



# ARABIAN HORSE ASSOCIATION

## Judges & Stewards

### EQUITATION and HORSEMANSHIP

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#### DESCRIPTION

- Equitation is the art of riding which is developed through knowledge, understanding of the horse and correct riding position.
- Good equitation is the acquired ability to produce the maximum performance of the horse through perfect form, position and control by the rider.
- Correct riding position allows the rider to control the horse by use of legs, seat, hands and body in coordination and equilibrium.
- The rider’s body alignment and use of aids are basic for all styles of riding.
- General balance, interaction and coordination of the leg, seat, upper body and hands are fundamental in all disciplines of riding.
- The best riders are securely positioned, balanced, coordinated, sensitive to the

horse, and disciplined in their attitude toward their performance.

- A good rider is a thinking rider, able to anticipate, communicate with and control the actions of the horse and not merely react to the horse’s actions.
- Showmanship, technical correctness, style and ring generalship are all points to consider.
- A good rider should show smoothness, accuracy and must always be in total command of the horse between hands and legs, showing absolute balance and control.
- The best riders take advantage of ring position, demonstrating the utmost of their riding ability and their horse’s ability by asking the maximum rather than passively doing only what is asked.
- The best riders are able to make the performance happen.

#### MATTERS TO CONSIDER

1. Rules governing Equitation classes, including riders’ attire and appointments, are found in the USEF Rule Book, Equitation Division, for Saddle Seat, Western Seat/Reining Seat and Hunter Seat. Rules for AHA Medal Classes, Horsemanship and Showmanship are found in the USEF Arabian Division. Check the current USEF Rule Book for allowed tests. These tests are the only tests to be used when developing a pattern or individual workout. (Canadian Equitation classes are governed by EC rules).
2. Class procedures for AHA Medal classes, Regional Equitation, and National Equitation classes are located in the Arabian Chapter of the USEF Rule Book.

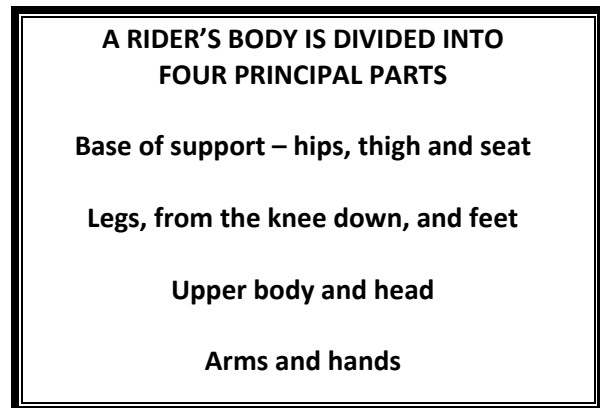
3. In conducting equitation classes, engage in a proactive methodology and know your scoring plan before the gate opens. Prepare your card prior to the class to reflect the proper percentages of pattern/rail work. In Western Horsemanship and Showmanship prepare your card to reflect the maneuvers in the pattern.
4. All AHA Medal classes, Western Horsemanship, Showmanship, Regional Championship Equitation and National Equitation Championship classes require a pattern. The Call Judge shall prepare in writing and have a pattern posted at least 24 hours prior to the first section of the Eliminations for Regional and National competitions. Subsequent patterns are to be available immediately following the last working section of each phase.
5. Patterns for AHA Medal classes and any other equitation/showmanship patterns used at a regular (non-regional/national) competition must be posted at least one hour prior to the class. The judge shall prepare in writing and either read or have the pattern announced over the public address system before the first rider begins the workout. Any questions and subsequent answers must be announced over the public address system.
6. If possible, choose tests or patterns after you see the quality of riders. Show management may assist you in determining the quality and quantity of riders if pattern work is to be requested in the first Equitation class judged.
7. Reference the AHA Equitation Manual found on the AHA website for recommended equitation, showmanship, and horsemanship patterns. Always double check the patterns against current rules in case a change in a rule has not yet been reflected in the pattern. Be sure to check the appropriate age group as it is indicative of the tests eligible for that specific age group.
8. Patterns in the AHA Equitation Manual are written such that the written directions take precedence over the drawings. The drawings are a guide. In addition, the patterns are written to call for either correct/incorrect diagonals and leads or right/left diagonals and leads. In the patterns written utilizing right/left diagonals and leads, the word "right" has no inference as to whether the diagonal/lead is correct.
9. Patterns are not permitted in walk/trot or walk/jog Equitation classes.
10. Do not try to choose or make patterns so difficult as to lose your riders. A good pattern should test the rider's ability to control the horse at different gaits on lines, circles, and transitions. Use patterns which are suited to your riders' skills. Make your riders look good so you can judge their ability, horsemanship and showmanship. A pattern which none of the riders can accomplish makes no one look good.
11. Before posting your pattern, ask about ring size, location of judge's box, centerpiece and location of the entrance and exit gates. Judges should keep several different patterns on hand to fit different arena situations and riders' abilities.
12. Write patterns as clearly as possible, addressing any questionable areas on the pattern. Indicate how your exhibitors are to get to the start of the pattern and how they are to exit the pattern area.
13. Know your pattern inside and out. Keep a copy in front of you on your judging pad for reference.
14. Judges shall not confer with riders individually. The judge should answer questions, but address answers to the entire class or all of the riders who are to perform the pattern. Use the public address system, if accessible.
15. Markers shall not be used in Saddle Seat Equitation, or Western Dressage Equitation classes as reference points in the pattern.
16. Markers may be used in Western Horsemanship, Western Seat Equitation and Hunter Seat Equitation Not to Jump

