

# TRAIL SCORE - TRAIL RUN ROUTE GRADING SYSTEM©

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##The above disclaimer must be included alongside any publication online or in print of the Trail Score explainer below.

## 1.1 GREEN/BLUE/BLACK/EPIC

The system of rating trails according to Green (Easy), Blue (Moderate) and Black (Difficult) has been chosen as it is the most recognisable labelling system according to difficulty in accordance with that used on many ski fields worldwide during the winter ski season. An 'Epic' label has been added to accommodate for the higher-end trail run market. Trails are ascribed a colour (or Epic) label according to a scoring system (/45) that takes into account:

- > DISTANCE (/9)
- > ASCENT TOTAL (/9)
- > GRADIENT INCLUSIONS (/9)
- > TECHNICALITY (/9)
- > ROUTE MARKING (/9)

## 1.2 SCORING SYSTEM: DETAILED -/45

Each of the five determinant factors will be rated out of nine points. The final grading will be based on total points:

**GREEN = MAX 15 POINTS / 45**

**BLUE = MAX 30 POINTS / 45**

**BLACK = MAX 42 POINTS / 45**

**EPIC = MAX 45 POINTS /45 POINTS**

This allows for the best accuracy and consistency of grading, normalising 'subjective' factors inherent in the human auditing process, especially where numerous (trained) auditors are employed on grading.

DISTANCE	POINTS
<5km	1-3
>5km but <10km	4-6
>10km but <15km	7-8
>20km	9

TOTAL ASCENT	POINTS
< 250m	1-3
250m - 500m	4-6
500m - 800m	7-8
>800m	9

ROUTE MARKING	POINTS
Excellent at every junction plus 'reminders' at frequent intervals	1-3
Good at every junction with some 'reminders'	4-6
More sporadic at every major junction	7-8
None - needs map navigation (still on trail)	9

TECHNICALITY	POINTS
Moderately easy terrain, short sections of 'technical' terrain but largely easy running. Single track plus fire road or connecting non singletrack trails. Groomed or mostly flat underfoot with little trail debris or obstacles. No waterway crossings. No steep descents or tight switchbacks. Trail cornering moderate.	1-3
Moderate challenging terrain, with a mix of 'technical' and 'non technical' terrain. Some trail debris (rocks, logs, uneven underfoot, mixed surface, mud). Some steps (natural or otherwise) on descent. Some steep descents for short distances (10-20 metres). Tighter cornering for sections. Requires periods of focused concentration to avoid obstacles and ensure safe foot placement. May have easy 1-2 step water crossings.	4-6
Difficult terrain, majority 'technical' terrain that is extremely demanding. Includes lots of concentration for longer periods to ensure both safe foot placement including avoidance of obstacles underfoot and those impinging on upper body / head space (low hanging branches, logs across trail that require ducking under). May have waterway crossings that require runner to slow to walking pace. May even require short climbs involving use of hands (ladders, short rock wall step ups etc). Includes winding sections, switchbacks and hard cornering. Includes steep descent sections.	7-9

GRADIENT INCLUSIONS	POINTS
Mostly runnable gradient; undulating in general; any significant incline/declines of a gentle gradient (1:10 or under 5%) and not overly long (<100 metres)	1-3
Mostly runnable gradient, but has some short (<100m) steep ascent and descent sections (more than 1:10 / or 10% gradient) that may require walking 4-6 points	4-6
Lots of steep ascent and descent (more than 1:10 / or 10% gradient), some that may cover more than 100m in walking distance or more than 100m vertical gain in one stretch	7-9
*NOTE: we are using a judgment descriptor rather than a set gradient percentage, as it is more user friendly and instantly comprehensible)	

### 1.3 SCORING SYSTEM: SIMPLE -/10

For easy public comprehension, the TRAILSCORE /45 scoring system can be re-interpreted into a TRAIL SCORE score out of ten (-/10). This works well for initial contact information, such as physical maps etc. The -/45 system may be included on more detailed information repositories such as websites for those seeking further or more nuanced gradient clarification.

Each -/45 score is simply divided by 4.5, with rounding always up, ensuring the grading systems preposition of favouring beginner-intermediate runners is adhered to. i.e. if anything, runs are always graded as being slightly harder than they actually are to ensure a safety margin in a runner's self-selection of suitability.

### 1.4 DISCLAIMER/S

The TRAIL SCORE grading system is indicative only. Conditions and landscapes change continuously, and, given sudden weather shifts, can even change mid run. Hence the route guides and associated data are to be used as a guide only, rather than directly prescriptive.

Any statistics (distances, elevations, ascents/descents etc) attributed to any one TRAIL SCORE guide are indicative only. Users of the various GPS-enabled devices would know that different devices (and sometimes even the same device) will offer different readings and measurements for the same run. Also, transferring data files from one web-based application (i.e. Google Earth) to another (i.e. Garmin or Suunto proprietary programs or Strava) will often change the output data.

We encourage all runners to research their intended route prior to running it, with a view to early exit and/or evacuation options. Pick key cross check points (man made structures, road crossings, trail intersections, summit points, natural features noted on map/s) to ensure they will know where they are at all times.

We encourage all runners to know what the predicted weather conditions will be and prepare accordingly, noting NEVER to venture into wilderness areas that are under threat / notification of bushfire dangers.

All runners should check in with local authorities (park rangers, resort management etc.) where appropriate to notify of trip/run intentions and approximate timings. If they do check in prior to starting a run, they should be sure to leave a contact number and, where feasible, to 'check out' upon their return.

Trail running is a goodwill-based pursuit: so if a runner comes across others on trail requiring assistance (be they runners or other trail users), they should stop and offer assistance. Also, note and report back any change in trail conditions to park / trail management authorities.

Shared trails: many trails used by runners will be 'shared trails' used by other runners, walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Runners should respect other users at all times, give adequate warning when running up behind someone slower, and always give way to trail users who are faster. This is particularly pertinent when using mountain bike trails. It is important to be courteous at all times.

Trail running takes place in the outdoors, in often wild, sometimes remote and even dangerous environments. We encourage all runners to ALWAYS carry essential items when trail running, at minimum:

- basic first aid kit, including snake bandages in countries where snakes are prevalent
- Hydration, water, electrolytes
- Space blanket
- Wet weather jacket and a warm layer
- Communications incl. mobile phone and/or EPIRB / SPOT Tracker or similar satellite based communicator
- Emergency nutrition (gels / bars)
- Quality maps (preferably topographical)
- The above is especially pertinent for longer, more remote routes and/or in extreme weather. We advise runners not to run on trails with overhanging tree coverage when the winds are up due to the threat of falling branches.