**Trail Grading**

UK MTB trails use colour codes to tell you what to expect. The colours are based on those used for cross-country skiing routes. The table below shows you what the colours mean for UK mountain-bikers.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GREEN** | **BLUE** | **RED** | **BLACK** |
| **GRADE** | **Easy** | **Moderate** | **Difficult** | **Severe** |
| **SUITABLE FOR** | Novice cyclists and families. Children 4+yrs riding solo.Bikes with childseats or trailers. Touring bikes. Bikes for those with disabilities. | Occasional cyclists with some experience of road use or easy trails. Reasonably fit families. Children 10+ yrs riding solo.Suitable for mountain bikes, hybrids or robust touring bikes. | Regular cyclists with experience of moderate trails.Suitable for offroad quality mountain bikes. | Expert mountain bikers who will expect and relish technical challenges.Suitable for offroad quality mountain bikes. |
| **TRAIL TYPES** | Railtrails, towpaths, reservoir trails, estate or forestry tracks. Traffic quietened roads, and those regulated by bylaws or other restrictions. | As “Green” plus bridleways, byways and unsurfaced unclassified roads. Lightly trafficked lanes. | Any usable trail with pushing or portage unlikely to exceed 2% of total distance. | Any, but with the expectation of technical riding which could include unforgiving terrain, severe climbs and descents, or considerable distances. Unlikely to be appropriate on PRoW. |
| **GRADIENT** | Shallow climbs and descents capable of being ridden by children and less active adults. | Shallow / moderate climbs +/- short sections of steeper climbs which may have to be walked. | A wide range of climbs and descents of a challenging nature. | Any ridable or usable gradient. May include “drop offs”. |
| **SURFACE / WIDTH** | Blacktop or compacted limestone or gravel. Essentially smooth with a minimum content of loose surfaces. Normal width 2 to 3m. | Mostly stoned surfaces. < 10% earth based single track of width <2m. | Widths from 1m, and any usable surface. Likely to include singletrack and other technical sections. | Mostly offroad. Expected to include a significant proportion of singletrack, with challenging surfaces. |
| **ACCEPTABLE HAZARDS** | These trails should carry a very low risk… Any unavoidable hazards should be identified in promotional literature and through notices at trail headand site of hazard. | Some loose surfaces, ruts, potholes and / or tree roots may be expected. | The route should be judged on the basis that a reasonably experienced rider riding within his/her level of skill and prevailing ground conditions, would not be expected to fall. | Hazards are expected, as assessed and agreed by an expert user. Falling off will be expected! |
| **ADVISORY PARAMETERS** | | | | |
| **TARGET LENGTH** | ***5 – 20 km*** | ***10 – 20km*** | ***10 – 50km*** | ***<1 to 100km including “skills” courses*** |
| **MAXIMUM CLIMB** | ***<50m*** | ***<100m*** | ***<500m*** | ***<1000m*** |
| **NOTES** | | | | |
| These standards are not intended to be prescriptive, but should be use to provide broad guidance. | | | | |
| Full risk assessments should be made on all trails, following CTC guidelines. | | | | |
| All trails should, where possible, have shortcut options,and these, plus the main trail should be comprehensively and clearly waymarked. | | | | |
| Back up literature should clearly indicate the route, grade, distance, climb, and likely riding time, and this information should be reinforced by trailhead notices. | | | | |
| Where designated routes embrace a combination of grades, these should be expressed as percentages, e.g. 10% Green, 60% Blue, 30% Red. | | | | |
| Information should be provided to give the combination of trail grades likely to be encountered on permanent Trailquest courses. | | | | |