



Special Olympics
South Dakota
Equestrian Handbook

January 1, 2026



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Practice ideas, skill assessment and development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI rules for each sport at <https://www.specialolympics.org/what-we-do/sports/sports-offered?locale=en>

SOSD Official Equestrian Events

OFFICIAL EVENTS OFFERED:

- English Equitation
- Western Equitation
- Flat Surface Equitation
- Working Trails
- Barrel Racing
- Showmanship at Halter
- Showmanship at Bridle Classes

MATP EVENTS OFFERED:

- MATP Working Trails
- MATP Showmanship at Halter OR Showmanship at Bridle (May only participate in one)

Equestrian Governing Rules

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics equestrian sports competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based on Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), American Horse Shows Association (AHSA) and American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) rules for equestrian sports competition. FEI or National Governing Body (NGB) shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. In such cases, The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall apply.

Equestrian General Rules

- An athlete with Down Syndrome who has been diagnosed with Atlanto-axial instability may not participate in equestrian events.
- Rules listed are only for those events offered by SOSD.
- **SOSD Equestrian events will be held at two locations with one East River and one West River. No statewide competition will be held in 2026.**

DETERMINATION OF DIVISIONS:

- Riders are assigned to a division according to their ability to safely negotiate any movements required in the class. This ability is indicated on the Equestrian Sports Rider Profile Form (found in competition guide/registration forms) by the Special Olympics coach prior to competition and submitted with athlete entry form.
 - A Rider Profile must indicate the following information:
 - 1) Physical inability to post the trot – supported by a physician’s statement.
 - 2) Physical inability to sit the jog – supported by a physician’s statement.

- 3) Physical inability to wear boots with a heel – supported by a physician’s statement.
 - a. Western tack style riders must have tapaderos or other safety stirrups.
 - b. English tack style riders must use Peacock Safety stirrups, S-shaped irons or Devonshire boots.
- Riders may enter any or all classes from their division but may not cross enter division levels.
- It should be noted that all athletes compete according to ability and age. Equestrian athletes are not separated by gender. If there are less than three athletes in an age group, groups may be combined to make a competition but levels may not be combined.
- **Definitions:**
 - Support: Rider needs the physical support of one or two sidewalkers and/or the presence of a leader. Any help in the arena is considered “support”.
 - Independent: Independent rider may not be helped while competing.
 - Physical limitations: Unable to post a trot or sit the job (medical documentation required)
- **Divisions:**
 - **A Level:** Walk, Trot/Jog, Canter/Lope-Independent only. Rider is expected to compete with no modifications to NGB rules.
 - 1) A: Can perform any class requirements.
 - 2) A-P: Riders that have a physical disability prohibiting them from posting a trot or sitting the jog.
 - **B Level:** Walk and Trot/Jog.
 - 1) B-I: Independent, can perform class requirements.
 - 2) B-IP: Independent riders that have a physical disability prohibiting them from posting the trot or sitting the jog.
 - 3) B-S: Supported, can physically perform any class requirements.
 - 4) B-SP: Supported riders that have a physical disability prohibiting them from posting the trot or sitting the jog.
 - **C Level:** Riders ride at the walk only.
 - 1) C-I: Independent
 - 2) C-S: Supported

Rider Division Levels Chart:

<u>Equestrian Sports</u>	<u>C-S</u>	<u>C-I</u>	<u>B-S</u>	<u>B-I</u>	<u>A</u>
			<u>B-SP</u>	<u>B-IP</u>	<u>A-P</u>
English Equitation	X	X	X	X	X
Western Equitation	X	X	X	X	X
Flat Surface Equitation	X	X	X	X	X
Working Trails	X	X	X	X	X
Barrel Racing				X	X
Showmanship @ Halter	X	X	X	X	X
Showmanship @ Bridle	X	X	X	X	X

MATP EVENTS RULES:

- MATP stands for Motor Activity Training Program and is offered for those athletes who may otherwise be unable to participate in Equestrian competition.
- Athletes are allowed to have a coach or chaperone assist them as needed to fully participate.
- Athletes participating in MATP events are not eligible to participate in any other events.
- No athlete will be disqualified.
- EVENTS OFFERED: MATP Working Trails, MATP Showmanship at Bridle and MATP Showmanship at Halter
- Athletes are eligible to participate in 2 MATP events to include MATP Working Trails and either Showmanship at Bridle OR Showmanship at Halter (one or the other/not both)
- Events defined:
 - MATP Working Trails: Athletes may walk/lead their horse through the working trails course with/without the assistance of a coach/chaperone.
 - MATP Showmanship at Bridle/Halter: Athletes may receive whatever assistance is needed from coach/chaperone without penalty.
- All athletes entered in MATP Equestrian events will receive a 1st place medal or ribbon upon completion of their 2 events.

ATTIRE:

- Local Program shirts, t-shirts, etc. are acceptable attire. The information below regarding attire is the optimal outcome. PLEASE no shorts.
- **General Attire Rules:** Clothing should be workmanlike and neat. There can be NO advertisements, logos, etc. on the rider's shirt.
 - All riders are encouraged to wear heeled boots appropriate to the tack style in which they are showing. Safety stirrups must be used if the rider is not wearing a heel.
 - 1) Riders who must wear other footwear as the result of a physical disability must have a physician's statement submitted with their entry form.
 - a) English tack style riders must use peacock safety stirrups, S-shaped stirrups or Devonshire boots.
 - b) Western tack style riders must use tapaderos or other approved safety stirrups.
 - All riders must wear protective SEI-ASTM or BHS-approved helmets with full chin harness which must be fastened at all times riders are working around horses.
 - Competitors must wear their number prominently displayed on their back during competition, practice at competition and while in the competition "holding area".
 - During practice, athletes must adhere to the helmet, boot and long pants rule but may wear short-sleeved shirts.
- **English Tack Style Attire:**
 - A short, dark-colored riding coat.
 - A solid color, preferably white, riding shirt or Oxford-style long or short sleeved shirt.
 - Tie or choker.
 - Breeches or jodhpurs.
 - Gloves and spurs are optional.
 - Athletes will be permitted to wear a hat cover or conservative raincoat in the case of inclement weather.
 - In extreme heat (above 80 degrees), the judges may permit athletes to show without riding coats.