- and must be used for a reining pattern in Reining Seat Equitation.
17. In Regional and National Championship Equitation, Showmanship, Western Horsemanship and AHA Medal classes all exhibitors are required to perform the pattern. Individual work is not required in non-medal equitation classes for Saddle Seat, Hunter Seat and Western Seat Equitation, but calling for tests is optional at the judge's discretion.
  18. Western Horsemanship riders are always required to perform the pattern at all shows.
  19. Saddle Seat Equitation, Hunter Seat Equitation, Not to Jump, Western Dressage Equitation and Western Horsemanship are judged 50% on the rail work and 50% on the pattern; therefore, "off pattern" does not necessarily eliminate a rider.
  20. All Hunter Seat Equitation Over Obstacles riders are required to ride the course. Off course is elimination and may not receive a ribbon. Two or more additional tests of the top four riders are required in AHA Medal, Regional and National classes. An off pattern during additional testing does not constitute elimination.
  21. Reminder: In Hunter Seat Equitation, riders cannot be required by the tests to enter or exit the arena at a trot or canter. The riders must enter and exit the arena at a walk,
  22. In an AHA Reining Seat Medal, Regional or National Championship Reining Seat Equitation class, a rider who is off pattern is eliminated and may not receive a medal or ribbon.
  23. AHA Reining Seat Equitation classes consist of an NRHA reining pattern only, no rail work.
  24. In a non-Regional or non-National Equitation class with a pattern, one needs to decide, time permitting, if the class is to remain in the line-up or leave the arena and return individually for pattern work. Consider the position of your line-up with regard to your pattern. Horses often don't

want to leave the line-up and the pattern may slow down or drift, especially with the younger rider age-group, if the line-up is too close to the pattern.

25. Three riders are required to award an AHA Medal class in the class. If an AHA Medal class does not fill, it must be held as a regular equitation class with a pattern. However, no medal will be awarded.

**BASIC BODY POSITION** – *see each equitation seat for additional references.*



- Balance, body alignment and use of aids are fundamental to all Equitation seats. A rider must be balanced in the center of the horse.
- Eyes should be up; the back and shoulders straight, never rounded, and directly over the hips.
- Hands are held in an easy position above and slightly in front of the withers, showing sympathy, adaptability and control. The height of the hands is determined by where the horse carries its head and neck. There should be a straight line from the horse's mouth to the rider's elbow.
- Legs should be positioned just behind the girth, directly under the rider's body, knees slightly bent allowing the heel to be lower than the toe and the heels directly under the rider's hip.
- The rider's knee should remain close to the saddle at all times, acting in conjunction

with the rider's calf and thigh to create a secure and effective leg.

- The ball of the foot should be on the stirrup and the foot position should be natural.
- There should be an imaginary line through the rider's ear, elbow and hip down to the back of the heel.

***Proper Equitation allows the rider to remain in control at all times, maintain the horse in good form, and keep consistent gaits. This gives the rider the ability to maintain the horse under adverse conditions should any emergency arise.***

### **LEGS**

- The lack of security in the leg causes a multitude of problems. A rider's balance and effectiveness are determined by the leg position. Balance and control, seat and hands, are very dependent upon each other.
- The entire body's balance starts with correct foot and leg position. The leg in the correct position serves as a balance for the rest of the body and is an aid to influence the horse.
- The leg is an anchor for the whole rider and everything the legs do reflects on the rest of the body.
- The leg should be securely positioned just behind the girth, directly under the rider's body, with the heel underneath and in-line with the rider's hip.
- This leg position allows the rider to remain in the center of the horse and to use the leg and upper body effectively.
- The rider's knee should remain close to the saddle at all times, acting in conjunction with the calf and thigh to create a secure and effective leg.
- Establishing the rider's leg position is foundation. The rider must establish contact with the horse with the inside of the calf and inner knee bone.
- The rider must not pinch with the knee since too much pressure acts like a pivot and causes the lower leg to swing.

- As an aid, the rider's leg creates forward motion and guides the horse's body.
- A horse's hindquarters is its engine – the source of power – and the rider's legs control this power. The rider's legs guide the horse's body on a circle or turn. The legs create bend, suppleness and impulsion. Legs help to properly push the horse to the bridle and maintain proper head position.
- A rider's legs aid in the command or cues for different gaits and transitions, for circles, stops and spins, for collection and extension.
- Through leg aids, a rider gets better balance, response, and motion, which maintains the horse's proper form, elevation and softness.
- Riders who attempt to communicate with their horses only through their hands are very limited in what they can accomplish.

### **FEET**

- A rider's ankle and foot should be in a natural position, not extremely in or out, with heels down.
- Ankles should be relaxed, since they act as a shock absorber, and allow the rider's heel to drop down. The ankle may be flexed in slightly, allowing the toe to point slightly outward and the calf to come in contact with the horse, creating an effective leg.
- The ankle must never be flexed or cocked outward with the rider pulling the toe inward.
- The stirrup should be on the ball of the foot, with even pressure on the entire width of the foot. The heels are pressed downward.
- The heels need not be exaggerated but the rider's toe should never be lower than the heel. The feet should be firm and definite at each gait.
- It is important that the weight of the rider is not only distributed downward but equally on each side of the horse.

### **LEG AND FOOT FAULTS:**

- A leg that is too far forward causes the rider to be in the back of the saddle, behind the motion or falling back with the upper body.
- Since the leg is pushed forward and usually braced; it is not in contact with the horse and cannot be properly used as an aid.
- A forward or braced leg is ineffective and the rider is not secure. A forward or braced leg is often seen in a defensive or insecure rider. This is a serious fault.
- A leg that is too far back causes the rider to fall forward ahead of the motion. The rider is usually tipped forward onto the crotch, unable to maintain a deep, balanced or secure seat.
- Straddled legs, flared legs, or legs that are pushed too far away from the horse, result from the rider rotating the entire leg too much at the hip and pushing out too hard on the stirrups.
- This causes stiffness and tension in the upper body and leg. It also causes lack of control over the horse and an insecure seat. This is a serious fault.
- A locked knee forces the lower leg to swing forward as the rider sits when posting. When the knee is locked, the rider's leg is still, ineffective, and causes the rider to be out of balance.
- A floating knee or a knee that slides back and forth on the saddle when the rider posts, is caused by a loose or insecure lower leg. A floating knee often causes a rigid seat and upper leg, resulting in a swayed back.
- Knees off the saddle, which are usually caused by the rider sitting too far back on the buttocks with the feet too far forward, are often accompanied by stirrups which are too short.
- Knees must be in contact with the saddle to allow the rider to have correct leg position, influence the horse properly, and have security in the saddle.
- Toes turned too far out can also cause the rider's knees to be pulled away from the saddle which puts the back of the leg

against the horse rather than the inside of the calf.

- Cocked ankles, ankles that are flexed or twisted out pulling the toes in, put the rider's weight to the outside of the foot, weaken the leg and pull the knee away from the saddle. Legs are ineffective and the rider is not secure. This is a serious fault.
- Toes down mean insecurity, lack of control and probably too long of a stirrup.

