with a corduroy-like surface.

On some trails there may be enough width for classic tracks on both sides and a two way skate lane down the middle, but many trails are not wide enough for this configuration. In that case the trail might be designated one-way, with a classic track on one side.

Sometimes trails are restricted to skate-only or classic-only. There are a number of possibilities, so it's best to check trail maps and rules before you head out.

Rules regarding dogs vary from place to place, so it's best to check ahead.

Trail Etiquette: Follow the Golden Rule

The problem with rules for trail etiquette is that new skiers don't know the rules and experienced skiers don't agree on them.

Here are some guidelines and things to consider to help everyone stay safe and have a good time:

- Skating over classic tracks ruins the experience for classic skiers.
- If you need to stop along a trail, step aside so you don't block the trail.
- Don't stop at the bottom of a hill where other skiers might have trouble avoiding you.
- Do a shoulder check before stepping out of the classic track or moving laterally across the trail so you don't interfere with a skier approaching from behind.
- Because skiers on the downhills have less control, they are generally considered to have the right of way over skiers climbing.
- If you are tucking on the downhills, make sure your pole tips point down, not upward behind your armpits. You don't want to poke another skier in the eye.
- Dogs are allowed on some trails. Check local rules.
- Beginner skiers are already fearful, so please keep your dogs away from them and beware of snagging other skiers if your dog is on a leash.
- It used to be that faster skiers approaching from behind could call out, "Track!" and slower skiers would step out of the tracks to allow the faster skier to pass. This convention is falling out of favour. Most expert skiers are happy to step out of the track to pass – they are the better skiers, after all.

Be considerate, use common sense and try to think ahead to potential problems. We don't have to make it more complicated than that.