- **Western Tack Style Attire:**

- Pants/Jeans.
- A long-sleeved shirt of conservative color with a collar.
- A belt under loops.
- Neckties, kerchiefs, bolos, chaps and gloves are optional.
 - 1) Chaps are prohibited in all gymkhana events and showmanship classes.
 - 2) Western-type hat worn on approved helmet is optional.

TACK:

- **General Tack Rules:**

- Saddles must fit the horse.
 - 1) An athlete may use his/her own saddle if it fits the horse he/she is riding.
 - 2) Adapted saddles must be approved by the Event Director prior to the competition.
- Halters are required for all supported classes. Lead line must be attached to the halter and not to the bridle.
 - 1) The halter may be over or under the bridle so long as it doesn't interfere with the use of the bit or the reins.
- **PROHIBITED** Tack and Equipment (applies to warm-up area as well as competition)
 - 1) Earplugs of any kind
 - 2) Martingales of any kind
 - 3) Bearing, side or running reins
 - 4) Seat covers – if an athlete needs it, it must be declared on the Rider Profile and approved
 - 5) Boots, bandages or blinders
 - 6) Nose covers
 - 7) Bit guards
- Riders may use adaptive equipment without penalty but they may, in no way, be attached to the horse or saddle. Adaptive equipment must be declared on the Rider Profile.
- Bridles must be appropriate to the class entered and meet the rule requirements.
 - 1) In International, National and Chapter competition, it is mandatory to have the bits dropped and inspected on all horses. Riders must be dismounted for this inspection.

- **English Equitation:**

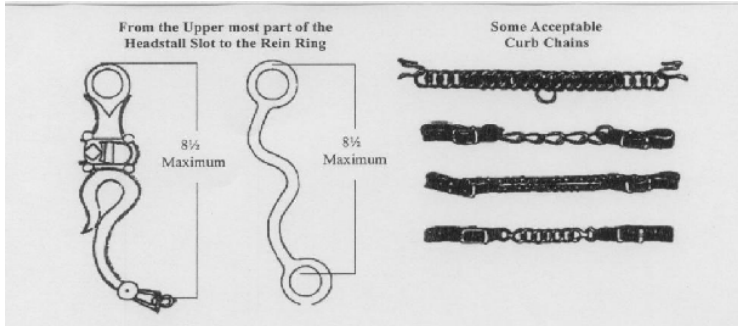
- English-style saddle of any type is required.
- Regulation snaffles and pelhams, with cavesson are recommended.
 - 1) A judge at his/her own discretion can penalize a horse with non-conventional types of bits or nosebands.
 - 2) Boots and conservative-colored bandages are permitted in Trails classes only.
 - 3) Martingales are prohibited.
 - 4) Spurs, crops or bats are optional.

- **Western Equitation and Western Working Trails:**

- Saddles
 - 1) The saddle must fit the rider. It may be slick or swelled fork and have a high or low cantle. Nothing that would prevent the stirrups from hanging freely shall be added to or deleted from a standard Western saddle.

➤ Bits and Bridles

- 1) A standard Western bit is defined as having a shank with a maximum length overall of 21 centimeters (8 ½ "). The mouthpiece will consist of a metal bar 75 millimeters (3/8") to 3 centimeters (3/4") in diameter, varying from the straight bar to a jointed mouthpiece. Nothing may extend below the horizontal plane of the mouthpiece other than a roller attached to the center of the bit. Swivel ports and flat polo mouthpieces are permitted. Reins must be attached to each shank.
- 2) A leather chin strap or curbed chain may be used but must be at least 1 centimeter (1/2") in width and lie flat against the jaws of the horse.



➤ Optional Equipment

- 1) Carrying a lariat or reata is optional in Stock Seat Equitation and Working Trail classes. When carried, it must be attached to the fork of the saddle.
- 2) Silver equipment may be used but should not be given preference over good working equipment.
- 3) Shin, bell and skid boots are permitted only where stock horse routine is required.

➤ Prohibited equipment

- 1) Hackamores
- 2) Tie-downs
- 3) Running Martingales
- 4) Draw reins
- 5) Bosals
- 6) Cavesson-type nosebands
- 7) Wire/metal/rawhide devices as part of the chin-strap; and
- 8) Shoes other than standard horse shoes

• **Showmanship:**

- Athletes showing horses under Western Tack Style may use a halter and lead shank made of leather or nylon.
- Athletes showing horses under English Tack Style may use a suitable English bridle or halter of either leather or nylon.

• **Gymkhana events:**

- Saddles are required in Equitation classes.
- Bridles are required in Equitation classes.
- Optional Equipment
 - 1) Shin, bell and skid boots
 - 2) Spurs, crops

- Prohibited Equipment
 - 1) Lariat or reata
 - 2) Hackamores
 - 3) Tie-downs
 - 4) Running martingales
 - 5) Draw reins
 - 6) Bosals
 - 7) Cavesson-type nosebands
 - 8) Wire, metal or rawhide device as part of leather chin strap
 - 9) Shoes other than standard horse shoes

Rules of Competition

GENERAL RULES:

