



# Additional Trail Blazing Resources

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New York-New Jersey Trail Conference

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## Introduction

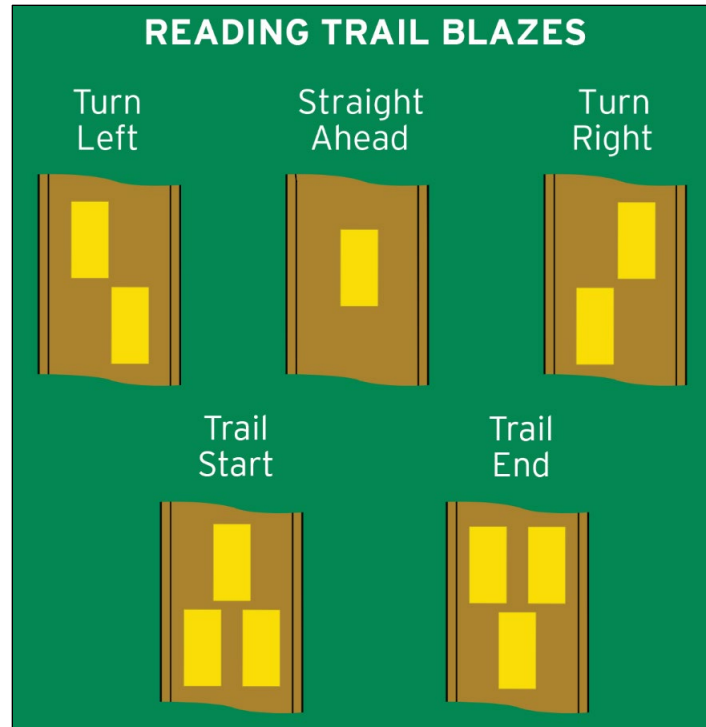
Clear marking of trails, called “blazing”, is critical to prevent trail users from getting lost and to minimize the environmental impact of off-trail users. Properly locating, installing, and maintaining trail blazes so that paths are easy to follow is one of the primary functions of Trail Maintainers in most parks (with some exceptions, where park staff fulfill this function).

This document is a supplement to the [Trail Maintenance Manual](#) published by the Trail Conference. It contains specialized information about blazing, typically of interest to leaders responsible for coordinating work, addressing problems, or introducing new Maintainers to the responsibilities and standards of their assigned sections.

## Trail Maintenance Manual

The [Trail Maintenance Manual](#) is the handbook for all volunteer Trail Maintainers, and includes detailed blazing standards and techniques for blazing with tags or paint. The following topics are addressed in that document:

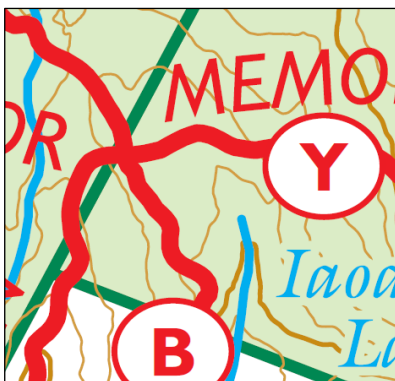
- Standards and guidelines for all blazing
- Explanations of the differing considerations for tag and paint blazes
- Lists and uses of the various tools used for trail blazing
- Special trail markings to use in unusual or challenging circumstances
- General hints and advice for successful blazing work



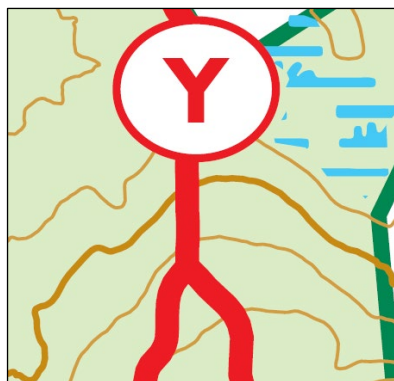
## Blazing Trail Intersections

An “intersection,” or “junction,” is any point where two or more trails touch. Some common examples you may encounter include:

- Two trails head in perpendicular directions, crossing each other along the way.
- A single trail splits and goes in two new directions, forming a stem attached to a loop trail (sometimes called a “balloon” or “lollipop” configuration).
- An iconic or convenient location attracts three separate trails, all converging at the same point.



