

TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN: STOP, SPEAK, and STAND BACK





The Trails Safe Passing Plan



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STOP:

Horses are prey animals and naturally can be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects. Horses have natural "flight" survival instincts and prefer to move their feet towards an exit route. Therefore, people with horses should pass at a walk while other trail users remain STOPPED until passed.

SPEAK:

Please ANNOUNCE your presence.
Please SAY "Hi" when we pass by.
Speaking helps horses identify you as a person and will help keep them calm.

STAND BACK:

Please STAND BACK with your whole group on the same side of the trail.
Please contain children and dogs.
Please do not hide or stand behind a tree, as these actions may cause horses to fear you are a predator planning an attack.

SMILE:

Enjoy the safe and happy trails!

Staying Safe



According to a study by the *Outdoor Industry Association*, 8.1 million more Americans hiked in 2020 than in 2019.

The dramatic increase in outdoor recreation adds increased pressure on trails and emphasizes the need for a trails safe passing plan for all trail user groups on public and private lands.

The TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN: STOP, SPEAK, and STAND BACK is an action plan and educational resource developed to help all trail users understand the importance of yielding to people with horses since horses are prey animals and naturally can be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects.

Horses Are Our Partners



Photo courtesy of
J. Klein Photos
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Horses are cultural and historical. They carved their place in history and carried people into the future on their backs.

Today, horses are declared health partners as Equine Assisted Services (EAS) providing emotional, mental, physical, and substance abuse therapy and should be welcomed on public lands.

Horses Are Prey Animals

Due to the natural pecking order of predator and prey, horses are more afraid of you than you are of them.

Horses expect people to be the leaders of our partnerships, providing opportunities to practice confidence, empathy, empowerment, kindness, leadership skills, patience, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and self-discipline.

Horses appreciate when they are treated with respect.



Photo courtesy of
J. Klein Photos
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Horses Mirror Our Attitudes

The size, speed, and strength of horses hold people immediately accountable for our attitudes and actions. Horses will mirror our attitudes, providing us a reflection of how we are portraying ourselves to others.

Horses improve balance, flexibility, muscle strengthening, stamina, and more for people.



Photo courtesy of Pure Michigan
Silver Lake State Park, Mears, Michigan

A Horse's Body

The horse's body structure is designed to carry people perfectly.

Horses can carry up to 20% of their weight (approximately 220 pounds) and pull up to twice their weight (approximately 2,200 pounds).

Each of their gaits (walk, trot, and run) simulate our gaits, providing people essential industry, therapy, and transportation partners.



Photo courtesy of Joe Gall Photography
Silver Lake State Park, Mears, Michigan

A Horse's Senses

Horses can hear better than people as they can rotate each ear independently in nearly all directions.

Horses have a stronger sense of smell than people, so they will notice people, other wildlife, and objects before people.

Horses are exceptional search and rescue partners.



Photo courtesy of J. Klein Photos
Muskegon State Park, Muskegon, Michigan

Horses Have Blind Spots

Horses have eyes on the sides of their heads so they can look for predators and danger in a 350-degree radius.

