

The Grading Shift: Supporting Better Rider Choices



Why Trail Grades



- ✓ Help Riders Choose the Right Trail for Their Skills and Fitness
- ✓ Support a Safe and Enjoyable Experience
- ✓ Ensure Consistency Across the NZ Cycle Trails Network
- ✓ Assist Designers, Builders, and Funders
- ✓ Enable Operators and Advisors to Give Accurate Recommendations

Determining Trail Grades

- Trail grades are determined by evaluating the **technical difficulty, surface conditions, gradients, and other key features** of the trail, based on criteria set out in the **NZ Cycle Trail Design Guide (2024)**. This ensures consistency across all Ngā Haerenga Great Rides.



Surface



Gradient



Width



Obstacles



Length



Exposure & Risk

Grade Equivalents



GRADE 1*

Mostly off road, generally flat shared concrete path. There are short sections on suburban roads with lower traffic volumes.

*There is one very short section on a higher volume road with shoulder and visible delineation.

More details: mountaintosea.nz/trail-grades/

GRADE 2

Gentle climbs, firm gravel trail surface. Expect bridges and boardwalks.

Enjoy as a leisurely ride while enjoying the scenery with moderate technical skills required.

More details: mountaintosea.nz/trail-grades/

Right Trail, Right Rider, Right Info



BEGINNER



EASY



INTERMEDIATE



ADVANCED



EXPERT



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Ngā Haerenga
GREAT RIDES
OF NEW ZEALAND

Right rider, right bike, right trail



Safety



Protect
the Trail



Reputation








Rider Experience



Reduces Support
Burden

Know your grades

Grade	Symbol	Rider Level	Terrain / Conditions	Recommended Bike
1 Easiest		Beginner Family	Smooth, wide, gentle	Any sound bike
2 Easy		Most riders with some experience	Mostly smooth Some hills	Hybrid, touring, e-bike
3 Intermediate		Confident riders	Narrower, rough sections, some hills	MTB or e-MTB
4 Advanced		Fit & Skilled	Steep, technical, exposure	High spec MTB
5 Expert		Very experienced	Challenging, remote, drop offs	Expert MTB, No kids

Questions to ask?



- ☐ Have you ridden a trail like this before? (or what trails have you ridden before?)
- ☐ What kind of bike are you using?
- ☐ Are you comfortable with hills or gravel?
- ☐ Are you on a time schedule or taking it easy?
- ☐ Do you want a scenic cruise or a physical challenge?

Quick Checklist!

- Match fitness and skills to trail
- Confirm bike type (tyres, gears and brakes)
- E-bikes – check battery range
- Recommend trail sections with good support/access to less confident riders
- Encourage riders to carry water, repair kit (and know how to use it) and wet weather gear



Its all about setting riders up for success.

A happy rider is a returning rider - and we have great advocates who do more and advocate more!

Match the Rider to trail

Team exercise