### **BASE OF SUPPORT (SEAT AND THIGHS)**

- For the rider's balance and the balance of the horse, it is essential for the rider to remain in the center of the horse.
- The rider's seat must be deep and secure so the rider can feel the movements of the horse. The seat is considered secure when the thighs and seat, through flexibility and feeling, remain in complete harmony with the horse's movements.
- A good rider's thighs and buttocks are sunken into the saddle so the rider and horse can move as one.
- Buttocks and thighs, along with an open or relaxed hip joint, are used to absorb the motion of the horse.
- A rider's seat and thigh are also used as an aid to create impulsion, give direction, and retard the speed of the horse.

### **FAULTS IN THE BASE OF SUPPORT:**

- Tension in the buttocks and thighs will cause stiffness and the rider to bounce.
- Gripping too hard with the inner thigh causes rigidity throughout the seat and upper legs, often resulting in a swayed back or protruding seat.
- Gripping too tight with the thighs causes the seat and lower leg to become insecure as tightening the thighs pulls the knee too far up, allowing the lower leg to fall forward.

### **UPPER BODY, HEAD AND NECK:**

- The rider should sit erect and straight out of the saddle from the hips right up through the neck and head.

- The rider should be straight but not stiff. Shoulders should be back and held squarely with the rider's torso over the horse's center of gravity.
- The neck and head are upward extensions of the body and should be in line with the upper body as though the rider's head was being pulled upward from the body by a string.
- Riders should use their eyes to look ahead of the horse so they can anticipate, make adjustments, stay out of trouble or traffic with other exhibitors or to plan the path during a pattern or individual work.

#### **FAULTS OF THE UPPER BODY, HEAD AND NECK**

- Leaning to the side puts both the rider and the horse out of balance. This is usually caused by the rider's hips not being straight in the saddle or the rider dropping in the waist and shoulders to compensate.
- A loose back is a slinging movement in the rider's waist as the horse moves forward, usually caused by the rider not stretching upward through the back, making it weak, ineffective and sloppy.
- A roached or rounded back is a combination of the buttocks tucked too far under and shoulders that are rounded. Not only is this unattractive, but it also makes the rider ineffective and is usually accompanied by reins which are too long and braced legs.
- Rounded shoulders may appear in riders without having their entire back roached or rounded. Rounded shoulders weaken the effectiveness of the rider's back and are unattractive and ineffective.
- A swayed or hollow back is characterized by the rider's buttocks being too far out behind and shoulders too far back.
- The rider looks tipped forward onto his or her crotch rather than seated on their buttocks. Riders are usually stiff and inhibited in the use of aids.
- Forced-back shoulders are often seen in riders who are trying to sit up straight and exaggerate it by forcing their shoulders

too far back, causing the shoulder to be out of line with the rest of the body. Riders lose effectiveness by being behind the motion.

- A rider's head should not cock to one side or the other, as this affects the rider's position and balance, nor should the rider's head and neck extend out ahead of the body.
- Riders should not be looking down nor should they exaggerate "looking too far ahead" by turning the head completely to the side looking over the shoulder.

#### **ARMS AND HANDS:**

- The arms should be held in a relaxed position, elbows bent as necessary with the shoulders back, not rounded. The bend of the elbow and the height of the hand position are determined by the horse's head and neck carriage.
- There should be a straight line from the horse's mouth to the rider's elbow. Hands should be held in an easy position and should show adaptability and control.
- The hands should guide and subtly balance the horse at all gaits and be persuasive to the horse. This will accomplish what the rider wants without being severe or causing the horse to react abruptly or defensively.
- In Saddle Seat and Hunter Seat Equitation the rider's hands are held just over and slightly in front of the withers. Thumbs should not point straight up as this makes the hands vertical and limits the effectiveness of the wrists.
- Neither should hands be held horizontal or flat (piano hands). This position limits the wrists, creating a hard or severe hand. Hands should be held slightly inside the vertical, or between straight and flat, allowing the wrists and hands to be the most effective.
- Saddle Seat riders' hands should be held in an easy position, neither perpendicular nor horizontal to the saddle and should show sympathy, adaptability and control. The height the hands are held above the

horse's withers is a matter of how and where the horse carries his head.

- Hunter Seat Equitation riders knuckles are thirty degrees inside the vertical, hands slightly apart and making a straight line from horse's mouth to rider's elbow.

#### **FAULTS IN ARMS AND HANDS:**

- Abusive hands or hands that jerk or hang on a horse's mouth for balance are serious faults.
- A "fixed hand" or "fixed arm," a hand that does not follow the motion of the horse, a rider that sets his hands in an immobile position, a rigid hand or arm in which the rider appears to be holding or pulling the horse's head into position, are all serious faults. Riders with fixed or rigid arms usually have an insecure leg, insecure seat and rounded shoulders.
- If the reins are too long the rider will get his hands too high and lean backward behind the motion, or the hands will come back to the stomach and the rider will lean forward over the hands. Long reins also result in an uncontrolled performance.
- If reins are too short, the arms and hands are pulled too far forward out of position and the rider's upper body may be pulled forward ahead of the motion and the shoulders are probably rounded. If riding Western or Reining Seat, the shoulder of the reining hand will be twisted forward out of alignment.
- A hand so passive that it does not control or balance the horse is also a fault. Contact with the horse's mouth must be maintained. However, the rider must also use leg aids and seat to keep the horse in the bridle.
- Elbows should be neither clamped in nor be pulled out away from the body and locked in position. Stiff, unyielding or locked elbows are not flexible and cause severe hands and usually rounded shoulders.
- Hands that are held vertical or horizontal are not adaptable as the wrists have limited flexibility when hands are held in

that manner. Even worse is a rider who holds his hands flat, drops his wrists and keeps his knuckles up. This position locks the wrist and hand permitting no flexibility or softness.