*Two trails crossing.*



*Single trail becoming a loop.*



*Three-trail convergence.*

## General Advice for Trail Intersections

Hikers often miss trail intersections or become confused about which way to turn, and can become lost. When following a trail, hikers need some clear indication that another trail is crossing so that they can either avoid it or begin to follow it with intention.

The techniques below can help make trail intersections clearer and more visible:

- Wider trimming of vegetation at the intersection is easy and can be very helpful.
- Check and replace or touch up any damaged, faded, or missing blazes.
- A sign, post, or cairn in the center of the intersection provides greatest visibility. Since these can be costly and subject to vandalism, they are typically used only at major or difficult-to-find intersections.
- It is helpful if the intersection can be located at a place with a large, well-placed tree which can support blazes for multiple trails. This is especially true for multiple trailhead and turn blazes, which need additional space.
- Some parks identify trail intersections using numbered tags that correlate with numbers on a curated park map. These numbers are useful if lost hikers phone the park office and can name the numbered intersection at their location.
- Stem-and-loop “lollipop” intersections have special considerations, because they are technically a single trail and share a common color.
  - Where the spur trail leads into the loop, use turn blazes to mark turns from the spur in both directions for the two “arms.”
  - If you are on one of the arms, mark as a turn with the blaze of the other arm.
  - Many of these three-way “lollipop” intersections are adopting a black dot on the blazes of short stems that connect visitors back to trailhead parking. This makes the intersections much less confusing and reduces lost hiker incidents.
    - If you think this will help reduce confusion along your trail, suggest the idea to your Trail Supervisor or Trail Conference staff contact.
    - In this case, simply blaze the dotted spur trail as its own trail with normal three-blaze trailhead markings on both ends. Then use the same normal trailhead markings for each end of the loop at that location.
- Any intersection with more than two trails is inherently confusing, and should be avoided if possible. If it cannot be avoided, the following approaches may be helpful:
  - Install a sign with arrows on a post in the middle of the intersection.
  - Post a map snippet explaining the intersecting trails.
  - Make sure all the branches have highly visible confirmation blazes or start blazes.
  - Don’t make it more confusing with too many turn blazes--make hikers stop and look for the way they want to proceed.

- If trails end here, place the end blazes a bit before the intersection to avoid having excessive blazes in the intersection.
- If you are ever unsure of how to handle a situation, RTC meetings are a good place to talk about options and the best possible solution.