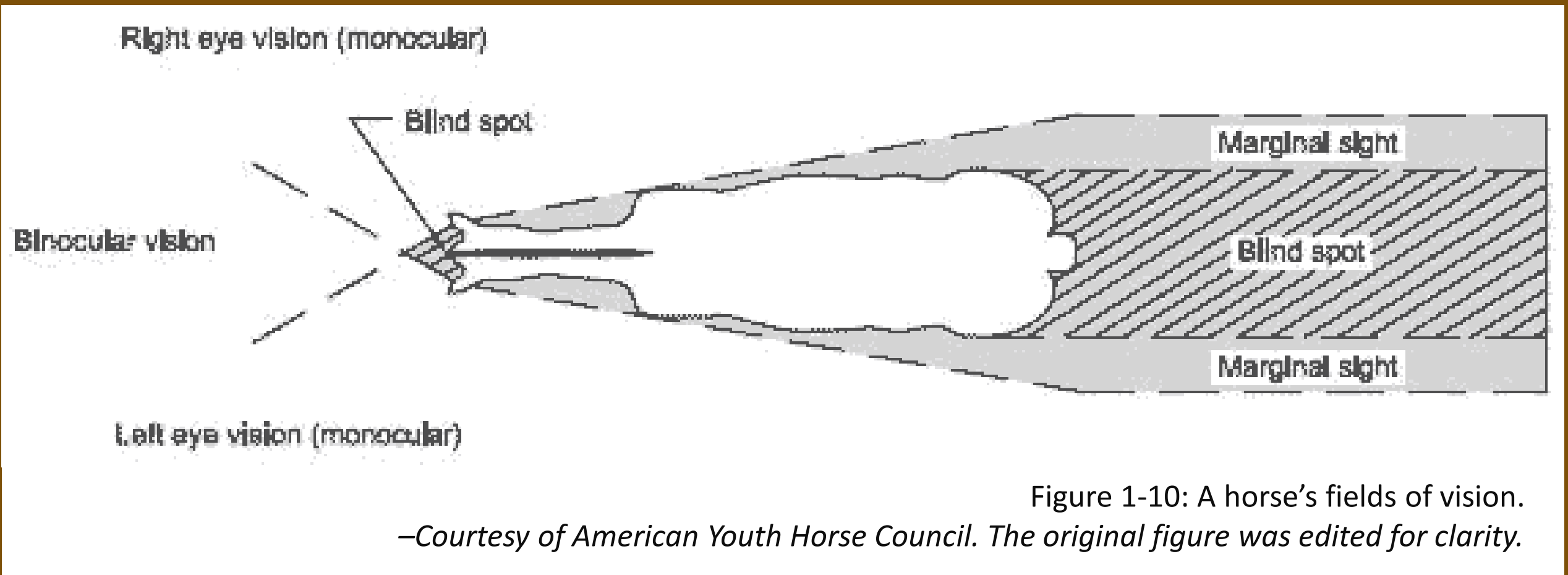
Horses have blind spots up close, between their eyes, and directly behind them.

Always ask horse owners before approaching their horses. Please approach horses at their sides, not directly at their faces or behind them.



Photo courtesy of Pure Michigan
Fort Custer Recreation Area, Augusta, Michigan

A Horse's Field of Vision



For more horse behavior, characteristics, and information, please refer to this helpful resource:

Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads and Campgrounds

[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/
fs_publications/07232816/page03.cfm#visi](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/fs_publications/07232816/page03.cfm#visi)

A Horse's Sense of Sight

Horses can see movement, such as a bike approaching better than people.

Horses only have one-dimensional vision, so they have difficulty with depth perception, such as how far away a bike is or how deep the water is at water crossings.



Photo courtesy of Pure Michigan
Fort Custer Recreation Area, Augusta, Michigan

Horses Communicate

Horses provide clear communication through their physical body language of ears, head, and tail positions, and eye expressions.



Photo courtesy of J. Klein Photos
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Horses Are Transportation



Photo courtesy of Sally Aungier
Staunton River State Park, Virginia

Horses provided our first autonomous modes of transportation. They have excellent situational awareness and self-preservation skills. They will take care of both themselves and their rider.

Horses can react a quarter of a second faster than people, putting people with horses at risk of injuries when swift, semi-silent bikes are approaching, which could simulate the speeds and sounds of potential predators.

Horses Are Herd Animals

Horses prefer to be in a herd because there is safety in numbers.

People with horses often camp and travel in groups on the trails to keep their horses calm and comfortable.



Photo courtesy of Pure Michigan
Waterloo Recreation Area, Michigan

Horses Are Low Impact



Photo courtesy of Best of America by Horseback
Mackinac Island State Park, Michigan

Horses have a four-beat hoof pattern and prey scent, so even with a rider on their back horses disturb other wildlife less than all other user groups, including hikers.

Horses are passive, lightweight, and low-impact trail users in even the most sensitive environments.

Risk of Injury



People with a horse have more risks of injuries as they are in sitting positions, on live creatures, over eight feet above the ground. Bikers and hikers are in upright positions, on objects, or on the ground, and are less likely to fall or have injuries.



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Thank You



Thank you for following the TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN of STOP, SPEAK, and STAND BACK and learning about the natural instincts and gifts of horses.

Understanding these horse facts will drive out fears of horses, give compassion and respect for horses and people with horses, and provide a plan of action when you encounter horses and people with horses.

Equine Land Conservation Resource would like to thank the following:

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mi.trail.rep@gmail.com Jena Cook, and Lynsey Cook for developing the TRAILS SAFE PASSING PLAN of STOP SPEAK, and STAND BACK educational presentation **<http://michiganhorsetrails.com/>**

Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council of Aspen/Snowmass, Colorado, for the use of the Stop, Speak and Stand Back sign <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/>
rfvhc.Colorado@gmail.com

For more information on equine access to public trails, visit **www.elcr.org**