

Should you take breaks on the trail?

I think the Leave No Trace team has stated it before, and that is that these are principles, not hard and fast rules. One of the best things is just plan ahead for these situations and make the best decision based on the circumstances.

Some of the responses I thought had merit included:

It depends on the situation. Do whatever makes the least impact on the environment and is the most courteous towards the other users of the trail.

True for one person taking a quick breather. False for a group of 10 having a 20 minute break.

The correct answer is "It depends." Generally speaking, moving off the trail to take a snooze seems to be logical. What if your trail is surrounded by sensitive endangered wildflowers or delicate alpine meadows? Things are not always so black and white while trying your best to leave no trace. Stop and think before you snooze. Sweet dreams!

However, I believe this is the best answer:

I will say generally false on busy trails, although at times it may be tricky to follow all the principles of Leave No Trace in the process: travel on durable surfaces, respect wildlife, and respect other visitors. It may not be possible to plan ahead for when/where you can stop for a break, but it can be part of the solution -- find a place off trail where your impact will be small, that won't disturb other visitors or wildlife, and can keep the trail clear for other visitors.

However, I will say TRUE on remote trails. If you have the place to yourself, there is no reason to spread your impact by finding a place just to rest. If this is just a 15 minute break to catch your breath or get a drink and eat a snack, perhaps the best place is the trail.

In places like many trails into the Grand Canyon, traveling off trail would mean falling off a cliff. Be wise.