



Portage Park District Online — Trails, Maps & Programs

Trails, Maps & Programs in Portage County

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1787 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Here is the whole guide in a nutshell. The Portage Park District looks after the county parks and trails, and its website is where you find park pages, trail maps, and a list of programs such as guided hikes and nature talks. Start by typing the address yourself, portageparkdistrict.org, rather than clicking a link in a message. Look for a section about parks and maps, open the park you are curious about, and read the page for hours, rules, and directions. Maps can be printed or saved to a phone. For programs, open the listing, read the details, and follow the sign-up directions it gives. If a program is full, ask about a waiting list. The district will never ask for your password or gift cards. If any step feels tangled, that is just what I help neighbors with, so please call me.

1. What the Portage Park District Is

The county's parks and trails, in one organization.

The Portage Park District is the public agency that looks after many of the county's parks and trails. Its stated purpose is to conserve Portage County's natural heritage and give people chances to appreciate and enjoy it. Its office is in Ravenna.

If you have ever walked a wooded path, fished from a river access, or joined a guided nature hike somewhere in the county, there is a good chance the park district was behind it. The district is separate from city parks run by places like Kent or Ravenna, though you may well visit both on the same weekend.

The website is the front door. It tells you where the parks are, what each one offers, and what programs are coming up. You do not need an account just to read it, and reading it costs nothing.

- Park and trail pages with directions and rules.
- Maps you can look at, print, or save.
- A list of programs and events.
- Ways to volunteer or support the district.

GOOD TO KNOW

Parks run by a city, a township, or the state are different organizations with their own websites. This guide is only about the county park district.

2. What You Can Do on the Website

A quick tour before the details.

Think of the website as a friendly information desk that never closes. You can walk through it in your pajamas and plan an afternoon outdoors.

You will not break anything by clicking around. The site is meant for reading, and every page has a way back to the home page. If you open something you did not want, simply press the Back arrow in your browser and try another path.

Most visitors do four things. They look up a park to see what is there. They find a map so they do not get turned around. They check the programs list for something interesting. And they look for rules, such as whether dogs are welcome. This guide gives each of those its own chapter.

- Browse the parks and trails the district manages.
- Open trail maps and park maps.
- Read about guided hikes, talks, and family programs.
- Learn about reservations and permits for certain uses.
- Read about volunteering and donating.

Not every feature is something you must use. Pick the one that matches what you want today and ignore the rest. Nothing on the site rushes you.

TIP

Website layouts change over time. If a button is not where this guide says, look for a similar word nearby. The idea stays the same even when the wording moves.

3. What You Need Before You Start

A short list of things to have handy.

You do not need much to use the park district website. Most of it is just reading, the same way you would read a brochure at a visitor center.

Nothing here is a race. If you only have time to look at one park page today, that is a fine start. Come back for the maps another day, and take a short break whenever your eyes get tired of the screen.

- A phone, tablet, or computer with a web browser.
- An internet connection at home or at a library.

- A printer, if you would like paper maps.
- An email address, only if you decide to sign up for a program or newsletter.
- A pen and paper for jotting down a program date or phone number.

If you would like a paper trail map, check that your printer has paper and ink before you begin. If you do not own a printer, many libraries will print a few pages for you. You can also save a map on your phone and skip the paper altogether.

Give yourself a quiet ten or fifteen minutes the first time. After that, planning a walk takes only a minute or two.

TIP

Sit somewhere comfortable with good light. Reading small map labels on a screen is much easier when you are not squinting.

4. Getting to the Real Website

Type the address yourself.

The most important habit is starting at the genuine address. The district's own materials point to portageparkdistrict.org. Type that into the address bar at the very top of your browser instead of clicking a link from an email or text message.

Once you reach the real page, add it to your bookmarks by clicking the star near the address bar. After that, you can return with one click and never need to worry about typing it again or following a doubtful search result.

The park district is a public agency, and some of its pages also sit on the Portage County government website, portagecounty-oh.gov, which ends in dot gov. That is another trustworthy place to look. If you search the web instead, be careful, because look-alike pages sometimes appear above the real ones.

- 1 Open your web browser.
- 2 Click once in the address bar at the top.
- 3 Type portageparkdistrict.org slowly and press Enter.
- 4 Look at the page. You should see park district information, not ads or prize offers.
- 5 If anything looks odd, close the page and try again.