#### **JUDGING EQUITATION**

- Equitation classes must demonstrate transparency in placement ensuring the outcome makes sense to exhibitors and spectators.
- Judges have a duty in retaining members in the AHA and equine industry particularly in equitation classes. The horse is only a vehicle in which the rider needs to participate.
- Keep your mind focused on the rider and not on the beauty or movement of the horse utilized. The judge should not be influenced by the body shape or attractiveness of the rider. The judge must not get wrapped up in personal pet peeves and personal likes and dislikes.
- The performance of the horse is important through the partnership as demonstrated by means of the rider's seat and aids.
- The quality of the horse should have no influence if the rider's seat and aids are not seen as having a detrimental effect on the horse's movement.
- Reward the riders who are able to get the most from their horses while maintaining proper form, correct position, using aids properly, showing command of each situation, and ring generalship.
- Take into consideration horse difficulty and how the rider handles the horse and the situation.
- Part of the picture is the rider understanding collection, horse's position, balance and suitable speed. Riders should understand how to make the horse perform to its capabilities and not just sit on the horse and look pretty. Riders should be judged on ability.
- The judge must pick the winner from positive impressions – how well the rider

actually rides – not based on who made the last mistake.

- Judges and exhibitors should bear in mind that at all times riders are being judged on ability.
- Take note of the general balance of each rider, leg position, upper body position, and hands. Consider the interaction and coordination of all the body parts as well as maintaining correct riding position.
- Riders must also keep the horse in hand while simultaneously keeping awareness and command of what is happening in the arena, avoiding trouble spots, not crowding into other exhibitors, and riding the horse to the best of its capabilities.
- A good equitation rider should first be a good rider, showing himself and his horse in a correct and positive manner and demonstrating good ringmanship.
- Judge the class by considering the quality of the performances. The quality of performance is not the quality of the horse, but what the rider is able to accomplish with the horse based on security of position and proper use of aids.
- In an equitation class a rider who does an excellent job on an average horse may place above a rider who does a poor job on an excellent horse.
- In judging, note how the riders deal with problems which may arise during the class. The rider who is assertive and works the horse forward through a problem should receive more credit than a rider who is passive and ignores the problem, or who is insecure or abusive in dealing with the problem.
- Reward knowledge. The rider who is aware of a problem and tries to correct it should receive more credit than a rider who is unaware of a problem.

## **WHY INDIVIDUAL TESTS? WHEN?**

- Individual tests give the judge an opportunity to evaluate a rider's ability to understand, anticipate and control the horse.
- The ideal workout or pattern should test the rider's ability to control the horse at different gaits on lines, circles and transitions.
- The individual tests which may be used in each Equitation seat are listed in the USEF Rule Book, Equitation Division, for each seat.
- The tests listed in the Rule Book are the only tests which may be used to create a pattern for individual workouts or individual testing of riders.
- Horsemanship tests are listed in the Arabian Division of the USEF Rule Book.
- At Regional and National shows, riders in the lineup in all seats will be excused from the ring during individual pattern work.
- Age groups will be determined by the show commission/committees and any age splits other than 13 & under and 14-18 must have the appropriate tests.
- All Regional and National Championship Equitation classes require contestants to ride an individual work or pattern.
- See AR291 for AHA Medal Class Requirements.

## **ERRORS OR FAULTS**

- The worst equitation faults are those which show the rider is not in control, such as a horse that bolts or runs away, balks and refuses to go forward, rears or kicks. If a rider's lack of control or a horse's behavior appears to be a threat to its own rider or other exhibitors, the rider should be excused.
- The most serious errors are those which negatively affect a rider's balance or show abuse or cruelty to the horse.
- Since a rider's balance and effectiveness are greatly determined by the leg position, the worst errors are those that allow



insecure contact between the horse's side and the rider's legs.

- Abusive hands, hands that jerk, constant bumping, or hands that are used to balance the rider, should be severely penalized.
- Wrong leads and wrong diagonals must be penalized as leads and diagonals are fundamental to good riding and the balance of horse and rider.
- Excessive spurring or excessive use of the whip should be severely penalized. A rider should be persuasive rather than abusive.
- Allowing the horse to break gait, when not called for, shows lack of control and communication. Breaking gait or allowing the horse to fall out of a particular gait should be penalized.

### **JUDGING EACH EQUITATION SEAT INDIVIDUALLY**

- Equitation rules are found in the USEF Rule Book, Equitation Division and Arabian Division, and should be referred to as the rules change from time to time. The individual tests from which the judges may choose are listed in each seat. The tests differ for differing age groups.
- Horsemanship rules are found in the USEF Rule Book, Arabian Division.

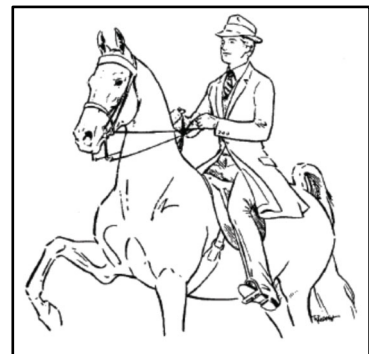
### **SADDLE SEAT EQUITATION**

- Saddle Seat is an elegant style of riding show horses.
- Its purpose should be to teach riders to show their horses to the utmost of their abilities and to show off their horses.
- Riders must learn to balance the horse, create energy, develop and maintain proper form in the gaits while remaining in control, show smoothness, accuracy and precise transitions.
- Riders should convey the impression of effective and easy control.
- The rider should be comfortably in the saddle, over the center of gravity, by sitting with a slight bend in the knees. The rider's back should be straight with the

shoulders directly over the hips and the spine in line with that of the horse.

- Irons should be placed under the ball of the foot, not on the toe or "home," at the heel of the boot, with even pressure on the entire width of the sole and the center of the iron.
- The foot position should be natural. The toe should not extremely point out with the ankle in, nor should the toe ever point in toward the horse with the ankle popped or flexed out.
- Hands should be light and quiet, held in an easy position, neither perpendicular nor horizontal. They should show sympathy, adaptability and control.
- The hands are held above the withers, and the height at which the hands are held is determined by how and where the horse carries its head and neck.

- Horses with a high set head and neck allow riders to hold their hands higher



than riders on a horse with a lower set neck and head.

- Ideally, there should be a straight line from the horse's mouth to the rider's elbow.
- The method of holding the reins is optional, but both hands must be used and all reins picked up at the same time. The bight of the reins shall be on the off (right) side.
- Riders shall be penalized for switching or carrying at any time the bight of the rein on the ("on" side) left side.
- Elbows should be in a natural position next to the rider's body. The arms must not be forced up and out. Popping the elbows out causes roundness of the back, the chest to cave inward, and the shoulders to come forward out of position.

