

Sierra Foothills Horseman's Association

Obstacle Trail Challenge

This event will consist of four trail obstacles in the arena and four trail obstacles in the wooded trail area. Obstacles are natural, or simulate naturally occurring conditions (including urban), for the horse and rider to negotiate. The ride consists of obstacles and situations people might encounter on a trail ride. A course is designed using the natural obstacles that already exist on a particular trail such as walking over logs, opening a gate, or maneuvering through a creek. In riding, you may also encounter obstacles such as birthday parties, family BBQ's, volleyball games, and mountain bikes . . . these are considered "natural" obstacles as well. Each obstacle will test the rider's knowledge and the horse's capabilities. Riders are judged on their skills and abilities to guide their horses through a natural obstacle course with an emphasis on calmness and safety. This trail ride is meant to be fun and enjoyable for everyone. This is not a timed event, but casual in nature. Riders may be given a time limit to ride through a particular obstacle so that riders behind them don't get held back. As long as safety and common sense are kept in mind, everyone will have a good time.

It is important to remember that the people doing the judging at this ride are volunteers who are following this rule book and are doing the best that they can. They are NOT paid professionals. *It must be understood that these rules are guidelines subject to various interpretations by (sometimes) inexperienced judges.*

All competitors start with a perfect score of -0- (zero). Points are added when competitors do not meet the judge's criteria on the judge's score sheet. Most criteria will have a range of points for the judge to go by. The maximum points that can be added at any obstacle will be 30 points (32 points for obstacles requiring a cinch check). The maximum points will also be added for any obstacle bypassed or any obstacle where horse/rider is disqualified (3rd refusal at an obstacle will automatically disqualify at that obstacle).

The best overall score (the total of all the scores received from each individual judge) is -0- (zero). The lower your overall score, the better your placing!

ITEMS YOU SHOULD HAVE WITH YOU ON THIS TRAIL
(JUDGE # 1 WILL VERIFY YOU HAVE THE REQUESTED ITEMS):
*** Hoof pick, * Halter and lead rope, * Pocket knife.**

GENERAL RULES:

1. Horse show rules will not be used at our event.
2. Safety and common sense will be number one priority for our ride.
3. Any attire normally worn for trail riding is accepted.
4. Enclosed footwear is required (no sandals or bare feet); boots are recommended for all riders and is required for **ALL** minor riders (17 years and under). All minors must have a riding helmet on at all times when mounted on the horse or pony. Riding helmets are not mandatory for riders 18 years and over but riders are encouraged to wear them.
5. Any type of tack may be used: must have a saddle (Western, English, or Australian) and a bridle (bitless is okay) or a hackamore (riding with just a halter and lead rope will not be allowed). NO tiedowns or martingales. Leadline riders must have lead ropes attached to halters that are either over or under the bridle and the horse or pony will be led through the obstacles/trail course.
6. It is the responsibility of the rider to have the judge's attention before starting on any obstacle.
7. Voice cues are permitted. Aids such as crops and spurs are permitted but excessive use may cause penalties.
8. The rider should always check the cinch before doing an obstacle that could cause the saddle to slip (examples: uphill, downhill, mount, or drag). It is not required at other obstacles. It may be checked on or off the horse. It is the responsibility of the rider to be sure the judge has visually seen or verbally heard the cinch check.
9. Emphasis should be placed on the methods the rider uses in obtaining a good smooth performance.
10. No coaching will be allowed at any obstacle. A penalty will be assessed to those observed violating this rule.
11. At the judge's discretion, a rider may be dismissed from an obstacle for excessive time or safety reasons. Each obstacle will have a time limit and/or maximum number of refusals (if you want to re-ride the obstacles/trail course after the last rider has competed, you are welcome to do so).
12. Riders should maintain control of their horse with the reins or lead rope during the entire event.
13. No foals at side. No dogs allowed on trail. No riding double during competition or anywhere on the grounds.
14. Stallions may be approved by ride management. If a stallion is ridden, a yellow ribbon must be in the tail to identify the horse is a stallion. No one under the age of 18 to ride a stallion.
15. If your horse is known to be a "kicker" – please put a red ribbon in the horse's tail. If your horse is known to be a "biter" – please put a red ribbon in the horse's forelock.