WATCH OUT

A message claiming your park permit is expiring and asking you to click right away is a warning sign. Real park staff do not work that way. Type the address yourself instead.

5. Finding the Parks and Maps Section

Where the park list lives.

Once you are on the site, look near the top of the page for a menu. On the district pages I reviewed, there is a section for parks and maps, and another for things to do. Menus sometimes show only when you move your mouse over a word or tap the little three-line button on a phone.

Menus on websites are organized a bit like the aisles of a store. If you do not find the item in one aisle, check the next. The words may be slightly different from what I describe, but the park list is always somewhere near the top.

Inside the parks and maps area you should find a list of parks and trails, and possibly a general district map and a page of trail etiquette. Each name on the list opens its own page.

- 1 From the home page, look at the menu across the top.
- 2 Find the word Parks, Maps, or something similar.
- 3 Click or tap it to see the list.
- 4 Click a park or trail name to open its page.
- 5 Use your browser's Back arrow to return to the list.

Take your time browsing. Opening a page costs nothing and you can always go back.

TIP

On a phone, if you cannot see a menu, tap the three short lines in a corner. That button hides the whole menu.

6. Reading a Park Page

What to look for on each one.

A park page is like the front desk sign at the entrance. It tells you what the place is and how to enjoy it. Pages are not all identical, but you will often find a few of the same pieces.

Pages that mention a seasonal change, such as a trail section that is closed for work, usually say so near the top. If you spot a notice in bold or a colored box, read it first, because it matters most for your visit.

- A short description of the park or trail.

- Directions or an address you can use in a map program.
- Opening hours or a note about when the park is open.
- Rules about pets, bikes, fishing, or other activities.
- A link to a map.
- Notes about amenities such as parking or restrooms, where listed.

Read the whole page once before you leave home. A park may have different rules from the one you visited last time, and it is better to learn that at your kitchen table than at the trailhead.

If a detail you need is missing, such as whether a trail is smooth enough for a walker, do not guess. Call the district and ask.

TIP

Jot down the park address and the district phone number on a sticky note, and keep it with your keys.

7. Parks and Trails Named on the District Site

A few places you may see listed.

The district's pages list a good number of places. Names I saw on the site include Berlin Lake Trail, Dix Park, Headwaters Trail, Morgan Park, Seneca Ponds Park, Shaw Woods, Towner's Woods, and the Portage Hike & Bike Trail. There are others as well.

I am sharing names only so you recognize them when you browse. I am not describing what each one looks like, how long it is, or how easy it is to walk, because those details belong on the official page and can change. Use the district's own page for each place.

Parks also differ in kind. Some are mainly trails for walking or biking. Others are wooded natural areas, and others are places to reach water. The page title and description will tell you which kind you are looking at.

- Open the park's own page for the facts.
- Read the rules before you visit.
- Compare two or three places before choosing.
- Ask the district if a detail is unclear.

GOOD TO KNOW

The list of parks can grow as the district adds land. If a favorite spot is not listed, try the search box or give the office a call.

8. Finding a Trail Map

Look for the map link on the park page.

A trail map shows you where the paths go, where you can park, and how the loops connect. The district's pages include a general district map and, for many places, a map of that particular park or trail.

Some parks have more than one map, such as an overall picture and a closer one of a single trail. If you see two choices, open both. The wider one helps you find the park, and the closer one helps you choose your walk.

The map often opens as a picture or as a PDF file. A PDF is just a document that looks the same on every screen. It opens in your browser, and you can zoom in by pressing the plus button.

- 1 Open the page for the park or trail you want.
- 2 Look for a link or picture that says Map or Trail Map.
- 3 Click or tap it to open the map.
- 4 Use the plus button to make it larger.
- 5 Scroll around to see the whole thing.

Take a moment to find the parking area and the entrance on the map. Those two spots are what you will look for when you arrive.

TIP

If the map seems tiny, zoom in until the labels are comfortable. Then drag the page around with your finger or mouse.

9. Printing a Trail Map

A paper copy you can fold into a pocket.

Paper maps are wonderful because they never run out of battery. Printing one is simple once the map is open on your screen.

Before you print many pages, print just one and look at it. Check that the writing is large enough for you to read comfortably. If it is too small, go back, enlarge it on the screen, or choose a larger paper scale in the print window.

- 1 Open the map so it fills the screen.