- All Riders must have had a minimum of 15 hours of training over a minimum of 8 weeks.
- No post entries are allowed.
- No dogs will be permitted on the show grounds, except Seeing Eye dogs or assistance dogs.
- There will be a safety inspection of tack and equipment before riders mount.
- If riders provide their own horses, the event director may require proof of a negative Coggins test.
- During World Games, all athletes will compete on horses provided by the Games Organizing Committee.
- If riders do not bring their own horses, adequate time must be set aside to determine suitability of the rider to the horse.
- Spotters, appointed by Event Director, will remain in the ring at strategic places to act in case of emergency for unassisted riders.
- Under no circumstances should sedatives be used on horses for Special Olympics Equestrian Sport.
- Change of horse is only allowed for safety reasons or if a horse is sick or unsound.
- The official veterinarian's decision, if called by the judge, as to the serviceable soundness of a horse, will be final for the purpose of awarding medals and ribbons in the class for which he/she has been called. Otherwise, the judge(s) and the Equine Director will make the final decision regarding a horse's ability to compete.
- Where applicable, class commands shall be publicly announced first in English, second in French, third in Spanish and then signed for the hearing impaired. Cue cards may also be used for hearing impaired athletes. In order for the cues to be universal, they should be designated as follows: 1=WALK, 2=SIT/TROT/JOG, 3=POST TROT, 4=CANTER/LOPE, 0=REVERSE, universal stop ()=HALT.
- In the case of a grievance, the Event Director will consult the judge(s), competition steward and/or the Equestrian Sports Rules Committee. Their decision will be final.
- Unsoundness does not penalize a competitor unless it is sufficiently severe to impair the required performance. In such cases the imposition of a penalty is at the judge's discretion.
- An athlete with Down Syndrome who has been diagnosed with Atlanto-axial instability may not participate in the sport of equestrian. For additional information and the procedure for waiver of this restriction, please refer to Article 1, Section L, 7, f.

- **Glossary Terms:**

While many of the terms in this glossary are often used in a general manner, they are specifically defined herein to offer precision to word usage when describing characteristics of the horse in motion.

- Bending the horse refers to lateral bending.
- Cadence is the clarity of rhythm.
- Contact refers to the horse's stretching forward into the bit and accepting a taut rein as a means of communication to the rider.
- Diagonals: At left diagonal, rider should be sitting the saddle when left front leg is on the ground and at right diagonal, rider should be sitting the saddle when the right front leg is on the ground. When circling clockwise at a trot, rider should be on left diagonal. When circling counterclockwise at a trot, rider should be on right diagonal.
- Flexion in the horse refers to bending in the joints, specifically the poll and jaw.
- Freedom of movement is the extent to which a horse can reach forward with its hip joints and shoulders by virtue of a lively impulsion and suppleness of its joints free from the paralyzing effects of resistance.
- Impulsion is thrust. Impulsion in the horse is the elastic springing of the horse off the ground, beginning in the haunches with a bending of the joints in the hindquarters and culminating in very energetic gaits. The tendency to go forward without rushing is seen in a supportive forward reaching action of the hind legs rather than a backward pushing motion. To show impulsion, the horse must be willing to go forward and must travel straight.
- Lengthening of stride is a preliminary exercise to extension. It is characterized by the horse moving quietly and straight with the acceptance of the bit and showing a distinct increase in the length of the strides. Any or all of the characteristics of the true extension may or may not be present.
- Lightness in the horse is exhibited by the ability to move with deftness and agility, a result of suppleness, impulsion, balance and freedom of movement.
- On the bit: a horse which is on the bit (on the aids) accepts a light contact of the rein with no resistance and is yielding in the jaw and poll to the rider's hand; moreover, the horse accepts the rider's aids to move forward into the rein. A horse which is on the bit moves with a supple back, shows no resistance in transitions and remains submissive to the rider. The position of the horse when on the bit depends on the conformation as well as the degree of training of the horse. Care should be taken to consider the action of the entire horse and not just the head when evaluating whether a horse is on the bit.
 - 1) The head should remain in a steady position, as a rule slightly in front of the vertical with a supple poll as the highest point of the neck. No resistance should be offered to the rider.
- Position in the horse refers to the direction in which it looks. While flexed in the poll, the horse can be positioned either to the left or to the right. The rider sees the shadow of the horse's eye and nostril on the side to which it is positioned.
- Regularity refers to either the repeated rhythm in the horse's gaits as they are defined or regularity of the tempo.
- Rhythm: the order of the footfalls; simply the "beat" of the gait (Walk: 4-beat, Jog/Trot: 2-beat, Canter/Lope: 3-beat).
- Submission (obedience) is the horse's mental willingness and physical ability to follow the rider's will. The difference between resistance and disobedience can be explained in the following manner: a horse resists physically when responding to the rider's aids by showing a lack of suppleness in movements of transitions whereas disobedience involves willful escape.

- Suppleness is the physical ability of the horse to shift the point of equilibrium smoothly forward and back as well as laterally without stiffness or resistance. Suppleness is manifested by the horse's fluid response to the rider's restraining and positioning aids of the rein and to the driving aids of the leg and seat. Suppleness is best judged in transitions.
- Tempo is the rate of repetition of the rhythm. It is not synonymous with speed. Speed is miles per hour which can be produced either by an increase in tempo or a lengthening of the strides.
- Halt: At the halt, the horse should stand attentive, motionless and straight, with its weight evenly distributed over all four legs. This is recognized by the pairs of legs being abreast of each other.
- Reverse is a change of direction and should be done in the direction away from the rail.
 - 1) On change of direction the horse should adjust body bend to a curvature of the line being followed, remain supple and follow the indications of the rider without resistance or change of pace, rhythm or speed.
 - 2) The horse should maintain cadence and rhythm when changing direction.
 - a. Change of diagonal should be shown by the riders when at the rising trot.
 - b. Change of lead may be interrupted, simple or flying when a reverse is done at the canter/lope.
 - i. Interrupted is a change whereby the horse is brought to a halt, then immediately asked to canter on the correct lead.
 - ii. Simple is a change whereby the horse is brought back into a walk or trot and restarted into canter on the opposite lead with no more than three walk or trot strides.
 - iii. Flying is a change whereby the horse changes the stride of both hind and front legs simultaneously.
- Transitions are changes of pace and speed. They should be quickly made yet must be smooth and not abrupt. The horse should remain light in hand, calm, and maintain a correct position.
- **Judging the Classes:**
 - The following points (where appropriate) have equal consideration in judging all classes:
 - 1) Rider's balance
 - 2) Rider's seat
 - 3) Use of aids
 - 4) Ability to follow directions
 - 5) Ring etiquette and safety
 - 6) Sportsmanlike conduct
 - 7) Results as shown by the performance of the horse are not to be considered more important than the method used in obtaining them.
 - **Rider's Position – English Tack Style:**
 - 1) Rider should have workmanlike appearance, seat and hands light and supple, conveying the impression of control, should any emergency arise.
 - 2) Basic position: The eyes should be up and the shoulders back. Upper body should be straight, but not stiff or hollow-backed. Toes should be at an angle best suited to rider's conformation. Ankles should be flexed in, heels down. Calf and leg should be in contact with horse and slightly behind girth. Stirrup should be on the ball of the foot and must not be tied to the girth.
 - 3) Position in motion: At the walk, sitting trot and canter, body should be a couple of degrees in front of or on the vertical; during the posting trot, inclined forward or on the vertical; galloping and jumping, same inclination should be present as the posting trot.