- The upper body, including the arms and hands, should give the appearance of elegance and complete control without the impression of stiffness or exaggeration.
- Effective legs are key to good riding. With feet in the stirrups, the stirrup leathers should hang straight down allowing the leg to hang in a natural position directly under the rider.
- The rider should use leg aids to guide the horse and maintain impulsion, balance and cadence in the gaits to keep the horse properly in the bridle and light in the hand. Flared lower legs do not allow the rider to use the legs effectively since the rider cannot use the calf to influence or direct the horse.
- While at the walk, the rider should be straight with a slight motion in the saddle keeping with the rhythm of the horse.
- When trotting, the rider will show slight elevation out of the saddle while posting. Posting should be in cadence with the horse's trot, the rider's hips under the body keeping the rider in balance.
- It should not be a mechanical up and down motion nor a swinging forward and backward motion.
- At the canter, the rider keeps a close seat, going with the motion of the horse.
- At all gaits, the rider's legs must remain directly underneath the body and the upper body must not fall behind or in front of the vertical.
- Electronic communication devices used for the purposes of coaching, etc., between competitors and individuals outside the ring shall be prohibited.
- Exhibitors with a permanent hearing impairment are permitted to use an electronic communication device upon submission of a written certification from a treating medical professional's office certifying the permanent hearing impairment and certifying the requirement of an electronic communication device. The medical certification must be provided to the

competition Steward within a reasonable time prior to competing who shall attach a copy to the Steward report.

- An exhibitor with a disability (other than hearing) will be provided reasonable accommodation upon submission of a written certification from a treating medical professional's office certifying the disability and identifying the accommodation necessary for the exhibitor to compete safely. The medical certification must be provided to the competition Steward with a reasonable time prior to competing who shall attach a copy to the Steward report.

***In Championship classes and any class where a workout is required, judge(s) must work a minimum number of riders per number of ribbons awarded in the class. The judge(s) determine which riders will be required to perform additional testing.***

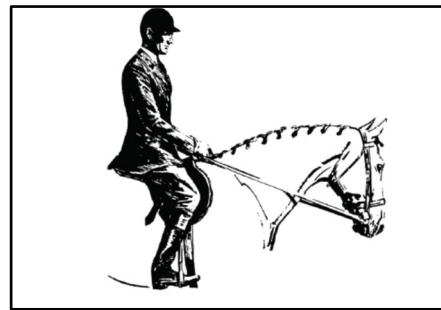
## **HUNTER/JUMPING SEAT EQUITATION**

- See Chapter EQ, Subchapter EQ-2 Hunter Seat Equitation with exceptions listed in AR280.
- Protective headgear. All riders must wear protective headgear. If a rider's chin strap becomes unfastened, the rider may stop, re-fasten the chin strap and continue their round without penalty or elimination. Headgear must be free from non-traditional adornment.
- A judge may, but is not required to stop a rider and ask them to refasten a chin strap which has become unfastened, again without penalty to the rider.
- Attire. Riders are required to wear conservatively colored coats (black, blue, green, grey or brown) which are free from adornment which in the judge's opinion is overly distracting. Shirts must have a choker, similar collar or tie. Breeches may be buff, canary, tan, rust or white.
- Spurs, crops or bats are optional but if used must be a conservative color.

- Inappropriate attire. When management permits Hunter/Jumping Seat Equitation riders to ride without jackets, riders must wear traditional, short, or long-sleeved riding shirts with chokers or ties. Polo shirts and full chaps are not permitted except in unjudged warm-up classes. Management or Judge may eliminate an exhibitor who is inappropriately attired.
- It is recommended that riders use traditional stainless steel stirrup irons that promote proper position of the foot in the iron as well as correct leg position.
- It is further recommended that riders use stirrup irons that allow judges a clear and unobstructed view of the position of the foot in the stirrup.
- Judges may not eliminate a rider for using a particular style of stirrup iron (Exception: see EQ101.4) Stirrup iron must not be tied to girth (unless as a permitted adaptive device).
- (See EQ106.7 for complete rule). Electronic communication devices used for purposes of coaching, etc., between competitors and individuals outside the ring shall be prohibited in all classes.
- The penalty for wearing or carrying a forbidden device if observed by the judge may be elimination from the class during which the device was worn or carried.
- Exhibitors who have a chronic condition may apply for a Presidential Modification exempting them from the provisions of this rule in accordance with GR153. Riders may not use these devices in over fences classes.
- An exhibitor who has a chronic condition and has previously been granted at least one annual presidential modification related to the condition, may submit an application for approval of a special three-year presidential modification related to the same condition. The application must be accompanied by sufficient supporting documentation that the condition is unlikely to improve during the three-year period.

## HUNTER SEAT EQUITATION, NOT-TO-JUMP

- Hunter Seat is a working seat. It is of utmost importance that the riders have a secure lower leg and seat, proper balance and control of the horse.
- Riders must be able to maintain collection with proper impulsion, keep the horse engaged at all gaits by using the legs, seat and hands in coordination. Hunter Seat Equitation is the foundation for riders to go on and become hunter or jumper riders.



- The Hunter Seat Equitation rider should present a polished, workman-like appearance. Seat and hands must be light and supple, conveying complete control should any emergency arise.
- Legs and seat are the base of support and should maintain a deep position. The rider must establish contact with the horse with the calf of the leg and inner knee bone.
- The knees must not be pinched so tight that the calves and heels are pushed away from the horse. Too much knee pressure acts as a pivot allowing the upper body to fall forward or backward.
- Heels should be down with the calf of the leg in contact with the horse and slightly behind the girth with the ball of the foot on the stirrup.
- Toes should be at an angle best suited to the rider's conformation, but not exaggerated.
- The leg in the correct position serves as a balance for the rest of the body and is an aid to influence the horse. The leg acts as an anchor for the whole rider and

everything the legs do is reflected in the rest of the body.

