

RunSMART® Trail Running Tips

Trail Running

- You may have to pick your feet up more due to the terrain and sometimes take shorter faster strides if the terrain is more technical.
- Look about 5 to 10 feet ahead of you to see any upcoming obstacles or change in the terrain.
- Walk when you need to such as going up a steep hill.
- Stay to the right of the trail you are on.
- If you are passing someone, greet them and say that you will be passing on the left (or right if that offers you more room). If you are on a narrow trail, wait until you get to a widening in the trail.
- Yield to downhill runners if you are going uphill.
- Yield to other trail users such as horses.
- Only use trails marked for hiking/walking or multi-use.
- If running in the late fall, check to see if the park or trail you want to run on is closed for hunting before heading out. Wear bright colors (such as orange) during hunting season.
- If you run with a dog, follow park rules. Many will require your dog to be on leash. Some metro parks have trails that are off-limits to dogs.
- Many trails will have bathroom facilities or porta-potties. If you need to go before you are back at a bathroom, get off the trail and make sure you are away from a water source.

Winter trail running

You can trail run in the winter. It can be tough going through deep snow, so snowshoe running is a good option after a snowfall. After the trails get packed down, it will be easier to run on the trail. Stay off groomed ski trails.

To help keep from slipping, use a traction device (such as Yaktrax® or MICROspikes®) or put hex head sheet metal screws in the soles of your shoes.

Safety

- Bring your ID and cellphone with you in case you get lost or hurt.
- Let others know where you are going and when will be back.
- Leave your headphones at home. It is important to be aware of your surroundings.
- If you leave your car at the start of a trail, make sure you don't have any valuables with you or that they are not visible (put them in the trunk before getting to the trail).
- Run with others when you can as you are getting familiar with new trails or bring a map. Check out websites or trail maps of the trails you plan to try out beforehand.

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- Wear sunscreen.
- Wear bug spray in the summer.

Shoes

If you plan to run on trails on a regular basis, it will be worthwhile to buy a pair of trail running shoes. They will provide you with:

- more traction on rocky and slippery terrain
- better underfoot protection from rocks
- more stability.

Hydration

Bring some type of hydration pack, belt or handheld bottle with you on your runs. Typically, you will be running slower on the trails versus the roads due to the more challenging terrain. You can end up being out there longer than expected, so having water or a sports drink with you is important.

Fuel

If you will be running for more than an hour, bring some food, gels and/or chews with you. Carry a small plastic bag with you to put your trash in and throw it away when you are done.

Light

A headlamp or lightweight flashlight with fresh batteries (or bring spare batteries with if you will be out there for a while) will be needed for early morning runs or later evening runs. If you are running close to sunrise or sunset, bring it with you. Don't be caught out in the woods without light!

For more information about trail running, visit umtr.net (Upper Midwest Trail Runners).