

By practicing the Tread Lightly! principles, you not only care for the environment and reduce conflicts among recreationists, you help protect access to recreational areas for years to come.

Tread Lightly!® is a national nonprofit organization with a mission to promote responsible recreation through ethics education and stewardship. It is considered the nation's signature ethics message for outdoor enthusiasts that use motorized vehicles while enjoying trails and waterways. Tread Lightly! offers unique training and restoration programs strategically designed to instill an ethic of responsibility in a wide variety of outdoor enthusiasts and the industries that serve them.

- T** TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY
- R** RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS
- E** EDUCATE YOURSELF
- A** AVOID SENSITIVE AREAS
- D** DO YOUR PART



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Download *The Tread Lightly! Guide to Responsible Four Wheeling* for more useful information for riding in the great outdoors at [www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org).



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# FOUR WHEELING



**TREAD LIGHTLY!'S**  
RESPONSIBLE RECREATION TIPS

## TRAVEL RESPONSIBLY

Travel responsibly on designated roads, trails or areas.

- ✔ Travel only in areas open to four-wheel drive vehicles.
- ✔ For your safety, travel straight up or down hills.
- ✔ Drive over, not around obstacles to avoid widening the trail.
- ✔ Straddle ruts, gullies, and washouts even if they are wider than your vehicle.
- ✔ Cross streams only at designated fording points, where the road crosses the stream.
- ✔ When possible, avoid mud. In soft terrain, go easy on the gas to avoid wheel spin, which can cause rutting.
- ✔ Don't turn around on narrow roads, steep terrain, or unstable ground. Back up until you find a safe place to turn around.
- ✔ Stop frequently and scout ahead on foot.
- ✔ To help with traction, balance your load and lower tire pressure to where you see a bulge (typically not less than 20 pounds).
- ✔ Know where the differential or the lowest point on your vehicle is. This will help in negotiating terrain and prevent vehicle damage resulting in oil and fluid spills on the trail.
- ✔ Maintain a reasonable distance between vehicles.
- ✔ Comply with all signs and respect barriers.
- ✔ Travel with a group of two or more vehicles. Driving solo can leave you vulnerable if you have an accident or breakdown. Designate meeting areas in case of separation.
- ✔ Choose the appropriate winch for your vehicle size.
- ✔ Attach towing cable, tree strap, or chain as low as possible to the object being winched. Let the winch do the work; never drive the winch.
- ✔ When winching always inspect your equipment, use the right winch for the situation, find a good secure anchor, and never winch with less than five wraps of wire rope around the drum.
- ✔ When using a tree as an anchor, use a wide tree strap to avoid damaging the trunk of the tree.
- ✔ Don't mix driving with alcohol or drugs.

## RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

Respect the rights of others, including private property owners, all recreational trail users, campers and others so they can enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed.

- ✔ Be considerate of others on the road or trail.
- ✔ Leave gates as you find them.
- ✔ If crossing private property, be sure to ask permission from the landowner(s).
- ✔ Yield the right of way to those passing you or traveling uphill. Yield to mountain bikers, hikers, and horses.
- ✔ When encountering horses on the trail, move to the side of the trail, stop, turn off your engine, and speak—you want the horse to know you are human. Ask the rider the best way to proceed.
- ✔ Proceed with caution around horses and pack animals. Sudden, unfamiliar activity may spook animals—possibly causing injury to animals, handlers, and others on the trail.
- ✔ Do not idly ride around in camping, picnicking, trailhead, or residential areas.
- ✔ Keep speeds low around crowds and in camping areas.
- ✔ Keep the noise and dust down.

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

Educate yourself prior to your trip by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies, planning for your trip, taking recreation skills classes, and knowing how to operate your equipment safely.

- ✔ Obtain a map—motor vehicle use map where appropriate—of your destination and determine which areas are open to off-highway vehicles.
- ✔ Make a realistic plan and stick to it. Always tell someone of your travel plans.
- ✔ Contact the land manager for area restrictions, closures, and permit requirements.
- ✔ Check the weather forecast before you go.
- ✔ Prepare for the unexpected by packing necessary emergency items.
- ✔ Buckle-up! Seat belts are mandatory.
- ✔ Know your limitations. Watch your time, your fuel, and your energy.
- ✔ Take an off-highway drivers course to learn more about negotiating terrain in a four-wheel drive vehicle.
- ✔ Make sure your vehicle is mechanically up to task. Be prepared with tools, supplies, spares, and a spill kit for trailside repairs.

## AVOID SENSITIVE AREAS

Avoid sensitive areas such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands and streams. Stay on designated routes.

- ✔ Other sensitive habitats to avoid include living desert soils, tundra, and seasonal nesting or breeding areas.
- ✔ Do not disturb historical, archeological, or paleontological sites.
- ✔ Avoid “spooking” livestock and wildlife you encounter and keep your distance.
- ✔ Motorized and mechanized vehicles are not allowed in designated Wilderness Areas.

## DO YOUR PART

Do your part by modeling appropriate behavior, leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, and restoring degraded areas.

- ✔ Carry a trash bag on your vehicle and pick up litter left by others.
- ✔ Pack out what you pack in.
- ✔ Practice minimum impact camping by using established sites, camping 200 feet from water resources and trails.
- ✔ Observe proper sanitary waste disposal or pack your waste out.
- ✔ Protect the soundscape by preventing unnecessary noise created by a poorly tuned vehicle or revving your engine.
- ✔ Before and after a ride, wash your vehicle to reduce the spread of invasive species.
- ✔ Build a trail community. Get to know other types of recreationists that share your favorite trail.