



Horse Show Class Descriptions

Conformation (Halter)

The purpose of this class is to select individuals in the order of their resemblance to their breed ideal with the most positive combination of balance, structural correctness, muscling and movement. Classes are typically divided by the horse's age and sex.

Showmanship

Showmanship focuses on the exhibitor's ability to fit and show a horse at halter. Judges evaluate the grooming and fitting of the horse and the expertise of the exhibitor in presenting the horse to the best of his or her ability. Contestants must work a predetermined pattern consisting of maneuvers such as walking, trotting, pivoting, backing and setting up.

Hunter Under Saddle

Hunter under saddle is the preliminary class for English riding disciplines, and judges evaluate the way of going of a hunter-type horse on the flat, at a walk, trot and canter. Horses circle the perimeter of the arena, performing each gait called at the judge's discretion.

Hunt Seat Equitation

Hunt seat equitation evaluates the rider, not the performance of the horse. Individually, contestants must work a predetermined pattern consisting of maneuvers such as changing gaits (walk, trot, canter), traveling in a figure-8 pattern and backing up.

Riders will also be judged on the rail, performing gait changes at the judge's discretion. Emphasis is placed on the rider's ability to sit in the saddle correctly, hold the correct riding posture and control the horse.

Western Pleasure

Western pleasure horses should be as the name implies - a pleasure to ride. Contestants compete simultaneously, traveling around the perimeter of the arena. Horses are judged on functional correctness, quality of movement including consistency of their gaits, and attitude.

Western Horsemanship

Western horsemanship is judged on the horsemanship abilities of the rider using western rack. Individually, riders must first follow a prescribed pattern consisting of maneuvers such as walking, jogging or loping in a straight or curved line, pivoting, stopping or changing leads.

Exhibitors will also show their horses around the perimeter of the arena, or "on the rail." Judges pay close attention to the riders' body positions, how they sit a saddle and their ability to control the horse.

Reining

The easiest way to understand reining is to compare it to figure skating. While all reining patterns include stops, spins, rollbacks and lead changes, each horse is evaluated on movement, mastery of the pattern and attitude. There are different reining patterns that challenge the rider to guide and control every movement of the horse.

Western Riding

Following a pattern laid out by colored cones, western riding horses are evaluated on precise lead changes using both hind and front legs. Horses must also change gaits - from a walk to a jog to a lope. There are different western riding patterns that challenge the rider to guide and control the horse through numerous lead changes.

Trail

Just as a decathlete must train in several events, trail horses must also be accomplished in numerous obstacles such as passing through gates and crossing bridges. Trail judges focus on the skill of the horse to handle certain situations that might occur on an outdoor trail ride. Scoring is based on the horse's willingness, ease and grace in negotiating the course.

Hunter Hack

Hunter Hack is the transitional English class between hunter under saddle and working hunter. It requires a horse to move freely and easily while jumping small fences. Horses are required to first jump two fences. After completing the jumps, the horses are then shown at a walk, trot and canter along the rail in both directions. Horses are judged on manners and way of going, both on the flat and over fences.

Working Hunter

The horse is judged on a course of obstacles that simulate obstacles found in a hunting field: fences, brush and walls. Depending on the division, obstacles can range in height from 18" to 3 feet 3 inches. Manners, style of jumping, flow of strides and balance are elements that judges consider when marking a score.

Equitation Over Fences

Equitation over fences tests the rider's seat, hands and ability to control and show a horse jumping over fences. The course is similar to the working hunter class in that riders are judged on their ability to establish an even hunting pace. Judges evaluate the methods used by the rider and the effectiveness of the rider in properly influencing the horse.

Handy Hunter

Handy Hunter is similar to Working Hunter where the horse is judged on a course of obstacles that again simulate obstacles found in a hunting field: fences, brush and walls. Depending on the division, obstacles can range in height from 18" to 3 feet 3 inches. This class differs from Working Hunter in that the course requires an in-and-out combination jump, a trot fence, and at

least two changes of direction. Manners, style of jumping, maneuverability, flow of strides and balance are elements that judges consider when marking a score.

Barrel Race

Barrel racing is a time event. Exhibitors race against the clock, following a course consisting of three barrels in a triangular "cloverleaf" pattern. Contestants must choose either the right or left barrel, circle it, and go on to the next barrel, completing the course after circling the third barrel and running home. Barrels are permitted to be touched, but if one is knocked down during the course of the run, a five-second penalty per downed barrel is added.

Pole Bending

Pole Bending is a timed event. Just as a skier would compete in a slalom course, pole bending puts a horse through a similarly designed course. The course consists of a series of six poles spaced 21 feet apart, which horses and riders weave through. Horses run to the far end of the series of poles, turn, and weave in and out as they work their way back to the front. Horses then complete a turn around the front pole and maneuver through the series again. At the last pole, they complete that turn and race toward the finish line at full speed. A five-second penalty is added for each pole knocked down.

Keyhole Race

Keyhole is a timed event executed over a pattern. The pattern is usually made up of white powder, commonly flour or powdered chalk, poured into a 'keyhole' shape in the dirt. The event begins when the horse crosses the timing line. The horse enters the keyhole, and then turns in either direction inside the keyhole's circle without stepping over the chalk. The horse then exits the keyhole and the time ends once they cross the timing line. The horse is disqualified any time they step on or over the chalk line.

Stake Race

Stake Race is a timed event which is a variation of pole bending with only two poles. The two poles are set 80 ft apart and a timing line (defined by two markers) is set between the two poles. The event begins and when the horse crosses the timing line. Go through the timing line between the markers to the first pole and go around it in either direction. Go back across the timing line between the markers to the second pole and go around it in the opposite direction, then return across the timing line between the markers. The horse is disqualified if they knock over a marker. A five-second penalty is added for each pole knocked down.