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES:

Back-Up: Horse should back willingly and in control with the rider being observant by checking all directions prior to and during backing.

Bridge: Horse should walk over calmly and quietly. No penalty for acknowledging the obstacle before starting to cross. Horse should step on and off the bridge quietly.

Dismount: Horse will stand quietly and not move off. Style of the dismount not considered, only a smooth dismount that does not unbalance the horse. A rider must have the reins in hand while dismounting.

Downhill: Before beginning descent, check cinch and breast collar (if used). Saddle should stay in place. Horse and rider to remain balanced. Rider's legs should not contact horse's legs. Horse should be on light contact or less. Horse should walk calmly in a straight manner, except when necessary to follow the trail. However, on a wide trail, a traverse is okay. Forward position or Cavalry style will be penalized.

Drag or Pull Obstacle (drag is a forward motion obstacle; pull is a backward motion obstacle): Check cinch required before taking the rope or drag obstacle in hand. The rider may hold the rope or may dally (wrap the rope around the horn but not more than one full turn). No tying to the saddle. Wrapping the rope around the rider's working hand is to be severely penalized. Excess rope should be held in the rein hand (not wrapped around the hand) and not held in the working hand. The horse is to stand quietly during preparation and then drag or pull the obstacle quietly and in control. The rider should demonstrate awareness by looking at both the obstacle that is being dragged or pulled and the direction they are going. Horse to drag or pull the obstacle evenly and quietly unless specified. The direction of a turn shall not be penalized so long as the rope does not contact the horse below the hocks.

Gate: Safe and smooth while mounted. Contact with gate should be maintained. Horse to remain calm. The horse and rider combination will move through the obstacle quietly, deliberately, and under the rider's direction.

Hoof Check: Horse to stand quietly. Rider to have a hoof tool. Control of horse to be maintained. The criteria for this obstacle is a safe leg pick up, not the method of cueing the horse to pick up the leg. If the rider is holding the horse rather than tying him, letting go of the lead rope will be penalized.

Lead: Horse to follow willingly and not lag behind. The horse should not crowd or lean on the rider. The horse should be led quietly either behind or slightly to the side of the rider. Rider not to coil rope around hand. If halter is in place on horse's head, it should be used as opposed to leading with the reins.

Mounting: Check cinch. Stirrup does not need to be put over saddle. Horse to stand quietly and not move off (slight shifting of weight is okay). Rider to mount smoothly with reins in hand without unbalancing the horse. Style of mount not to be considered. Rider should not be penalized for using available assistance to mount, i.e., rock, log, etc.

Moving Obstacle (i.e., bicycle, backpacker, hunter, baby stroller, vehicle, cart, etc. - NO POP-UP, SPOOKY OBSTACLE!): A rider is to maintain control of the horse as he acknowledges the obstacle. Horse should walk quietly by. A horse that looks with interest is okay. Safety of all parties, including those persons providing the obstacle, is the primary concern.

Standing Tied: Some obstacles may require riders to tie their horse. Horse will be tied with the halter and lead rope or correctly configured halter-bridle, or other approved means, using a knot (any type of quick release is allowed) that is safe and appropriate for the situation and the horse. The knot must be secure and the horse must be tied in a location that is safe for the horse, the rider, and any by-standers, other tied horses and their handlers. Horses will stand quietly while tied and not pull back. Tie should be as high as reasonably possible for the rider. Keep safety in mind for the horse.

Stationary Obstacle (i.e., rain slicker, balloons, map, trash, bicycle, garbage can, etc.): A rider is to maintain control of the horse as he acknowledges the obstacle.