- 2 Press the Ctrl and P keys together on a Windows computer, or Command and P on a Mac.
- 3 A print window appears. Check that your printer is chosen.
- 4 Look at the small preview to make sure the whole map fits.
- 5 Choose how many copies you want and press Print.

If the map is cut off, look for a setting called Fit to page or Scale, and pick that. If you would rather not use paper, choose Save as PDF in the printer list instead, and the map will be saved on your computer.

Print a second copy for a friend. Hikers who go with a partner each carry a map.

GOOD TO KNOW

Color maps look nicest in color but are still readable in black and white. If ink is low, black and white is fine.

10. Saving a Map to Your Phone

Keep it handy even without paper.

Many people prefer to keep a map on their phone. The simplest method is to take a screenshot, which is a quick picture of whatever is on your screen. The picture then lives in your photo gallery.

Once the screenshot is in your photo gallery, you can also share it with a walking partner. Most phones have a Share button that sends the picture by text or email, so both of you have the same map ready before you arrive.

How you take a screenshot depends on your phone. On many phones you press two buttons at once, often the power button and a volume button. If you are unsure, ask me or look at your phone's instructions. Some PDF maps can also be downloaded using a Download or Share option.

- 1 Open the map and zoom so it fills the screen.
- 2 Take a screenshot using your phone's method.
- 3 Open your photo gallery and find the new picture.
- 4 Pinch with two fingers to zoom in and read.
- 5 Mark it as a favorite, if your phone offers that, so it is easy to find.

WATCH OUT

Cell service can be weak in wooded areas. Save the map before you leave home so you do not depend on a signal.

11. Reading a Trail Map

Understanding the lines and symbols.

A trail map is a simplified drawing from above. Lines are paths. Colors or line styles may show different trails. A small legend, also called a key, explains what each symbol stands for.

If the map has a scale bar, a small line marked with a distance, you can use it to estimate how far a loop is. Hold a piece of string along the path on paper, then lay the string next to the scale bar to see roughly how long it is.

Start by finding the legend. It tells you what a dotted line, a parking symbol, or a building symbol means. Then find a spot labeled as an entrance or parking area. That is you. Trace a path with your finger from there to see where it leads.

- Find the legend first.
- Locate the parking area, which is your starting point.
- Follow one loop with your finger before you walk it.
- Note any place where trails cross.
- Decide in advance where you will turn around.

Maps may not show how steep or rough a path is. For that, read the page text or ask the district.

TIP

Plan to walk a shorter route than you think you can. You can always add more, but you cannot easily shorten a long loop in the middle.

12. Choosing an Easy Walk

Matching a trail to your comfort level.

Not every path suits every walker. Some trails are wide and fairly flat, and some wander over roots and hills. The best choice is the one that leaves you smiling at the end rather than worn out.

Another good approach is to ask neighbors where they like to walk. Combine their advice with the official page. A personal recommendation tells you how a place feels, and the district tells you the facts, such as rules and hours.

The website is a good place to begin, but it may not describe surface or slope in detail for every place. I am deliberately not promising that any specific trail is paved or flat. Check the park page and, if you are not sure, phone the district and ask in plain words, such as: is this a smooth trail for someone who uses a cane?

- Read the description for words about the surface.
- Look at the map for short loops.
- Ask about benches or places to rest.
- Visit with a friend the first time.
- Try a short walk before a long one.

GOOD TO KNOW

A trail you already know and enjoy is a perfectly good choice. There is no prize for going farther.

13. Checking Hours and Closures

Confirm before you drive.

Parks have opening and closing times, and a trail can close for weather, repairs, or special events. A quick check before you leave saves a wasted trip.

If you are bringing a friend or grandchild, text them the plan after you check. Tell them the park name, the time, and where you will meet. A clear plan avoids the worry of two people waiting at different entrances.

Look on the park page for hours and for any notice near the top of the website. Notices are often placed prominently so visitors see them. If the page does not give a clear answer, a short phone call to the district office can settle it.

- 1 Open the park page the morning you plan to go.
- 2 Look for hours of operation.
- 3 Scan the top of the site for closure or caution notices.
- 4 If unsure, call the district office.
- 5 Decide, then pack your things.

Weather matters too. After heavy rain, some paths can be muddy, and winter ice can make them slippery. Use good judgment.

GOOD TO KNOW

A closure notice may show up only on the district's own site. That is another reason to check there rather than relying on someone else's post.