➤ **Rider's Position – Western Tack Style:**

- 1) Riders will be judged on seat, hands, performance of horse, appointments of horse and rider, and suitability of horse to rider.
- 2) Basic Position: Body should appear comfortable, relaxed and flexible. The rider should sit in the center of the saddle with legs hanging to form a straight vertical line, from the ear, dropping down through the center of the shoulder and hip, touching the back of the heel. The stirrup should be just short enough to allow the heels to be lower than the toes with a slight bend in the knee and toe directly under the knee. Feet should be placed in the stirrup with the weight on the ball of the foot. Consideration should be given to the width of the stirrups, which vary on Western saddles. If stirrups are wide, the foot may have the appearance of being “home” when, in reality, the weight is being carried properly on the ball of the foot. Arms are held in a relaxed, easy manner, shoulders back and down and upper arm in a straight line with the body, the one holding reins bent at the elbow forming a straight line from elbow to horse's mouth.
- 3) Hands: Only one hand is to be used for reining and hands shall not be changed. The hand should be around the reins. Rein hand is to be above horn and as near to it as possible. Bracing against the horn or coiled reata is penalized. When split reins are used and ends of rein fall on same side as reining hand, one finger between reins is permitted. No finger between reins is allowed when using romal, or when ends of the split reins are held in hand not used for reining. The position of the hand not being used for reining is optional, but it should be kept free of the horse and equipment and always held in a relaxed manner straight with the rider's body. Rider can hold romal or end of the split reins to keep from swinging and to adjust the position of the reins, provide it is held at least 41 cm (1' 4 1/4") from reining hand.
- 4) Position in motion: Rider should sit to jog and not post (unless otherwise specified in division rules). At the lope, he/she should be close to the saddle. All movements of the horse should be governed using imperceptible aids and the shifting of the rider's weight is not desirable.

➤ **Unauthorized assistance from horse handlers and sidewalkers will result in penalties:**

- 1) Sidewalkers may not give verbal commands or extra physical prompting except in the case of an emergency.
- 2) Special consideration will be given to riders with visual or auditory impairments or severe physical disability.
- 3) Coaches may not act as horse handlers, sidewalkers or spotters for their own athletes at any time while the athlete is being judged.

EQUITATION:

- **General:** Riders must maintain the same mount throughout all phases of a class. Any rider not having his mount under sufficient control will be excused from the rings and disqualified.
 - If the health and safety of the rider is in jeopardy while on a horse supplied by and borrowed from the venue management or any borrowed horse outside of the athlete's regular training program, the coach may request a change.
 - Attendants are not allowed in the ring except at the request of the judge(s) or when specified in the class requirements.
 - Outside assistance/railside coaching will be penalized at the judge's discretion. Electronic communication devices used for the purpose of coaching, etc., between riders and individuals outside the ring shall be prohibited.

- In cases of broken equipment or loss of shoe, the rider may continue or be excused from the ring at the request of his/her coach.
- **Judging the Class:**
 - Riders will be judged on seat, hands and ability to control and show the horse. Results as shown by performance of the horse are not to be considered more important than the method used by the rider.
 - The following are the class specifications for judging equitation classes. Level A riders are expected to compete with no modifications to the NGB rules of each class entered.
- **All Divisions – Class Routines and Expectations:**
 - All riders will ride around the ring in both directions at all required gaits, in a group and/or individually at the command of the judge.
 - Riders will perform the gaits appropriate for their division.
 - All riders will be asked to back their horses.
 - All riders may be required to execute any appropriate tests determined by the judges and the Event Director.
- **English Equitation Class Routine:**
 - Competitors shall enter the ring at a called-for gait.
 - They must be worked both ways of the ring. They must always be on the correct diagonal if appropriate.
 - Entries then line up and back their horse on command.
 - Any or all riders may be required to execute any appropriate tests included in the class requirements. All tests used must be on the flat. Tests may be performed either collectively or individually, but no other tests may be used. Instructions must be publicly announced.
 - In English Equitation, tests from which the judges may choose to include:
 - 1) Halt (4 to 6 seconds);
 - 2) Figure eight at trot, demonstrating change of diagonals;
 - 3) Figure eight at canter on correct lead, demonstrating simple change of lead; demonstrating simple, interrupted or flying change of lead;
 - 4) Work collectively at walk, trot or canter;
 - 5) Hand gallop to a halt (4 to 6 seconds);
 - 6) Execute serpentine at a trot demonstrating change of diagonal;
 - 7) Change leads on a line demonstrating a simple, interrupted or flying change of lead
 - 8) Perform circles at any gait appropriate for the division;
 - 9) Turn on forehand and/or haunches; and
 - 10) Reverse direction at the halt, walk, trot and/or canter.
- **Western Equitation Class Routine:**
 - Competitors shall enter the ring at a walk or a jog and are judged at a flat-footed, four-beat walk, two-beat jog and a three-beat lope in accordance with the division specifications.
 - They must always be on the correct lead.
 - Entries then line up and back their horse on command.
 - Any or all riders may be required to execute any appropriate tests included in the class requirements. Tests may be performed either collectively or individually, but no other tests may be used. Instructions must be publicly announced.
 - Tests from which the judges may choose for Western Equitation:
 - 1) Large circle at walk, jog;
 - 2) Perform a halt;
 - 3) Reverse direction from a halt or walk or jog or lope;
 - 4) Lope stop;

- 5) Demonstrate a sliding stop;
- 6) Roll back or haunch turns or spins;
- 7) Figure 8 at a jog;
- 8) Figure 8 at a lope on correct lead demonstrating simple, interrupted or flying change of lead; and
- 9) Change of leads down center of ring demonstrating at least three changes of lead.