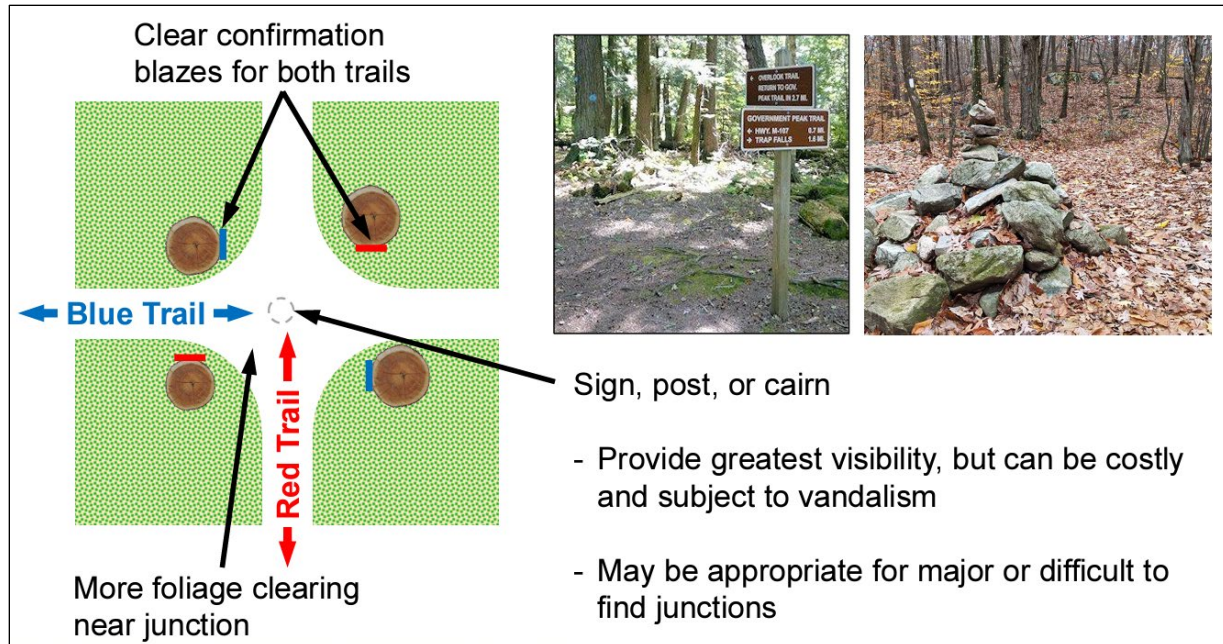


*An example blazing situation we want to avoid!*

## Trail Intersection Diagram

The diagram below shows an example of how a trail intersection can be marked to minimize the chances of a hiker missing the intersecting trail. Note in particular:

- Additional clearing near the intersection.
- Clear and visible blazes for all trails visible from the central landmark.
- A central landmark such as a sign or cairn can give greater visibility.

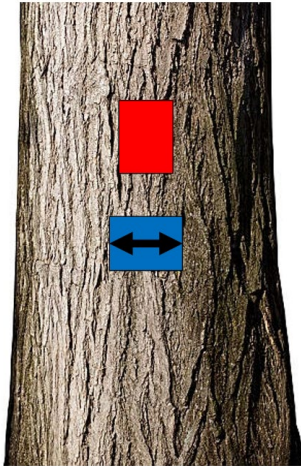


## Special Trail Intersection Blazing Conventions

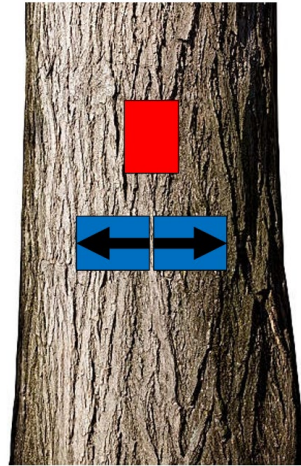
Some parks use special blazing at intersections, such as directional arrows or two horizontal blazes in the color of the crossing trail. There is no regional standard for this, but Trail Supervisors should know what is done in their particular park. The following pages show some examples, but keep in mind:

- There is no universal intersection-blazing convention. It is up to land managers to determine which convention (if any) should be used on their property.
- These intersection blazes can be useful, but many beginning hikers don't understand even the most basic blazing conventions. Adding new meanings for blazes can add to confusion.
- The relevant Trail Chair or Supervisor must work with the local land manager to determine whether to use special intersection blazes, and must instruct the local Trail Maintainers on which (if any) to use. When in doubt, maintainers should always check with their Trail Supervisor before implementing any of the blazing conventions that follow.