14. Trail Etiquette

Sharing the path politely.

The district's site includes a page on trail etiquette. It is worth a read, even for experienced walkers, because paths are shared by people with different speeds and purposes.

Etiquette also protects the places we love. Staying on the marked path keeps plants and soil from being trampled, and carrying out what you carry in keeps the park pleasant for the next person. Small habits add up over many visitors.

Etiquette is mostly common courtesy. Be aware of who is around you, keep to a predictable side, and leave the place as you found it. The official page has the district's own wording, so treat this chapter as a friendly preview.

- Stay on marked trails.
- Let others pass, and give a friendly hello.
- Pack out your trash.
- Keep noise down so everyone, including wildlife, can enjoy the quiet.
- Respect signs and closures.

If you walk with a group, try not to spread across the whole path. Leave room for a bicycle or another walker.

TIP

Read the etiquette page once, then print it or save it. A short reminder sheet by your door helps new walkers in your family.

15. Dog Rules

Check before you bring your best friend.

Many people love walking with a dog. Rules about dogs can differ from one park to another, and from one trail to another. Some places may require a leash. Some activities may have special restrictions.

If your dog is older, think about the distance as well. A short, easy loop with plenty of shade may suit an older companion better than a long hike. Watch for tired paws and take breaks, just as you would for yourself.

I will not guess what the rule is at any particular park. The right place to look is that park's own page and the etiquette page on the district site. If it does not say, call the office and ask.

- Look for words like pets, dogs, or leash on the park page.
- Bring a leash and waste bags anyway.
- Carry water for your dog.
- Keep your dog under control around other walkers.
- Clean up after your pet.

Even a friendly dog can startle a stranger or a child, so keep a respectful distance on narrow paths.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the rules are not stated clearly, ask the district before you go. It is easier to hear the answer by phone than to turn around at the trailhead.

16. Accessibility and Comfort

Planning for walkers, canes, and rest stops.

The district's pages note that certain trails are accessible. I cannot tell you which ones, because the right answer is whatever the district says today and it may be updated. Please read the park page or call.

You do not have to explain your health to anyone. Simply say what would make the visit comfortable, such as a short route, a smooth surface, or a bench. Staff can only help if they know what you are looking for, and they are used to these questions.

Accessibility can mean different things to different people. For one person it is a smooth surface. For another it is a bench every so often, a shorter distance, or parking close to the start. Describe what you need when you ask.

- 1 Decide what matters most to you, such as smooth ground or places to sit.
- 2 Read the park page for related words.
- 3 Call the district office at 330-297-7728.
- 4 Ask about the parking area and the first stretch of path.
- 5 Write down what you learn.

TIP

Wear shoes with good grip and bring water. Comfort is part of accessibility too.

17. Finding Programs and Events

The things-to-do area.

Beyond walking, the district offers programs. On the pages I reviewed, the Things to Do area listed items such as a Wild Hikes Challenge, a Junior Ranger Program, geocaching, a book club, and other offerings. Programs change, so treat that list as an example rather than a promise.

Take a few minutes to look at several programs before choosing. Seeing the variety may spark an idea, such as a gentle morning walk, an evening talk, or a family activity. There is no obligation to sign up for anything you read about.

The district has also published program guides, which are documents that list what is coming up in a season. You may find one on the site as a PDF, and you can read it on screen or print it.

- 1 From the home page, find Things to Do, Programs, or Events.
- 2 Open the area and scroll through the choices.
- 3 Click a program that sounds interesting.
- 4 Read the date, place, and details.
- 5 Write the date on your calendar if you plan to go.

GOOD TO KNOW

Look at the year on any guide. An older guide can be useful for ideas but not for dates.

18. Reading a Program Listing

What each detail means.

A program listing is a small announcement. Reading it carefully before you sign up prevents surprises.

If a listing uses a word you do not know, such as a plant name or a term like citizen science, you can type it into a search engine to learn more. Better yet, ask the leader at the program, who will usually be happy to explain.

- Title and short description of what happens.
- Date and start time.
- Meeting place, which is often a park rather than an office.
- Who it is meant for, such as adults, families, or children.
- Whether you must register ahead of time.
- How long it lasts and how much walking is involved, if stated.
- Anything you should bring.

Pay special attention to the walking information. A hike may be easy for one person and tiring for another. If the listing says little, call and ask.