*****Judges are encouraged to call for at least two tests to be performed. Riders will not be asked to change horses.

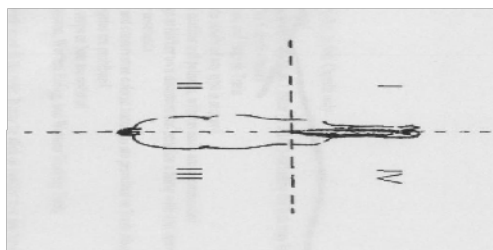
WORKING TRAIL:

- **General:** Management is encouraged to design courses that can be negotiated in 90 seconds.
 - The course is to be designed to require each horse to show all gaits appropriate to division level as part of its work and will be scored as a maneuver.
 - Course designers should keep in mind that all courses and obstacles are to be constructed with safety in mind so as to eliminate any accidents. Enough space must be provided for the horse to jog/trot at least 10 meters (30 feet) and lope/canter at least 15 meters (50 feet) for the judge to evaluate these gaits in the appropriate divisions.
 - Outdoor facilities are encouraged to include natural obstacles (e.g., trees, creeks, brush, hills, ditches) as long as they can be maneuvered safely and designed within easy access of the judge.
 - **Judges should be made aware of any course/class modifications prior to the event. (Ex: mailbox/beanbag/bucket).**
 - Judges must walk the course and have the right/duty to alter the course in any manner or remove/change any obstacle deemed unsafe or non-negotiable.
 - Safety of the gaits between obstacles shall be at the discretion of the judge.
 - The winner will be the rider incurring the fewest penalty points who also executes the course in the most competent manner.
- **Entry will be evaluated on:**
 - Responsiveness
 - Willingness
 - General attitude
 - Rider's ability to guide the horse through a designated obstacle course
 - While the horse is in motion, the rider's hands shall be clear of the horse to avoid cueing
 - Western riders may use only one hand on the reins except that it is permissible to change hands when working an obstacle.
- Judges are encouraged to advance to the next obstacle any horse taking excessive time at an obstacle.
- Horses should be penalized for any unnecessary delay when approaching an obstacle.
- Off course is defined as:
 - Taking an obstacle in the wrong direction or from the wrong side;
 - Taking an obstacle in a manner other than described in the pattern;
 - Skipping an obstacle unless directed by the judge;
 - Negotiating obstacles in the wrong sequence;
 - Failure of rider to attempt obstacle per judge's instructions;
 - The above constitutes no score for that obstacle, but not necessarily elimination from the class. Those riders having the above errors place below all other entries following the prescribed courses.

- **Required Obstacles:** (Obstacles are listed in the **Facilities and Elements** section)
 - Riders in Divisions A and A-P
 - 1) The course will include three elements from the mandatory list and at least three from the optional list.
 - 2) The course will be a minimum of 6 elements and a maximum of 10.
 - Riders in Divisions C-I, B-I and IP
 - 1) The course will include three elements from the mandatory obstacles.
 - 2) The course will be a minimum of five elements and a maximum of seven.
 - a) If a gate is used in this division, the rider will be asked to open the gate only and pass through but not close it.
 - Riders in Divisions C-S, B-S and SP
 - 1) The course will include two elements from the mandatory obstacles.
 - 2) The course should be a minimum of four elements and a maximum of six.
 - a) If a gate is used in this division, for the safety of the sidewalkers, the rider will be asked to pass through an open gate only, not to open/close the gate.

SHOWMANSHIP AT HALTER AND BRIDLE CLASSES:

- **General:** The emphasis should be on the athlete's ability to handle and show the horse with safety as the major consideration. The horse is merely a prop to show the ability of the showman.
 - The Quarter method will be used. The following suggested guidelines of movement are meant to serve as an illustration of movement around the horse while showing in showmanship and are for the exhibitor's/coach's information. Imaginary lines bisect the horse into four equal parts as seen in the figure. (NOTE: the quadrants will be numbered I, II, III, IV for ease of identification). One line runs across the horse just behind the withers. The other imaginary line runs from head to tail. When the judge is in I, the handler should be in IV. As the judge moves to II, the handler should move to I. When the judge moves to III, the handler should move to IV. As the judge moves up the horse to IV, the handler returns once more to I. This method is based on safety as the handler can keep the horses hindquarters from swinging toward the judge should the horse become fractious.



- Show management must post individual test patterns a minimum of one hour before the class is to be held.
- **Class routine:**
 - 1) Enter the arena leading the animal at an alert walk in a counter-clockwise direction (unless otherwise directed by the judge). The horse should lead readily at a walk or trot.
 - 2) After the class has been lined up, the judge will call on each exhibitor to move his horse individually. When moving the horse, be sure the judge gets a clear, unobstructed view of the horse's action.