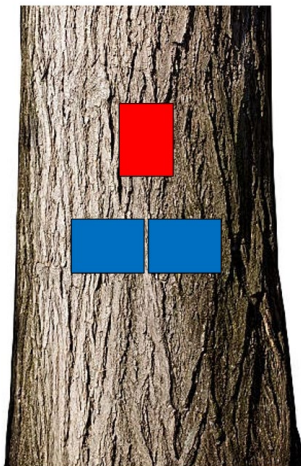
Option 1 (double arrow)



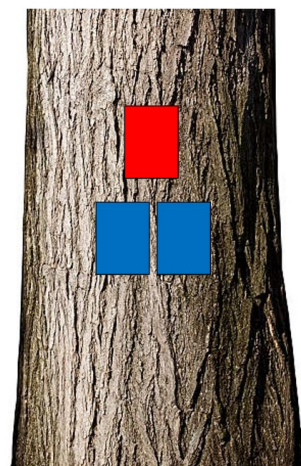
Option 2 (two arrows)



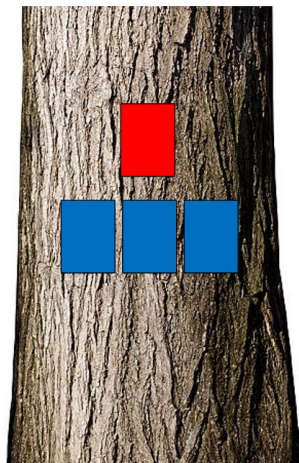
Option 3 (two horizontal)

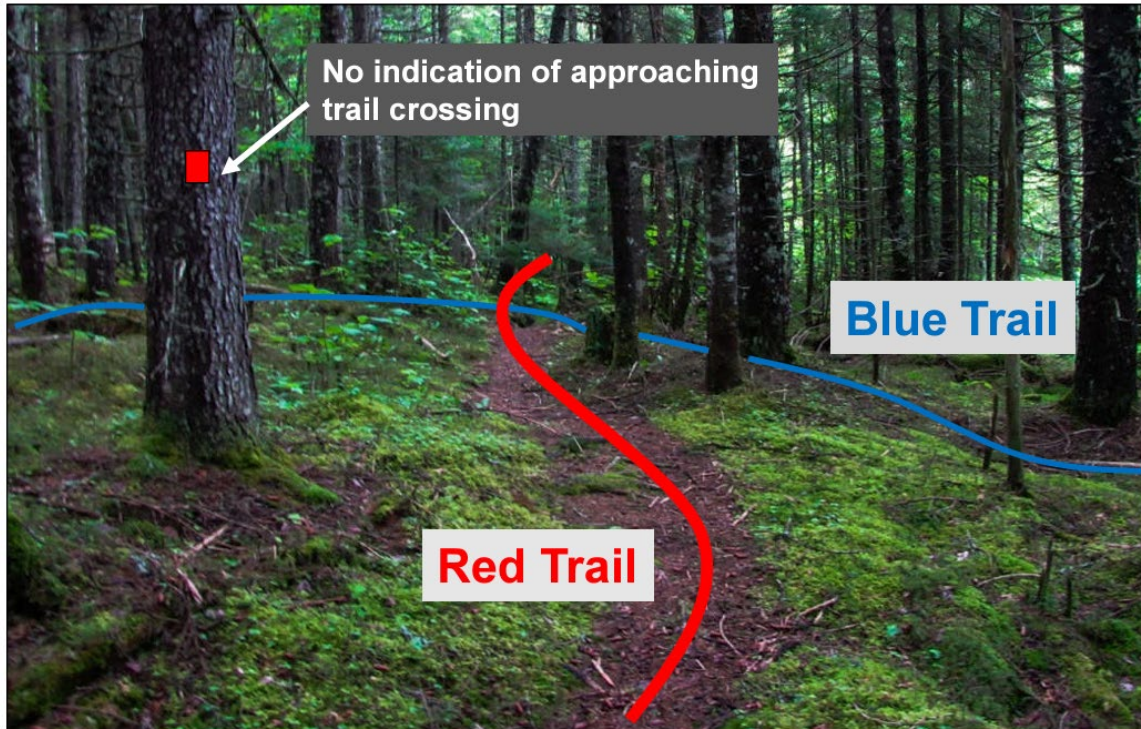


Option 4 (two vertical)



Option 5 (three vertical)





*Trail intersection without intersection blazes. Note how easy it would be for a hiker to completely miss the fact that the blue trail crosses soon, and walk right past it.*



*Trail intersection with one style of special intersection blazing. Note how the blue blazes alert the hiker to the impending blue trail crossing, intuitively letting them know to begin looking for it.*

## Recommended Paint Colors for Blazing

This is a list of the standard paint colors recommended for all paint blazing. This list was approved by the Policy Council on June 10, 2020.