Also notice whether the program is for a certain age group. Some are designed for children, some for adults, and some for the whole family.

TIP

Copy the title, date, time, and place onto paper. If you phone later with a question, those four facts get you an answer fast.

19. Signing Up for a Program

Follow the directions on the listing.

Some programs welcome anyone who simply shows up. Others ask you to register first, and the listing will say which. I cannot describe a single sign-up screen for you, because the method can vary from one program to another. What I can tell you is how to approach any of them.

After you submit a registration, look for some kind of confirmation, either on the screen or in your email. If you do not see one, do not assume you are signed up. Call the district to confirm, and check your spam folder for a message.

Sign-up directions usually appear on the program page. You may see a form, a link, an email address, or a phone number. Use whatever the official page gives. Many district programs are offered free, but check each listing.

- 1 Read the listing all the way through.
- 2 Find the line about registration.
- 3 Follow the method it names, whether form, email, or phone.
- 4 Enter your name and contact details carefully.
- 5 Save or print any confirmation you receive.

WATCH OUT

A real registration for a free nature program should not ask for your bank password, Social Security number, or gift cards. If it does, stop and call me.

20. Full Programs and Waiting Lists

What to do when there is no room.

Popular programs can fill up. On one district page I saw a program marked as full, with an option to be placed on a cancellation list. That is a common and polite way to handle it.

If a favorite program fills up every time, ask the district whether it is offered again. Programs that are popular are often repeated, and staff can tell you when to watch for the next listing so that you can sign up early.

A cancellation list, sometimes called a waiting list, means that if someone drops out, the next person is offered the spot. You are not guaranteed a place, but there is a chance, and it costs nothing to ask.

- Look for the word full on the listing.
- See whether a cancellation or waiting list is offered.
- Follow the directions to be added.
- Keep your phone and email handy in case you are contacted.
- Look at other dates or similar programs.

While you wait, you can still enjoy the park on your own. Programs add company and learning, but the trail is open regardless.

TIP

Sign up early for programs you really want. Spots are easier to get when the listing first appears.

21. Guided Hikes and Nature Programs

Walking with someone who knows the woods.

Guided programs are a lovely way to learn. A naturalist or trained leader walks with a group, points out birds, plants, and signs of wildlife, and answers questions. You do not need to know anything beforehand.

Feel free to ask questions during the walk. Leaders enjoy curiosity, and no question is too basic. Many walkers enjoy the stories as much as the exercise, and it is common for strangers to leave the walk as friends.

For seniors, a guided walk can also be a gentle way to meet neighbors. The group usually moves at a conversational pace and stops often to look at things. Still, read the listing for the length and difficulty, and ask if you have concerns.

- Wear comfortable shoes and dress in layers.
- Bring water and, if you like, a small snack.
- Arrive a few minutes early to find the group.
- Bring binoculars or a camera if you have them.
- Tell the leader if you would like to go slowly.

TIP

Weather may affect an outdoor program. Check the listing or phone ahead on the morning of the event if the sky looks doubtful.

22. The Wild Hikes Challenge

A friendly goal for regular walkers.

One program the district has offered is called the Wild Hikes Challenge. An older form I found explained that hikers could visit a set number of trails to earn a reward, and that completion worked on the honor system. That form was from an earlier year, so the exact rules may differ now.

A goal like this works best when it is fun. Choose short, pleasant trails first, and celebrate each one. If the rules call for a certain number of trails, spread them over many weeks and several seasons instead of rushing.

I mention it as an example of how a program can turn your walks into a hobby. If you like having a goal, ask the district or check the Things to Do area to see how the challenge works today and what, if anything, you need to submit.

- 1 Open the Things to Do area.
- 2 Find the Wild Hikes Challenge page, if it is listed.
- 3 Read the current rules and any form.
- 4 Print the form or note the sign-up method.
- 5 Keep a simple list of the trails you visit.

GOOD TO KNOW

Do not rely on an old form. Always use the newest version on the official site, because rules and rewards can change.

23. Programs for Grandchildren and Families

Outdoor fun for all ages.

The website lists programs for younger visitors as well. On the pages I reviewed there was a Junior Ranger Program and a geocaching activity, which is a kind of outdoor treasure hunt. If you have grandchildren visiting, these are a wonderful excuse to get outside together.

