

USDA Forest Service Trail Difficulty Ratings

Trail difficulty ratings are generally based on trail condition, steepness of grades, gain and loss of elevation, and the amount and kinds of natural barriers that must be traversed.

These ratings mean different things depending on if the trail was designed for foot use, for horse use, for bike use or for wheelchair use. Use this guide as a means to provide your visitors with an idea of what they might expect.

		Easy	Moderate	Difficult
Hiking Trail	Grade	20%	30%	30% or more
	Trail Width	18-24"	12-18"	12"
	Trail Surface	Spot Gravel	Roots, imbedded rocks, some logs	No graded tread
Mountain Bike	Grade	10%	30%	30% or more
	Trail Width	24"	12-24"	12"
	Trail Surface	Relatively Smooth	Sections are Relatively Rough	Varied. May need to carry bike
Horse Riding Trail	Grade	15%	25%	30% or more
	Trail Width	24"	24"	18"
	Trail Surface	Surface as needed for stability	Roots, imbedded rocks, some logs	No graded tread
Wheelchairs Trail	Grade	1-3%	3-6%	6-8% or more
	Trail Width	4'	4'	3'
	Trail Surface	Concrete or Asphalt	Asphalt or very fine crushed rock	Hard packed soil with some rock and roots