- The rider's seat itself is placed in the forward part of the saddle close to the pommel.
- The thighs should lie flat with contact distributed evenly between the calf, inner knee bone and thigh.
- The seat is considered strong and secure when the thighs and seat, through flexibility and feeling, remain in complete harmony with the horse's movements.
- The upper body should be carried erect, the back straight and shoulders back without being stiff, hollow or sway-backed. The upper body cannot be rounded or hunched.
- The rider must be centered over the horse's center of gravity at all times with his eyes looking ahead to anticipate the line of travel.
- Hands should be over the horse's withers, knuckles thirty degrees inside the vertical, hands slightly apart and making a straight line from the horse's mouth to the rider's elbow. (Rider's hands should be much lower than a Saddle Seat rider's as the horse's head and neck should be carried much lower.)
- The method of holding the reins is optional and the bight of the reins may fall on either side. With hands just two to three inches apart, wrists should be straight and sympathetic.
- Bent wrists cause stiffness and forced, irregular body position. A useful hand is one strong enough for control, yet soft enough to allow freedom and a straight position of forearm, wrist and hand.
- When the horse is standing, the rider should be perfectly straight. At the walk, sitting, trot and canter, the rider's hip or pelvis angulation should close slightly allowing the rider to shift to just in front of the vertical, keeping the rider over the horse's center of gravity.
- At the sitting trot, the rhythm and pace of the working trot should be maintained.

The riders should not slow the pace, lean back or fall forward to sit the trot.

- A well-positioned rider who knows how to adjust to the horse's frame and ride the horse between the hand and leg will be able to sit the trot while maintaining the rhythm of the working trot by letting his or her weight and balance follow the horse's movements.
- The buttocks and thighs absorb the motion and keep the rider deep in the saddle. During all sitting gaits, the rider should slow an elegant self carriage, yet be supple and deeply glued to the horse.
- At the posting trot, the rider is inclined forward. The posting position is also the correct position for the hand gallop and jumping. This inclination forward is to compensate the rider's center of gravity or balance which must shift forward slightly as the rider comes out of the saddle.
- The rider will close the pelvis hip angle to no more than twenty degrees in front of the vertical. This hip closure will cause the rider to be posting through the thighs and crotch rather than back on the buttocks.
- At the canter, the hip or pelvis angle returns to that of the walk and sitting trot, just a few degrees in front of the vertical. When the hip or pelvis angle opens the rider is no longer on the crotch, but on the thighs and seat, deeply secure in the saddle.

#### **HUNTER SEAT EQUITATION NOT TO JUMP - COUNTRY VARIANCES**

- A few things are different between the United States and Canada regarding adjudication of Hunter Seat Equitation Not to Jump. In Canada the sitting trot must be called for in both ways of the ring meanwhile the hand gallop is not allowed.
- In the United States horses are to be shown at the walk, posting trot, sitting trot and canter. A lengthening or shortening of stride may be called for at any gait horses may be asked to back on the rail or in line up.

## HUNTER SEAT EQUITATION OVER OBSTACLES

- Fall of horse and rider - rider shall not remount in the ring. In the event of a fall of a horse within the competition ring at a Federation licensed Hunter, Jumper or Hunter/Jumper competition, the judge shall notify a steward, regardless of whether an EMT is called, and the steward must include the details of the incident on his report to the Federation.
- In order to maintain balance, the rider must coordinate his own center of gravity with that of the horse.
- The rider's center of gravity must be directly over the horse's center of gravity to instill forward drive or restraint.
- For smoothness, fluidity, and control, one must stay with the motion of the horse, with the rider and horse relating to each other.
- In principle, the faster the horse moves the farther forward its center of gravity shifts, which means that the rider must shift forward into the two point position in proportion to the speed of the horse. It is this action, sometimes called "closing the hip angle" or "upper body angulations" which enables the rider to be with the motion of the horse at all times.
- Understanding these angles is a must to smoothness, poise and control when riding a course.
- The two-point position means that only the rider's legs are in contact with the horse. This lifts the rider's weight off the horse's back and puts it down into the rider's legs, somewhat lightening the burden off the horse's back and securing the rider's legs. For smoothness and agility this position is used in galloping, jumping, hunting, showing a hunter and hunter seat equitation.
- When judging riders over obstacles, focus much of your attention on the position of the rider's lower leg.
- The rider's ankles should reflect a deep downward distribution of the weight and the lower legs should stay fixed on the horse's sides at all times, between jumps and in the air.
- The rider should enter the arena with a look of purpose. As the rider begins the course, the horse will be moved to a hunter pace, immediately establishing the set pace suitable to the course and arena which should be maintained throughout the entire course.
- The rider will assume almost a two-point position, inclining the upper body about twenty degrees in front of the vertical, moving forward over the horse's center of gravity. The rider should maintain this position as the horse will be galloping throughout the entire course.
- As the rider approaches the jump, the approach should be on direct line to the center of the jump, the rider's eyes looking forward.
- The legs must remain down in the proper, secure position, and hands in control. As the horse leaves the ground on take-off, the thrust and lift of the horse will close the hip angulation in a smooth, fluid motion.
- The rider's eyes will be looking ahead, the rider's shoulders up, the chest open, elevated and straight over the horse. The rider's back and shoulders must not be rounded.
- The rider's hands will follow the horse's head and neck forward, releasing to allow the horse freedom in the air to balance and jump easily.
- The rider's hands may touch or rest securely on the horse's crest or the top of its neck just below the mane about a third of the way up. This is a crest release and provides support for the rider's upper body and freedom for the horse.
- On landing, the rider's hip angulation opens resuming the two point contract, or two-point position, riding forward to the next jump.
- The rider should show accuracy to and over the jumps, smoothness over and throughout the course, and must always

be in total command with the horse between the legs and hands showing absolute balance and control, impulsion, bending the horse, keeping the horse on the bit, riding to the difficulty of the course, lead changes, and the look of discipline in both the horse and rider, should be rewarded.

- The rider should be penalized severely for allowing the horse to refuse to jump, for a loose rein or stirrup, or allowing the horse to trot on course when not part of a test.
- Minor faults or errors in the horse's performance should not be severely penalized unless they are due from fault of the rider, rider error, lack of control or timing.
- Since it is the responsibility of the rider to place the horse at the correct take-off spot, riders who place their horses poorly must be penalized since this puts both the horse and rider at risk.
- Riders who get left behind or take-off must be heavily penalized. When the horse jumps the rider must go with it for the rider's safety as well as that of the horse.

#### **WESTERN DRESSAGE SEAT EQUITATION**

- See Western Dressage Subchapter WD-12 for rules regarding Western Dressage Seat Equitation.
- Federation licensed Arabian judges can judge Arabian breed-restricted Western Dressage Equitation classes.