Take pictures, and let the children take some too. A printed photo of a first hike makes a lovely keepsake, and you can tuck it in the same folder as your maps. Memories of simple outings often last longer than expensive ones.

Read the age guidance in the listing. Some programs are for children with an adult, and some have age ranges. Ask if you are unsure whether your grandchild is the right age.

- Check the age range on the listing.
- Find out whether a grown-up must stay with the child.
- Bring water and snacks.
- Pack bug spray and sunscreen as the season suggests.
- Plan a rest stop for little legs and for yours.

Time outdoors is memorable. A short, relaxed visit often beats an ambitious one.

TIP

Let the children carry the map. They love the job, and it keeps them paying attention to where you are.

24. Reservations and Permits

For certain uses of park spaces.

The district site has an area for reservations and permits. Some activities, such as using a shelter or holding a group event, may need advance permission. Ordinary walking and visiting generally does not require anything, but I would rather you check than assume.

If you are unsure whether your plan needs a permit, ask before you invite people. It is much easier to sort it out ahead of time than on the day of the gathering. A short phone call gives you a clear answer and peace of mind.

If you are planning a family gathering, a club outing, or any special use, open the reservations and permits page and read what it says. It should explain how to ask and what rules apply. If a fee is involved, the page or the staff will tell you plainly.

- 1 Open the Reservations and Permits page.
- 2 Read which uses need permission.
- 3 Follow the stated method for requesting it.
- 4 Note the deadline or lead time, if given.
- 5 Keep the approval with your event plans.

WATCH OUT

Pay only through the method named on the official district pages. Never send money by gift card or to a person who contacts you out of the blue.

25. Fees, Free Programs, and Donations

Understanding what costs money.

Visiting county parks and reading the website is free. Many programs are offered free, and the district also has a donor program for people who wish to support its work. Some programs or permits may have a fee, and the listing should say so.

Keep any receipt or confirmation if you do pay for something, and note the date. If a charge appears that you did not expect, contact the district directly. Use the phone number from the official website, not one in a message.

I avoid quoting prices here because they can change. Instead, read the listing before you register. If it names a charge, you will see it before you commit. If the amount is not clear,

ask.

- Browsing the website costs nothing.
- Many programs are free; read each listing.
- Fees, if any, appear in the listing or permit page.
- Donations are optional and entirely your choice.
- A foundation store also appears on the site.

GOOD TO KNOW

Giving is voluntary. If someone pressures you to donate on the spot, step back, hang up, and contact the district directly using its published number.

26. Email Newsletters and Updates

Let the news come to you.

Many organizations send a periodic email newsletter, and a park district is a natural fit. A newsletter can bring program announcements and park news straight to your inbox so you do not have to remember to check.

Newsletters can be a gentle way to stay informed, but too many emails become noise. If you find your inbox crowded, keep only the ones you truly read. The park district newsletter is easy to drop later if it is not useful to you.

Look on the website for a sign-up box near the bottom of the page or in a menu, using words like newsletter, subscribe, or stay connected. If you cannot find one, ask the district whether they offer one.

- 1 Scroll to the bottom of the home page.
- 2 Look for a Newsletter or Subscribe box.
- 3 Type your email address carefully.
- 4 Press the button to join.
- 5 Watch for a confirmation email and click the confirm link if asked.

WATCH OUT

Make a folder in your email called Parks, and move the newsletters there so they do not get lost among other messages.

You can unsubscribe at any time, using a link usually found at the bottom of the message.

27. Phone and In-Person Help

A real person is available.

A website cannot answer every question, and you should never feel stuck when it falls short. The district has an office in Ravenna and a phone number, 330-297-7728, which appeared on the district pages I reviewed. Confirm the number on the official site before you dial, in case it has changed.

I want you to feel that picking up the phone is a normal and respectable way to get answers. The website is a convenience, not a requirement. If a call gets you the information faster, you have chosen the right tool for the job.

When you call, have your question ready. A short list helps you remember everything. Staff are used to questions from walkers, families, and first-time visitors.

- Which trail is best for a gentle walk?
- Is a certain park open today?
- Are dogs allowed on that path?
- How do I register for this program?
- Is there a printed map I can pick up?

If you would like to visit the office, ask on the phone about hours and the best time to stop by.

TIP

Write down the name of the person you speak with and the date, in case you need to call back.

28. Using a Library or Shared Computer

No home computer needed.

