

Trail Trace the Blue Hills – The Official Rules!

Note: When this series was started the idea that anyone would ever finish was questionable. As such the only original ‘rule’ was “Hike every inch of every trail.”

As the series became popular, and more and more of us dedicated ourselves to this ‘silly’ idea, people finished. Once, twice... The idea of hiking all the trails during the winter was added... Along the way, questions came up, and a few more rules were created. Some were written down, other “Best Practices” weren’t written down, merely informally agreed to. The intent here is to publish one complete set of ‘official’ rules, so everyone is playing by the same rules.

- 1) You start with the latest DCR/Mass Audubon official Blue Hills Map that is available when you begin, and *may* use that map until you complete it. (Or you *may* transfer your trails and use a newer map at any time, if you wish.)
 - a. Maps may be downloaded from the DCR Blue Hills website (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/blue-hills-trail-map-guide/download>) or purchased, when they are open, at the Trailside Museum or Observatory. Maps may be purchased by mail: Send \$4/map to “Trailside Museum/Attn: Julie Breheny/1904 Canton Ave/Milton, MA 02186. Include a letter stating how many maps you wish to purchase, and provide your mailing address.” Allow 2 weeks for delivery.
 - b. Once you have your map, you can start hiking and tracing in those trails you hike.
 - c. If DCR issues a newer map while you are working on your map, which adds trails; you are not REQUIRED to do those additional trails. (However, if you wish to, just do them and draw them in on *your* map.)
 - d. If the new DCR map closes any trails that are on your map that you have not yet hiked, cross those out on your map and label them ‘closed.’ Please do *not* hike trails that DCR has ‘closed’.

- 2) You must finish one map before you can begin the next map.
- a. Exception: You may, between the Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox, set aside your partially completed map and work on a Winter Trail Trace map.
 - i. Any trail you hike may be used on either your Trail Trace OR your Winter Trail Trace map, but not both unless you hike the trail twice.
 1. Clarification: Hiking a dead-end trail such as Carberry Path *MAY* be used on the way 'out' to record on your Winter Trail Trace map, and on the way 'back' to record on your Trail Trace map. (See "Options" below.)
 - ii. You *may*, during calendar winter, choose to use any trail hiked toward your Trail Trace map.

Note: While this may appeal if you are close to finishing a Trail Trace map, remember that Winter Trail Trace maps (as the trails can only be hiked for 3 months per year, and are sometimes snow covered and hard to follow) are harder to complete.

Note: Upon completion of your last trail, you may (figuratively if not literally) mark your last trail and pull out a new blank map and start tracing in your next map in the middle of that same hike.

- 3) Triangles: All sides of real 'triangles' at trail junctions *must* be hiked, even if the triangle is so small that it doesn't appear on the DCR map. (This is a bit vague, as people frequently shortcut corners and create new triangles. If it looks like it is well established... hike it, if it looks like someone just created an illegal trail... Don't hike it, and if so, feel free to throw a few branches in it if you want to discourage others from hiking it.)
- 4) Street Crossings: For our purposes all trails 'end' before the paved road, i.e., you are not required to hike across the auto roads. This is a safety issue, as we don't want anyone hit by a car, or to cause an accident by appearing to want to cross the street. The 'end' of the trail is any gate, large rocks, or if these don't exist, 6 feet from the paved road.
- 5) Winter Trail Trace maps: Note that the trail from 1010 to 1050 is officially closed to hiking by DCR in the winter, as it approaches and then crosses the ski slope. This is therefore not 'required' to be hiked to complete your Winter Trail Trace map. Please also do not hike on the ski slope during winter.

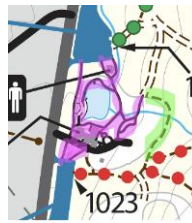
6) Exceptions/clarifications to the Official Blue Hills Map.

Purple highlights denote: "Not to be hiked"

Green denotes: "Trails that need to be hiked."



- a. This short stub "Trail" is a driveway to one of the camps. This should NOT be hiked.



- b. These "Trails" are the walkways associated with the Trailside Museum, and are not required. Note that the trail which follows along outside the Trailside Museum fence (shown in green) is required.



- c. This area is the water tank facility, and is not required. (The trail around the reservoir itself, and the 'out and back' peninsular are required.)



- d. Maple Avenue is not required, however see options below.



- e. The paved "Summit Road" is not required, however the unpaved road to the water tank is required.



- f. The paved Middle Street is not required.



- g. The paved road to the Education Center is not required, however the unpaved road to the water tank is required.



- h. The paved driveway at Brookwood Farm is not required, however the unpaved cross-over is required.



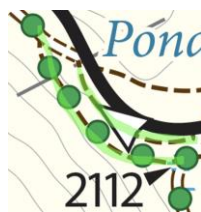
- i. The paved road to the "Athletic Fields" is not required.



- j. The paved loop around Breeze Hill is a trail and therefore is required.



- k. "Old 128" is required.



- l. Note that near 2112 there are two, separate, trails. The green dot trail goes through the woods and over the hill. The White Triangle trail goes along the road behind the guard rail. Both are required.

Options:

- 1) The above rules are the “Minimum” requirements to earn your patch. Some of us prefer to go a step further. For instance:
 - a. Some of us believe that if you hike a dead-end trail in winter the return trip shouldn't be counted on your Trail Trace map. So, we don't count them.
 - b. Some of us believe that Maple Avenue (through the Ponkapoag golf course) *is* a trail, and so we hike it for each map.
 - c. Some of us believe that the pipeline and Headquarters Path (between Chickatawbut Road and 4048 are two separate trails. Therefore, we choose to hike both. (The map only shows one trail and labels it “Headquarters Path”, although the intersection signs are posted along the pipeline.)

You can always go “above and beyond” the minimum requirements if you wish! However, you can't do less than the ‘minimum’.

Notes:

- 1) Some trails are not always (easily) ‘passable.’ Plan ahead! It is your responsibility to complete these trails to finish your map, i.e., before starting your next map. Plan ahead, don't leave these for last... as they might not be passable when you ‘need’ to hike them.
 - a. Indian Path, along the Neponset River has multiple places where the water can be several feet deep at times, especially in the spring.
 - b. The Boardwalk at Ponkapoag is, frequently, ankle deep over some of the boards.
 - c. The pipeline ‘out & back’ to Rt 28 on the east side of Rt 24 just south of the ‘horse bridge’ can be very wet.
 - d. Also note that these (and other) areas, being wet, are more likely to have disease carrying mosquitoes at times.

So, plan ahead or dress appropriately. (Hip boots, bug suits, etc.)

- 2) Colors: The first 10 Trail Trace maps each have an associated color. (Red, Blue, Green, Orange, Yellow, Purple, Pink, Bronze, Silver, Gold). After that the maps are numbered. Winter Trail Trace maps are always just numbered.
- 3) These official rules, as well as lists of finishers, etc. are kept on the AMC/SEM website, in the “Hiking” section.