➤ **Judging:**

1) Appearance of Horse Totals: Total = 20 points

a) Condition and thriftiness: 5 points

b) Grooming: 5 points

- ✓ Clean, well-brushed hair coat (dust and stains are objectionable)
- ✓ Areas which must be clean are around the eyes, ears, muzzle, nostrils, between the legs and around the tail
- ✓ Mane, tail, foretop and wither tufts are to be free of tangles and clean. It is prohibited to use any ornaments on the aforementioned. Manes, foretops and wither tufts may be English braided or Western braided if the exhibitor so desires.
- ✓ Hoofs should be trimmed properly and be clean. If shod, shoes must fit properly and clinches should be neat.

c) Trimming: 5 points

- ✓ Manes may be roached, but foretop and tuft over withers must be left.
- ✓ Inside of ears may be clipped.
- ✓ Long hair on jaw, legs and pasterns should be clipped.

d) Tack: 5 points

- ✓ Tack should be neat, clean and in good repair.
- ✓ Horses shown Western must be in halter of leather or nylon.
- ✓ Horses shown English may be in either bridle or halter of leather or nylon.

2) Appearance of Exhibitor: Total = 10 points

a) Clothes and person should be neat and clean.

b) Appropriate Western tack-style clothes.

c) Appropriate English tack-style clothes; jackets are optional.

3) Showing Horse in Ring: Total = 60 points

a) Leading: 40 points

- ✓ The athlete should lead from the left side of the horse with the lead shank/reins held with the right hand about 20-30 cm (8-12 inches) from the halter/bit; the hand shall not be on the chain portion of the shank. Athletes may be penalized for this at the judge's discretion. Smaller athletes may need a longer hold.
- ✓ The athlete should stay in position by the left side of the horse's head, "eye to eye" with the horse.
- ✓ Excess lead shank/rein should be held safely and neatly in the left hand. A tightly coiled/rolled lead shank or reins wrapped around the athlete's left hand will be cause for points to be deducted from the athlete's score.
- ✓ A loose, flapping lead shank or rein will be considered a fault.
- ✓ Emphasis should be placed upon the light control of the horse with a minimum of pressure on the lead shank/reins, to allow the horse to hold its head naturally. The horse should move out and continue readily, freely, and quietly at the walk, jog/trot, with a minimum of urging by the athlete.
- ✓ It is permissible for the athlete to pass between the judge and the horse as the judge moves around the animal, but the athlete should avoid blocking the judge's view beyond the movement required to step between the horse and judge. The athlete should step quickly and quietly to the zone where both horse and judge can be observed.
- ✓ It is to be remembered that the athlete is also being judged on safety. The athlete shall not crowd the competitor next to him/her when positioned in a side-by-side line-up or in front of him/her when lined up head to tail.

- ✓ If the judge or ringmaster requests change in position, the athlete should first look around to see that nearby athletes have their horses under control, then move out promptly as indicated.
- b) Posing: 20 points
 - ✓ When posing your horse, stand toward the front facing the horse, but not directly in front of the horse and always in a position where you can keep your eye on the judge.
 - ✓ Pose the horse with his feet squarely under him. Do the showing with the lead shank/reins. Never kick a horse's leg into position.
 - ✓ When a judge is observing other horses, let your horse stand, if posed reasonably well.
 - ✓ Be natural. Over-showing, undue fussing and maneuvering are objectionable.
- c) Poise Alertness and Merits: 20 points
 - ✓ Athlete's awareness of position of the judge at all times.
 - ✓ Athlete shows animal at all times and is not distracted by persons and things outside of the ring. He/she shows the entire time until the class has been placed and excused from the ring.
 - ✓ Athlete remains attentive for any instructions from the judge or ringmaster and cooperates readily with them.
 - ✓ Athlete is businesslike yet friendly and courteous, and maintains sportsmanlike conduct towards officials and other athletes.

GYMKHANA EVENTS:

- **General:** All are timed events and the winner will be the competitor with the fastest time.
 - Riders shall be required to start the course inside an enclosed ring and may not start until all gates are closed and secured. Gates may not be opened until the rider has completed the course and returned to a walk or halt.
 - Each athlete will begin from a running start, and time shall begin and as the horse's nose crosses the line.
 - Time will be complete when the horse's nose crosses the finish line.
 - A five second penalty will be added to the time for each of the following:
 - 1) Knocking over a pole or barrel (an athlete may touch a pole or barrel with his/her hand).
 - 2) For each three strides over the allowed gait for that division
 - A disqualification will be assessed for the following:
 - 1) Failure to follow the course
 - 2) Failure to cross the start and finish line between the markers
 - 3) If the helmet chin strap is not properly fastened on the athlete's head for the entire time the rider is in the arena
 - 4) Recrossing the start/finish line after completing the course
 - 5) The judge, at his/her discretion, may disqualify an athlete for excessive use of a bat, crop, whip or rope.
 - In the event of a tie, there will be a run-off using the same course. The competitor declared the winner in the runoff must re-run the pattern within five seconds of his/her original time or the run-off must be held again.
- **Barrel Racing:** (course set up/pattern in **Facilities and Equipment** section)
 - Judging – At the signal from the starter, the athlete will:
 - 1) The athlete will run barrel number 1, pass to the left of it and complete an approximately 360 degree turn around it.

- 2) Then the rider will go to barrel number 2, pass to the right of it, and complete a slightly more than 360 degree turn around it.
 - 3) The rider will then go to barrel number 3, pass to the right of it, and do another approximately 360 degree turn around it.
 - 4) The rider will then sprint to the finish line, passing between barrels number 1 and 2
- The barrel course may also be run to the left. For example, the competitor would start at barrel number 2, turning to the left of this barrel. He/she would then proceed to barrel number 1 and turning to the right, continue to barrel number 3, turning again to the right, and completing the event with a final sprint to the finish line.

FACILITIES AND ELEMENTS

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL EVENTS:

- Sound System
- Portable fencing system for crowd control and designating other areas
- Designated spectator area located well away from the in and out gates of the arena/ring
- During competition an exercise/warm-up area should be provided far enough from the competition ring so as not to interfere with the athletes who are being judged
- Arenas with sturdy fencing and solid gates, good drainage and suitable level footing with the following minimum distances:
 - Gymkhana Events: 50 meters by 30 meters
 - Working Trail, Showmanship, Equitation: 30 meters by 25 meters
 - Warm-up Areas: 40 meters by 20 meters
 - Or any combination that equals 110 feet of overall rail space with no less than 20 meters in length for the short wall.