#### **WESTERN SEAT/REINING SEAT EQUITATION AND WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP**

- Western Seat, Reining Seat Equitation and Western Horsemanship riders should give the impression of being in absolute control. Riders must have a very secure seat and leg with a quiet, guiding hand as the performance of the horse is also considered. The rider should have

purpose, direction and follow through in all gaits and maneuvers.

#### **Western Seat Equitation**

- See Chapter EQ, Subchapter EQ-4, Western Seat Equitation, EQ123-131.
- See AR288 for tests from which judges must choose. Judges are encouraged to call for at least two tests. A pattern is defined as two or more tests and can be performed either collectively or individually.
- Riders enter the ring at a walk or jog and are judged at a flat-footed four beat walk, two-beat jog, and a three-beat lope both ways of the ring.
- Extended jog and lope may be called on the rail and/or in the pattern. The order to reverse may be executed by turning toward or away from the rail.
- All competitors are required to back in a straight line during the line up in all classes.
- See AR282.6 for mandatory causes for elimination.

#### **Western Horsemanship**

- Riders enter the ring at a jog and are judged at a flat-footed four beat walk, two-beat jog and a three-beat lope both ways of the ring. Extended jog and lope may be called on the rail and/or in the pattern. The order to reverse may be executed by turning toward or away from the rail.
- All exhibitors must be required to perform a pattern composed of a minimum of four tests from AR288.
- Off pattern does not eliminate an exhibitor.
- Instructions must be publicly announced and patterns must be posted at least one hour before the class.
- Rail work or pattern work may be conducted first.
- In Western Horsemanship, emphasis should be placed on the horse and the rider working together.

- Both the rail work and the pattern work are considered equally.
- Execution of required gaits, transitions, tests, and correct form of both horse and rider, while maintaining a pleasurable ride, are the important factors.
- See AR284.5 for mandatory causes for elimination.
- Use of the Western Horsemanship Score Sheet is recommended.  
<https://www.arabianhorses.org/judges-stewards/patterns/>

### Reining Seat Equitation

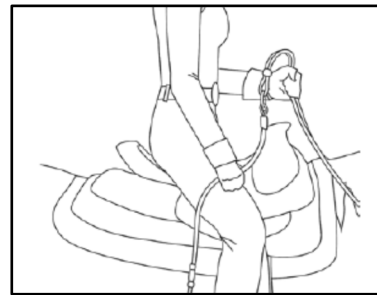
- NRHA patterns are used; no rail work. Patterns must be posted. The Reining Seat Equitation score sheet must be used and is available on the AHA website:  
<https://www.arabianhorses.org/judges-stewards/patterns/>
- The Reining Seat rider should give the appearance of control, adaptability and the ability to demonstrate how to properly ride a reining horse and perform a reining horse pattern.
- Riders are judged on seat, hands and performance of the horse. However, riders are being judged and the performance of the horse is not considered more important than the method used to obtain it.
- Methods used, hand, leg and body position, must be considered as well as how the aids were applied and what results were achieved.
- Speed and flare should not be sacrificed for correct position, control or smoothness.
- Riders should, however, show authority and show to the best of their ability.

### RIDER POSITION

- In both Western Seat/Reining Seat Equitation and Western Horsemanship, the rider's body should appear comfortable, relaxed and flexible while sitting erect and straight in the saddle. The

body should be erect and straight but not stiff.

- Riders should be sitting squarely in the saddle with the legs directly under the body, not pushed forward. The rider's seat must be secure, heels should be under the rider's hips, the knee in contact with the saddle, calf in contact with the horse, ankle relaxed and the heel down.
- The stirrups should be just short enough to allow the heels to be lower than the toes and the feet should be placed in the stirrups with the weight on the ball of the foot, not on the tip of the toe or pushed home to the heel. This position gives the rider the most effective use of the aids.
- Riders must sit straight and in the center of the horse's balance, keeping complete contact with the saddle.
- A quiet, light hand should be held in the proper position while maintaining a consistent head position and balance in all gaits.
- A secure leg position is necessary for control of the horse and maintaining consistent gaits, transitions and maneuvers.



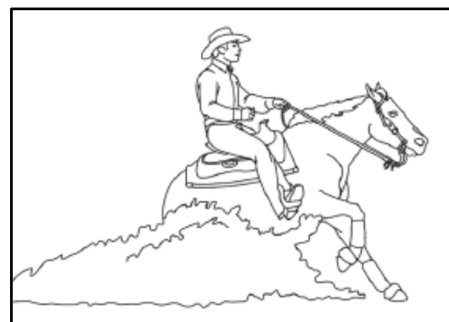
- At all gaits the rider should be straight with only a slight motion in the saddle keeping with the rhythm of the horse.
- Riders are to sit to the jog and at the lope should be close to the saddle without popping out of the saddle or leaning back.
- At all gaits the rider's legs must remain directly underneath the body and the upper body must not fall behind or in front of the vertical.
- All movements of the horse should be governed by the use of imperceptible aids.

- The obvious shifting of the rider's weight, leaning to direct the horse, or over-use of spurring, should be penalized.
- Since riders only use one hand for reining, it is imperative that the rider uses the hand, seat and legs in coordination to guide the horse.
- Arms are held in a straight line with the body. The reining hand, or the hand holding the reins, is bent at the elbow.
- Only one hand is used for reining regardless of the type of bit used. Hands should not be changed during the class. However, either hand may be used for reining and either is considered correct.
- Use of two hands is cause for elimination.
- When romal reins are used the hand is to be around the reins. The rider can hold romal reins or the ends of split reins with the free hand, the hand not used for reining, to keep them from swinging and to adjust the position of the reins, provided it is held with at least sixteen inches of rein between the hands.
- When using romal reins or when the ends of split reins are held in the hand not used for reining, no finger is allowed between the reins. All fingers are around the reins with the thumb on top and the reining hand is held in a vertical position. The position of the rider's free hand is optional but should be kept free of the horse and equipment and held in a relaxed manner with the rider's body straight at all times.
- It is common for a rider using romal reins to allow the free hand to rest securely on the thigh keeping the elbow close to the body and the shoulders straight and even.
- The free hand should not float, change positions or bounce around.
- When using split reins and the ends of the reins fall on the same side as the reining hand, one finger is permitted between the reins. The reining hand is held in a natural position, not necessarily vertical.
- The position of the free hand is optional, but should be kept free of the horse and equipment and held in a relaxed manner with the body straight.