If you do not have a computer, internet, or printer at home, the Portage County District Library and many senior centers offer public computers. They are a fine way to read the park district website and print a map.

Libraries often have helpful staff and quiet corners, which can make the whole job less stressful. If you are shy about asking, remember that helping patrons is part of their daily work, and they are glad when someone comes in to learn.

Park information is public, so using it on a shared computer carries little risk. The care really comes in if you register for a program or sign up for emails, since you will type your name and email address.

- Ask the librarian how printing works.
- Do not save passwords or personal details on a shared computer.
- Close the browser when you finish.
- Take your printed maps with you.
- Ask for help; librarians are glad to assist.

Bring a folder to carry your printed pages home neatly.

TIP

If the browser offers to remember a form entry or password, choose No.

29. Using Your Phone on the Trail

A helpful tool, used wisely.

A phone is useful on a walk. It can hold your saved map, take photos, and call for help. It also needs a little planning, because batteries drain and signals fade among trees.

A small portable battery pack is a nice thing to carry if you take long walks. Keep the phone out of direct sun and cold, since extreme weather can drain a battery quickly. Check your battery level halfway through your outing.

- Charge your phone before you leave.
- Save the map ahead of time.
- Turn the screen brightness up for outdoor reading.
- Keep the phone in a pocket you can reach easily.
- Tell someone where you are going and when you will return.

Put the phone on silent or vibrate so ringing does not disturb others or wildlife. If you carry a paper map as well, you have a backup.

In an emergency, call 911. If you can, tell the dispatcher the park name and where you are on the trail, using the map to describe landmarks.

WATCH OUT

Never rely only on a phone in the woods. A paper map and a plan to turn back in good time are your safest tools.

30. Helping a Family Member Plan a Visit

Doing it together.

Many of my clients ask a son, daughter, or grandchild to help with the computer. That is wonderful, as long as you stay in charge of the plans and the choices.

When the visit is over, ask your helper to show you how to find a second park or program. Learning one more skill each time builds your confidence. Soon you will be the one passing along advice to friends and neighbors.

Sit together and open portageparkdistrict.org yourself. Let your helper show you where to click, but you do the typing and the deciding. That way, the next time you want to find a trail, you will know how.

- 1 Sit side by side at the computer.
- 2 Type the address together.
- 3 Open one park page and read it aloud.
- 4 Print or save the map.
- 5 Pick a date and write it on the calendar.

If you are the helper, resist the urge to take over the mouse. Patience is the best gift you can give.

TIP

A planned visit is a good way to spend time with family. Arrange a short walk and a snack afterward.

31. Scams and Look-Alike Sites

How to stay safe.

Whenever people sign up for things online, scammers follow. The park district is a friendly local agency, but fakers can still pretend to be anyone. Knowing a few signs keeps you safe.

A useful rule of thumb is that real agencies give you time. Scammers want you to rush. If you feel pressure to act before you can think, that feeling itself is the warning. Slow down, close the message, and ask someone you trust.

- Type the web address yourself; look for the real domain.

- A real agency never demands gift cards.
- It never asks for your password or a one-time code by phone.
- It does not threaten you with fines for missing a free program.
- Be wary of a text with a link claiming a booking problem.

If a message seems off, do not click anything in it. Go to the district site yourself, or call the published phone number, and ask whether the message is real.

Look-alike sites may use a slightly different spelling or a different ending. When in doubt, close the page.

WATCH OUT

If you ever gave out a password, code, or card number to someone who contacted you, call your bank and then call me at (330) 200-8042. Acting quickly helps.

32. Bigger Text and Easier Reading

Make the screen comfortable.

If small print strains your eyes, you can enlarge any web page. This also helps with trail maps, which often contain tiny labels.

You can also use your computer's built-in magnifier if one is available. It enlarges a portion of the screen as you move the mouse. If you would like help finding it on your particular computer, I am glad to show you over the phone or at your home.

- On a computer, hold Ctrl (or Command on a Mac) and press the plus key to zoom in.
- Press Ctrl and zero to return to normal size.
- On a phone or tablet, spread two fingers apart on the screen.
- Your device settings can raise text size everywhere.
- Turn up screen brightness when reading outdoors.

Larger text means you may need to scroll more, but that is a small price for easier reading. For PDF maps, use the plus button in the PDF viewer as well.

If the colors are hard to see, try a darker or lighter display mode in your device settings.