It is more important that the color be uniform for the entire length of a trail than that it exactly match one of the recommended colors. If you don't know what paint was previously used, it may be necessary to repaint all the blazes. The colors change significantly upon drying, so don't compare wet with dry.








- All the standard and alternate colors should be available in quart cans.
- Alternates are based on the closest match in readily available colors.
- Latex-based exterior paint should be used.
- Latex exterior enamel (high gloss or semi-gloss) is preferred for longevity.
- Many paint suppliers, including Sherwin Williams, Benjamin Moore, Lowes Valspar, and Home Depot Behr can mix colors of other manufacturers. If you have trouble finding a color, consider using that capability to match the Trail Conference standard color. This is particularly relevant for the Long Path and Highlands Trail, where the standard colors from Pittsburgh Paints and Dutch Boy, respectively, are not widely available. In particular, Sherwin Williams, Benjamin Moore and Lowes Valspar can all match the Trail Conference standard colors for these trails.













**NOTE: Color samples in the table below were taken from online charts, and colors may vary depending on your screen or printer. Thus there may be small variations between what you see here and the color of the paint on a tree.**



## Standard Blaze Colors

COLOR	TC STANDARD	ALTERNATES		
WHITE	H-D/Behr 1850 Ultra Pure White	<i>Or Any True White</i>		
BLUE	Ben.Moore 0789 Sea to Shining Sea	Sher. Williams SW6953 Candid Blue	H-D/Behr 530B-4 Bliss Blue	Lowes/Valspar 5002-9C Summer Splash
				
BLUE on WHITE	Ben.Moore 0784 Blue Macaw	Sher.Williams SW6796 Blue Plate	H-D/Behr 520B-7 Havasu	Lowes/Olympic B51-5 Planetarium
				




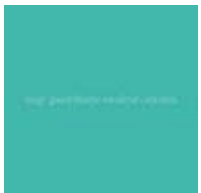


COLOR	TC STANDARD	ALTERNATES		
GREEN	Ben.Moore 0558 Killala Green	H-D/Glidden 34GY40/515 Topiary Green	H-D/Behr S-G-420 Limeade	Lowes/Valspar 6005-10B Jaunty Green
				
ORANGE	Ben.Moore 2014-20 Rumba Orange (Safety)	H-D/Glidden 68YR28/701 Fiesta Orange	H-D/Behr 210B-7 Flame	Lowes/Valspar 2002-1A Autumn Blaze
				

RED	Ben. Moore 2000-10 Red (Safety)	Sher.Williams SW4081 Safety Red	H-D/Behr8371 Candy Apple Red	Lowes/Valspar 1009-2 Classic Red
				
YELLOW	Ben. Moore 2022-20 Sun Kissed Yellow (Safety)	Sher.Williams SW6906 Citrus	H-D/Behr 330B-7 Sunflower	Lowes/Valspar 3005-1A Golden Delight
				
PINK	Ben. Moore 2079-50 Rhododendron	Sher.Williams SW6849 Party time	H-D/Behr 680A-3 Pink Bliss	Lowes/Valspar 1001-2A Magic Wand
				



