

RATING THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF TRAILS

The objectives of rating systems are to: help trail users make informed decisions to use trails that match their skill level, manage risk and minimize injuries, improving the outdoor experience for a wide variety of participants.

The Atascadero Horsemen Club Board requests that all ride leaders provide general guidance to its members for each trail ride they lead, based on the following general categories, which are drawn from definitions used by a variety state, national, and international organizations. Trails may have multiple ratings (i.e., a percentage of each of the following categories)

Easy trails moderately healthy person with limited experience on trails, well-marked low risk trail, firm footing in generally good condition and short (about a mile), little overall altitude change over trail (up to 150', 5% or less grade), good signage.

Moderate trails healthy experienced person, trail generally in good condition with firm footing, length 2-3 miles, moderate overall elevation change (up to 500', 10% or less), good signage.

Difficult trails healthy person with considerable experience on trails, trail in generally good condition but may have some variable footing, some narrow single-track sections and short rapid elevation changes (250+-, 20% or less), variable signage.

Unimproved trails offer the option of passing thru sections of grassland and/or trees where the trail may not have a distinct track. Trails with this designation may have alternate routes that are "improved" with a distinct track. *"Unimproved" trail sections are usually easy or moderate, noted in trail descriptions, may have more limited signage, but are often scenic and used by participants who want to get off the "beaten track".*

The final decision to hike/ride is the participant's and must take into consideration the participants level of expertise and the condition of their horse. Participants ride at their own risk, and trail conditions can vary widely based on weather conditions..