- Riders often hold the free hand in a position bending at the elbow, or resting securely on the thigh. Either is acceptable.
- The elbow is close to the body and the shoulders are straight and even. The free hand should not change positions, move or bounce around.



- Using either method of holding the reins, the reining hand should be above the horn and as near to it as possible. Bracing against the horn, saddle or riata is penalized.
- When performing the pattern in a Western Horsemanship class, riders should show complete control, precision, accuracy and smoothness. Execution and correct form of both the horse and rider while maintaining a pleasurable ride are the main criteria for this class.



- When performing the reining horse pattern, the rider should enter the arena with an aura of purpose and a plan in mind. The rider should show the ability to guide and control the horse's every movement as the performance of the



horse, dictated by the rider, is being judged.

- Judge the rider's ability to adjust the horse's speed, rate and balance. You should also judge the rider's ability to keep a secure seat and leg and the rider's ability to position the horse properly for each maneuver and accomplish the requirements of the pattern.
- Reward the riders who are able to keep their horses in proper position and ride aggressively, fully demonstrating their own abilities as well as their horse's. Cues for lead changes, adjustments in speed, spins and stops should all be performed with accuracy and smoothness with the rider showing total command, absolute balance and control.
- Riders losing control, leaning, over-using the spur, abrupt or heavy hands, touching the saddle or losing forward motion, or allowing the horse to back up when not part of the pattern should be penalized.
- Western Horsemanship – the extended jog and lope may be called for on the rail and/or in the pattern.
- **Extended jog:** The rider should stay square and maintain proper overall body position

yet animate their seat to encourage forward motion of the horse.

- The lower leg, while maintaining light contact and proper position may also become moderately more active to encourage the horse to lengthen its stride while maintaining cadence.
- The horse's stride should lengthen or extend, not quicken. The length of the stride should not be any greater than is comfortable for the individual horse to carry and maintain.
- **Extended lope:** The rider should have a square balanced torso over a soft connected seat.
  - The rider's seat may rhythmically drive the stride of the horse forward yet not interfere with the cadence of the gait.
  - The horse should transition within a few strides from the lope to the extended lope, which is a lengthened stride not a quickened pace.
  - The length of stride should not be any greater than is comfortable for the individual horse to carry and maintain

## WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP - Faults

Minor Faults (m)	Major Faults (M)	Severe Faults (S))
Break of gait at walk or jog up to 2 strides	Break of gait at a lope, out of lead or missing lead for 1-2 strides	Loss of stirrup or rein
Over/under turn up to 1/8 of turn	Not stopping within 10 feet of designated area	Missing a lead for more than 2 strides
Incorrect position	Incorrect gait or break of gait at walk or jog for more than 2 strides	Over turning more than 1/4 of prescribed turn
Dirty, un-groomed outfit, horse or equipment	Over turn of more than 1/8 turn, but not more than 1/4	Grabbing the saddle horn or any other part of the saddle
Unfitted equipment	Exhibitor obviously looking down to check leads	Cueing with the end of the romal
	Failure of bottom of boot to be in contact with the pad of the stirrup	Failure to follow pattern correctly including failure to ever execute correct lead or gait where called for
	Head carried too high	Kicking at other horses, exhibitors or judge
	Head carried too low (tip of ear below the withers)	Severe disobedience or resistance by horse including, but not limited to rearing, bucking, pawing
	Over flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical	Knocking over the marker, going off pattern or working on wrong side of marker
	Excessive nosing out	
	Inclusion or exclusion of maneuver not specified	
	Freeze up	
	Touching horse or saddle to prevent fall	
	Undesirable or excessive motion in legs - we have an active leg in extended jog definition	

<b>Elimination (E) (may not be placed)</b>		
Inhumane treatment and undue stress	Illegal use of hands on reins	Spurring/kicking in front of cinch
Excessive schooling or training	Use of prohibited equipment	Equipment failure that delays completion of the pattern or rail
Fall of horse or rider		

## WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP SCORE SHEET

The recommended score sheet for Western Horsemanship is available on the website. We encourage you to utilize this score sheet for consistency in the adjudication of your classes.

### **WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP - Scoring**

+ = above average

✓ = average

- = below average

An additional + or - may be given

#### **90-100 Excellent**

Excellent rider, including body position and use of aids. Completes pattern accurately, quickly, smoothly and precisely while demonstrating a high level of professionalism

#### **80-89 Very Good**

Very good performance in execution of the pattern as well as correct horsemanship and use of aids. Excellent horseman that commits a minor fault

#### **70-79 Good**

Good pattern execution and average horsemanship lacking adequate style and professional presentation to merit elevating to the next scoring range. A very good rider that commits a minor fault.

#### **60-69 Fair**

Fair pattern that lacks quickness or precision or rider has obvious position and/or appearance faults that prevents effective horsemanship; or a good horseman that commits two minor faults in the performance. An excellent rider that commits a major fault.

#### **50-59 Below Average**

One major fault or multiple minor faults in the performance. A rider that demonstrates a lack of riding ability and knowledge of correct body position

#### **40-49 Poor**

A rider that commits a severe fault, 2 or more major faults or multiple minor faults in the performance or the exhibitor that demonstrates a lack of riding ability and knowledge of correct body position.

#### **10-39 Extremely poor**

Rider that commits more than one severe fault or multiple major faults in performance or exhibits poor riding skills but completes the class and avoids disqualification.

## **RESOURCES**

- [Equitation: An Overview on Vimeo](#)  
[View All :: USHJA](#)
- [Judging Hunters & Equitation](#) by Julie Winkel and Tricia Booker  
<https://www.judgingwtf.com/>
- AHA Discipline Specific Resources: <https://www.arabianhorses.org/judges-stewards/education/>
  - Each equitation seat has a section in the Equitation Manual.
  - Videos accompany some of the sections.
- Current patterns and score sheets are found at <https://www.arabianhorses.org/judges-stewards/patterns/>
- USEF Western Equipment Handbook is a good resource:  
<https://www.usef.org/forms-pubs/pEljSmr3BAU/western-equipment-booklet>

### **Prepared by the**

Education & Evaluation Commission and the  
Judges & Stewards Commissioner  
6030 Greenwood Plaza Blvd, Suite 100  
Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
(303) 696-4539