*Paint brand and finish can make all the difference in how long blazes last.*









## Long Path and Highlands Trail Colors

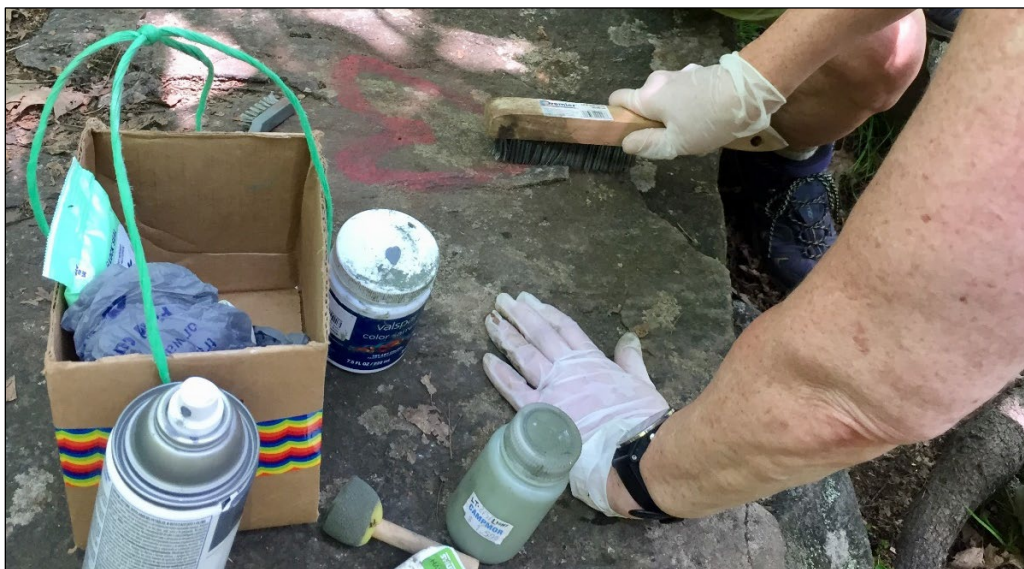
COLOR	TC STANDARD	ALTERNATES		
LONG PATH	PPG 103-4 Tropical Tide (former Parakeet Aqua)	H-D/Behr 470B-4 Intense Jade	Lowes/Valspar 6002-10A Lavish Green	
				
HIGHLANDS TRAIL	Dutch Boy10F-5 (11-B-5) Lake Superior	H-D/Behr 490B-5 Cozumel	Lowes/Valspar 5006-10B Turquoise Tint	
				



*In high-visibility locations, long-distance tag blazes with logos and website URLs may be paired with painted tag blazes to heighten awareness of the trail.*

## Neutralizing Colors

NEUTRALIZING	TC STANDARD	ALTERNATES		
DARK	Ben. Moore 1491 Aegean Olive	<i>SPRAYCAN</i>  Rustoleum 7713 Dark Bronze 1918, Earth Brown,  Krylon 4292Brown	H-D/Behr 780D-7 Wild Rice	H-D/Behr 420F-7 Forest Ridge
				
MEDIUM	Ben. Moore 2139-30 Sharkskin	<i>SPRAY CAN</i>  Rustoleum 7754 Anodized Bronze 7739 Charcoal Green;  Krylon 4293 Olive	H-D/Behr 790D-6 Dusty Mountain	H-D/Behr 720F-4 Stone Fence
				
LIGHT	H-D/Behr 770E-3 Pewter Mug	<i>SPRAY CAN</i>  For Gray: (& for rocks) Rustoleum (Amer. Acc.) 243265 Granite	<i>SPRAYCAN</i> For Beige: Rustoleum 1970 – Khaki	H-D/Behr 790E-2 Gentle Rain
				



Surface preparation can be needed before applying neutralizing paint over graffiti.

## Additional Resources

Additional resources about blazing, maintaining, designing, and building trails can be found on the Trail Conference web pages below:

### Trail Blazing & Maintenance Resources

<https://secure.nynjtc.org/content/trail-blazing-maintenance-resources>

### Trail Design & Construction Resources

<https://secure.nynjtc.org/content/trail-design-construction-resources>