Step Over: This is a forward motion obstacle. Horse to look at the obstacle and proceed over carefully. Horse to walk over cleanly (avoid striking the obstacle). Small horses and ponies not to be penalized for hopping very tall step overs, if they otherwise negotiate the obstacle calmly and with deliberation. For consecutive, in stride step overs, obstacles should not be higher than approximately 12 inches.

Stop: At a walk, horse should stop on command with little aid from the rider. Effort will increase slightly for the jog, and again for the lope. The horse should stand quietly for a specified time.

Tack Check: Horse to stand quietly. Rider should have a safe way of securing horse (halter and lead rope or hobbles). Rider should have some type of hoof tool. Equipment should be in safe repair. Anything beyond this should not be considered.

Turnaround: Horse to turn willingly and in control. Always face downhill side to reverse.

Uphill: Before beginning ascent, check cinch and breast collar (if used). Saddle should stay in place. Rider should be forward and in balance with the horse. No penalty for holding the horse's mane or neck to secure the forward position. Horse to negotiate a slope in a safe manner. Horse should walk calmly. Stopping to let the horse blow is at rider's discretion. If the rider is asked to stop on an uphill and if there is sufficient room, the rider shall rest their horse so that all four hooves are on ground that is as level as possible. The location of the stop shall be clearly marked and given in the directions for the uphill. At no time should a rider position his mount, haunches toward a drop off.

Water Crossing: Horse should walk through the water calmly and quietly. Horse will not be penalized for stopping to drink. Horse will not be penalized for acknowledging the obstacle before entering it.

NOTE: Jumping on, into, off of, through, or over any obstacle, unless required to do so, is a major fault.

JUDGING CRITERIA:

Cinch check: This is a simple “pass” or “fail”. 0 points added for a pass and 2 points added for a fail. Rider may check the cinch for excess slack by tugging on it. This may be done either from the ground or in the saddle. If done from the ground, rider will be judged on dismount and mount. Cinch checks are required before mounting, going up or down hills, or pulling and/or dragging which are all considered stresses on the saddle. Only one cinch check per obstacle shall be required.

Rider awareness: The rider should be paying attention to the directions with the horse positioned at a safe distance from the judge. The rider should evaluate the obstacle for potential cautions before proceeding, and during the obstacle. If the rider is asked to answer a question (i.e., where are we on this map?) or to perform a specific skill (i.e., lead their horse), and the rider does not perform the skill correctly, the judge may use this category to assess points.

Horse awareness: It is a fault if the horse is too aware by spooking, shying, or spinning, or if the horse is unaware and is just “going through the motions”. If a horse clips or stumbles because of a lack of awareness, score here.

Horse’s response to cues: When the rider applies aids or cues to the horse, the horse is to react appropriately. The rider should not have to resort to very strong aids to obtain a response from the horse, nor should cues create a reaction whereby the horse over reacts (i.e., side passing or backing too far). The horse should approach an obstacle as cued (i.e., straight on, side pass, etc.) and not avoid direct approach. The horse should stand quietly while mounted (slight shifting of weight is okay). If the horse is tied, the horse should stand quietly and not pull back.

Rider’s control: The rider must maintain control of the horse at all times. This will be maintained by having the rider control either with the reins or lead rope at all times. Rider’s control of the horse is whether mounted or unmounted. Rider should also control the horse by knowing HOW to ask their horse to execute the obstacle as well as keep the horse under control if the horse shies or spooks. If unmounted, the horse should be led quietly either behind or slightly to the side of the rider. While leading the horse, the rider should not let the horse crowd or lean on the rider.