TIP

A pair of reading glasses kept next to the computer saves a lot of fuss.

33. When the Website Will Not Cooperate

Calm troubleshooting.

Sometimes a page will not load or a link seems broken. This happens to everyone, and it is rarely your fault. Work through a few simple checks.

If you are using a phone, try switching between Wi-Fi and cellular data, or the reverse. Sometimes one connection is slower than the other. Closing the browser entirely and opening it again also clears many small problems.

- 1 Check that your internet is working by opening another site.
- 2 Retype portageparkdistrict.org carefully.
- 3 Press the refresh button, which looks like a circular arrow.
- 4 Try a different browser or device.
- 5 Try again later, because sites sometimes need maintenance.

If a PDF map will not open, make sure your browser is up to date, or try downloading the file and opening it from your Downloads folder. If it still fails, call the district and ask whether a paper map is available.

Write down any error message exactly as it appears. It helps whoever assists you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Pages and files get moved around. An old bookmark that no longer works usually just needs replacing with a fresh one from the home page.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

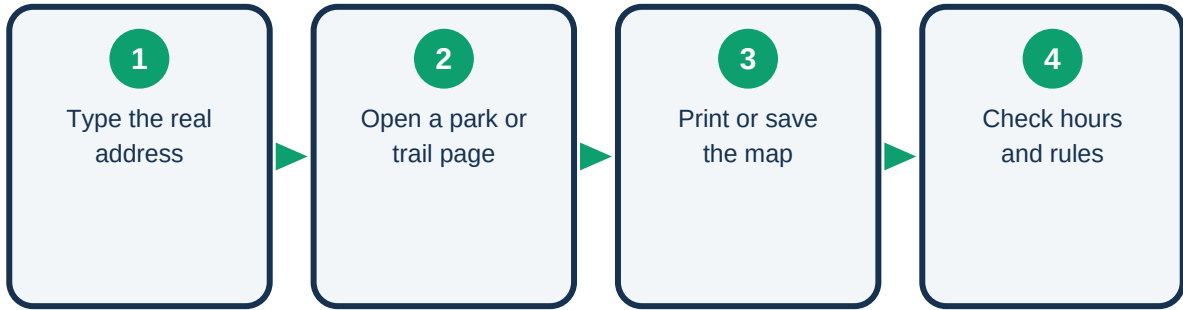
Keep this by the computer. I want to... Reach the district: type portageparkdistrict.org yourself. Find a park: open the parks and maps section. Get a trail map: open the park page and look for the map link, then print or save it. See what is happening: open the programs or things to do area. Sign up: follow the directions on that program's page. Check rules: read the park page before you go. Ask a person: call the district at 330-297-7728. Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

From Computer to Trailhead

Plan a park visit in four easy moves.



Planning ahead makes the walk more relaxing.

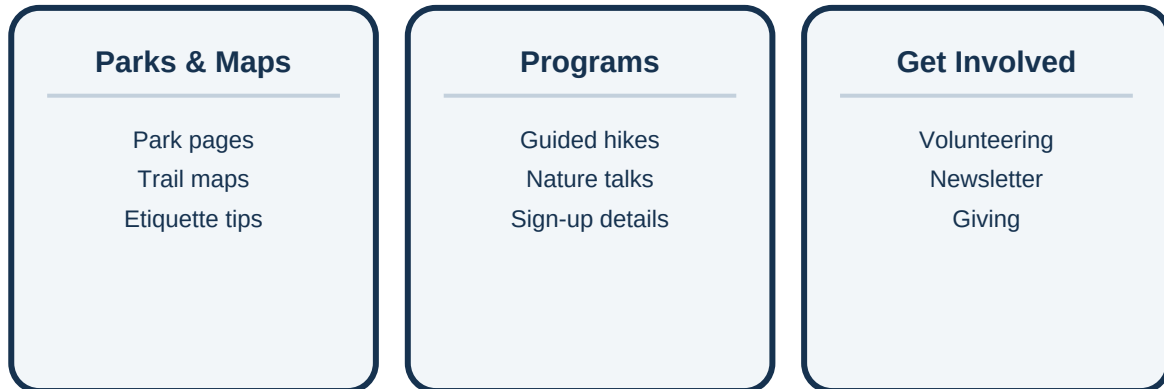
Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

What the Website Offers

Three things most visitors look for.



All of it can be read for free from home.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.