WORKING TRAILS:

- The course is to be designed to require each horse to show all gaits appropriate to division level as a part of its work. Enough space must be provided for the horse to jump/trot 10 meters (30 ft) and lope/canter at least 15 meters (50 ft) for judges to evaluate gaits.
 - Course designers should keep in mind that all courses and obstacles are to be connected with safety in mind.
 - Courses should be such that they can be safely negotiated in 90 seconds.
 - Outdoor facilities may and are encouraged to include trees, brush, hills, etc. as long as they can be safely maneuvered and designed with an easy access/view of judge.
 - Judges must walk the course and have the right to alter any part that they deem unsafe and/or unsuitable.
 - Safety of the gaits between obstacles shall be at the discretion of the judges.
- Working Trails Elements
 - Unacceptable Obstacles
 - 1) Tires
 - 2) Animals (alive or dead)
 - 3) Hides
 - 4) Remounting after dismounting
 - 5) Jumps
 - 6) Rocking, floating or moving bridges
 - 7) Flames, dry ice, fire extinguishers, etc.

8) Logs or poles elevated in a manner that causes them to roll

➤ Mandatory Obstacles

- 1) Passing through a gate. The gate should be approximately 1.53 meters (5 ft) high and have a latch at that height.
- 2) Ride over at least four logs or poles. Poles can be in a straight, curved or zig-zag line. Space between logs is to be measured on the path the horse will take.
 - a) Walk-overs (not elevated) should be spaced a minimum of 40-50 centimeters (15-20 inches) apart
 - b) Walk-overs (elevated) should be a minimum of 56 centimeters (22 inches) apart and may be elevated a maximum of 30 centimeters (12 inches), measured from the ground to the top of the element.
 - c) Trot/jog-overs: minimum of 90-107 centimeters (3-3 ½ ft) spacing
 - d) Canter/lope-overs: minimum of 2 meters (6-7 ft) spacing
 - e) Trot/jog-overs and canter/lope-overs may not be elevated

3) Backing Obstacles

- a) Back-through obstacles should be spaced a minimum of 70 centimeters (28 inches) apart or, if elevated, a minimum of 75 centimeters (30 inches) apart.
- b) Obstacle poles may be elevated no more than 60 centimeters (24 inches) and must be set in a standard jump cup or similar type cup.
- c) Obstacles may include the following:
 - ✓ Walk in, back out of straight chute (recommended for beginning athletes)
 - ✓ Back through and around at least three markers
 - ✓ Back through L, V, U, straight or similar shaped courses

➤ Optional Obstacles

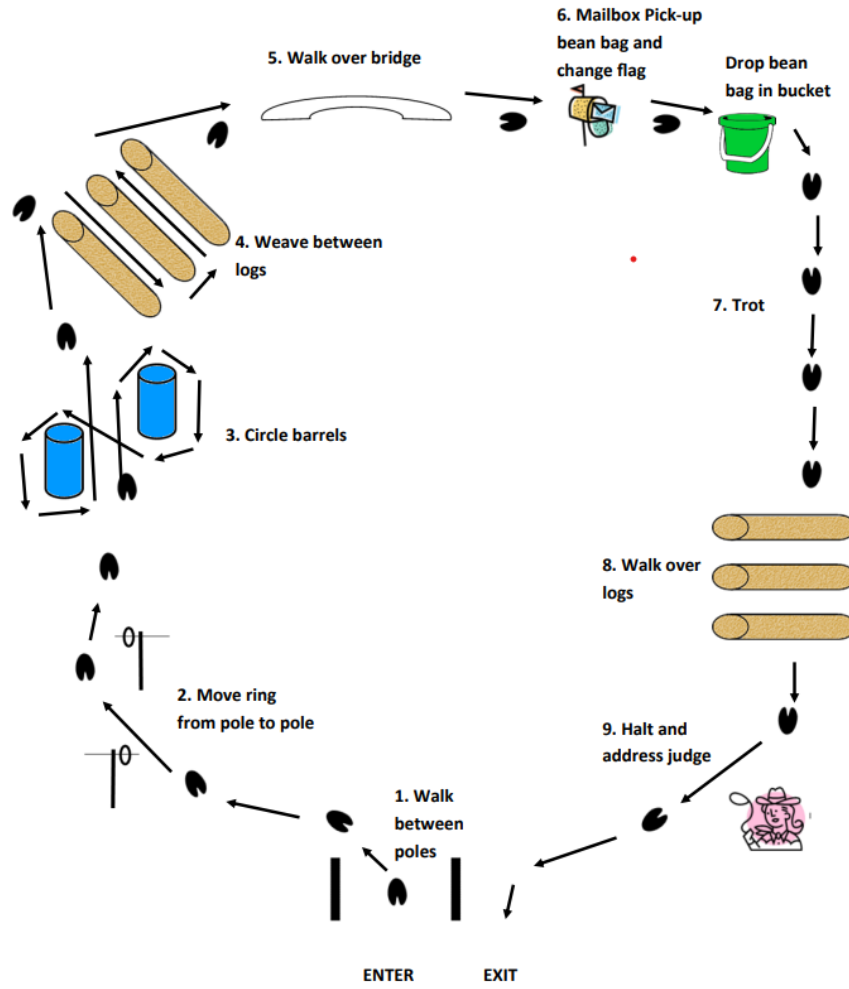
- 1) Water hazard: natural pond, ditches or man-made (no metal or slick-bottomed boxes may be used)
- 2) Serpentine obstacles at a walk, trot-jog or canter/lope
 - a) Obstacles may include:
 - ✓ Orange safety cones
 - ✓ Stakes 2 meters (6 ½ ft) high, made of plastic, wood or other suitable, safe materials that are set in a base constructed so as not to interfere with the horse's path
 - ✓ Barrels or quarter drums
 - ✓ Plants in safe tubs or planters
 - ✓ Natural obstacles such as trees and bushes that are trimmed high enough so as not to be a safety hazard for the athletes
 - ✓ Spacing should be a minimum of 1.83 meters (6 ft) for the walk or the jog/trot.
(NOTE: when designing a course for assisted riders, designers must remember to figure in space for the sidewalkers.)
- 3) Carry object from one part of the arena to the other
- 4) Ride over a wooden bridge
 - a) Bridge must be sturdy
 - b) Bridge must be a minimum of 1 meter (36 inches) wide and a minimum of 1.83 meters (6 ft) long
 - c) Suggested bridge is a 1.22 meters (4 ft) by 2.44 meters (8 ft) wide piece of 2 centimeters (¾ inch) plywood laid directing on the ground
- 5) Put on and remove slicker, coat, vest, etc.