Balance: This applies to both rider and horse. The rider should be well balanced in the saddle. For uphill, the rider should lean slightly forward with legs balanced under rider and not hitting horse's flanks, and deep in the saddle but not hitting the back of the cantle. For downhill, the rider should lean slightly back. The rider is not to lean excessively forward, back, or sideways. The horse is to be balanced while negotiating obstacles. For downhill obstacle, hindquarters should be under the horse and the horse should not lean on forehand. While negotiating step overs, the horse is to be balanced and pick up feet and avoid clipping and stumbling. Slight brush okay.

On course: The rider is to follow directions as given and stay on course. Excessive response, avoidance, or rider's misunderstanding of the direction will be penalized. The participant must remain within the boundaries of the obstacle as marked. Avoiding or going outside marked boundaries constitutes being off course.

Bypass or Disqualify: It is the participant's responsibility to bypass any obstacle he/she decides is beyond his/her skill level. Safety and common sense should always be kept in the participant's mind. The participant has three opportunities to attempt an obstacle; demerits to be assessed for each refused attempt. After the horse refuses three times, the rider is disqualified for this obstacle and receives full "DQ" penalty points (30). If the obstacle had a cinch check, that score is separate (pass = 0; fail = 2, which would then also be added to the 30 penalty points).

Coaching: It is the participant's responsibility to negotiate the obstacle on his/her own so a true test of his/her skills can be assessed. Once a participant has presented himself or herself to the obstacle judge, there shall be no further contact by another person.

Coaching is defined as any verbal, gesture, or implied assistance to a rider on course and executing the obstacle.

A participant being coached shall be marked with the full "DQ" penalty points (30). If the obstacle had a cinch check, that score is separate (pass = 0; fail = 2, which would then also be added to the 30 penalty points).

Scoring:

Participants will be scored on negotiating the obstacles. The individual areas of evaluation were listed above (judging criteria).

Scoring values will be assessed per each section of judging per obstacle as follows:

- 0 = Perfect. No discernible mistakes.
- 1 = Above average. Very minor mistakes.
- 2 = Adequate job. Obvious mistakes.
- 3 = Made effort. Skills need development.

The exception to this rule is "cinch check":

- 0 = Rider checked cinch.
- 2 = Rider did not check cinch.

Bypass: Bypass points will be assessed a value of 30 points. If obstacle required a cinch check, rider shall retain cinch check credit (if cinch was not checked, 2 additional points will be added).

Disqualify (DQ): Disqualification points will be assessed a value of 30 points. Any obstacle judge may disqualify a participant from their obstacle for safety reasons. The obstacle must be executed as stated in the judge's directions.

Refusal: Refusal points will be assessed a value of 30 points. If obstacle required a cinch check, rider shall retain cinch check credit (if cinch was not checked, 2 additional points will be added).

If a horse refuses at an obstacle, the participant will be allowed a total of three attempts to complete. Each attempt the rider will acquire penalty points. 1st attempt = 4 points, 2nd attempt = 4 points, and 3rd attempt = DQ and 30 points will be the total score.

The definition of a refusal is a horse that moves his/her feet away (any direction) from the obstacle. Looking and snorting are not considered refusals.

No Score: Should a rider miss an obstacle because of getting lost, injury to horse or rider, or quitting the judged competition, a score of NS will be entered in the obstacle score on the Official Score Sheet and the total score for the rider shall indicate NS. Credit for the ride will not be given when the ride is not completed.

SKILLS: The following abilities will help riders negotiate obstacles successfully. This list is meant only to provide a reference for riders. Riders and horses may be asked to perform the following skills in the negotiation of trail obstacles:

Whoa - responds to halt cues without argument.

Be able to ask horse to stand quietly.

Execute all gaits calmly and as directed. All gaits natural to a breed are acceptable.

Be able to move the horse laterally (side to side).

Make turns on the forehand and/or hindquarters.

Be able to back the horse in a straight line and/or around corners. When backing, the rider should demonstrate awareness by looking in the direction they are traveling. Riders should be instructed to back either their horse's front or back feet over a raised object.

Emergency dismount. Be able to dismount quickly and safely without the use of stirrups while maintaining control.