- 6) Remove materials (bean bag) from the mailbox and put flag up.
- 7) Put bean bag in bucket with these modifications: Walkers Level C: bucket on a barrel, Level B and A Riders (anyone that trots): bucket on ground
- 8) Side pass
 - a) Elements may be elevated by a maximum of 30 centimeters (12 inches)
 - b) Elements are a minimum of 1.06 meters (3 ½ ft) apart if all four hooves of the horse are within the obstacle; a minimum 51 centimeters (20 inches) apart if only the front hooves are in the obstacle; or 61 centimeters (24 inches) if only the hind hooves of the horse are within the obstacle.
 - c) Side pass may be through L, T, V, Z or straight paths and may include:
 - ✓ Haunch and/or forehand turns
 - ✓ Confined space (path) for front hooves, hind hooves, or all four hooves
- 9) A square consisting of four logs (rails), a minimum of 1.53 meters (5 ft) long
 - a) Athlete will enter square over designated log (rail), execute any maneuver as indicated and depart over log (rail) as indicated.
- 10) Any other safe, negotiable obstacle which could be expected to be encountered on trail rides and meets the approval of the judges may be used.
 - a) Figure the horses' wheelbase at 1.53 meters (5 ft), front hooves to back hooves.
- 11) Pass between two sawhorses of standard dimensions with solid ends, 1.83 meters (6 ft) apart at the center with a saddle blanket draped over each.
- 12) Ride through water
- 13) Ride through or under brush
- 14) Guide horse through L, V or Z of ground poles
- 15) Into or out of ditch without lunging or jumping
- 16) A combination of two or more obstacles is acceptable.

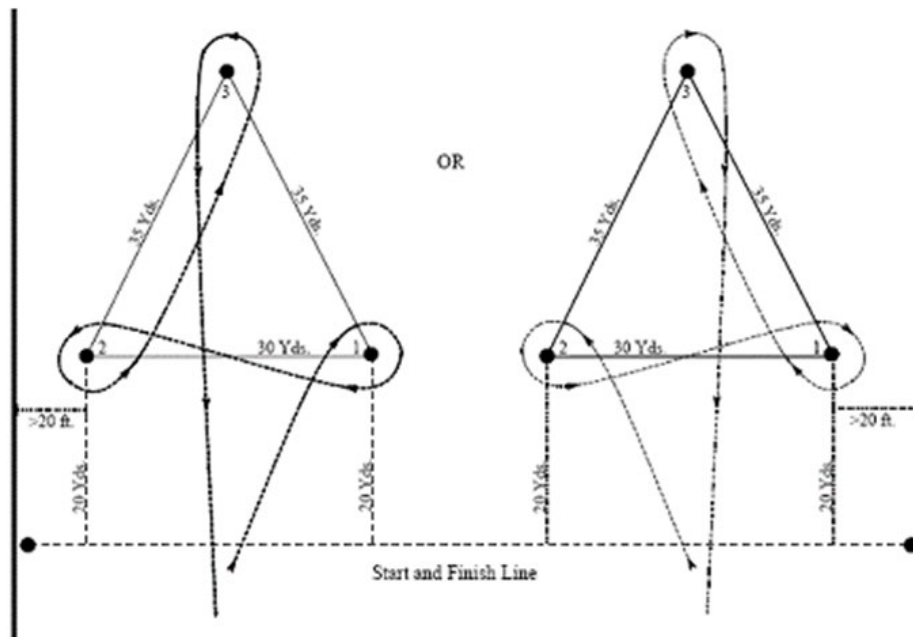
BARREL RACING – Setting the Course

- Three barrels set in a triangle are used with the following measurements:
 - Barrels 1 and 2 are set 27.43 meters (90 ft/30yd) apart and 18.29 meters (60 ft/20 yd) from the start/finish line.
 - Barrel 3 is set in the center (as the top of the triangle) 32 meters (105 ft/35yd) away from barrels 1 and 2. See layout diagram below.
- If the course is too large for the available space, the pattern should be reduced 4.57 meters (15 ft) at a time until it fits the arena. Remember to leave adequate space between barrels and any obstacle
- The distance from barrel 3 to the finish line need not be reduced 4.47 meters (15 ft) at a time if there is sufficient room for the horse to stop.
- Brightly colored 55-gallon plastic or metal drums may be used.
- When measuring the area for the barrel course, remember to leave ample room for horses to complete their turns and stop at the finish (at least 13.77 meters (25 ft) from the start/finish line to the end of the arena).

EQUESTRIAN WORKING TRAIL MAP (NEW 2022)



BARREL RACING COURSE MAP



AWARDS

- Individual medals will be awarded to athletes the first three places in each division. Ribbons will be presented to athletes in 4th-8th place.
- Awards will be presented immediately following the completion of each division in each event or at the end of the event. The decision is made by the committee.
- MATP awards will be presented after the completion of both MATP events. Each participant will receive one 1st place medal or ribbon for their participation.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is both the coaches' and athletes' commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes. Lead by example.

Competitive effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition. •
- Always finish a game/event. Never quit.

Fair play at all times

- Always comply with the rules.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- Respect the decision of the officials at all times.