

# Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation

## Horse Shows: Showing in Hunt Seat Equitation

4H-ANSI-424

Hunt Seat Equitation is a class designed to exhibit equitation and the ability to guide a horse through a pattern of basic performance maneuvers while riding with hunter tack and attire. The class is popular because it enforces the need for proper equitation and the ability to guide a horse through maneuvers that all horses should willingly perform regardless of their intended use. The class procedure usually requires riders to individually perform a pattern and then demonstrate the gaits on the rail with other riders. Performing the pattern accurately is very important. The rider's equitation and ability to easily guide the horse is also important. The horse should be attentive, willing and responsive to the rider's commands while moving with a free, smooth gait. As with any competitive event, success requires preparation, practice and self-evaluation. This 4-H member guide provides questions to answer about how you prepare for and perform in Hunt Seat Equitation. Members should have the chance to discuss answers with others and identify some of the common and various ways others prepare for and perform during shows. You will likely find you will need rulebook, so ask your leader or parent for a copy before you work through the questions.

### Equitation

Equitation refers to how your body is positioned while riding and how you cue and guide your horse. Do you identify with any of the following statements?

1. I know how I am supposed to position my body while riding, but find it difficult to stay steady while directing my horse or riding at a trot or canter.
2. I feel good about my equitation while I am riding on the rail, but patterns can make me feel insecure about my equitation and ability to cue my horse.
3. I have a hard time with my equitation because my horse is continually resisting my cues.
4. I feel comfortable and secure with my equitation when performing patterns and riding on the rail.

*Thoughts and discussion:* Describe the desirable position of the rider's upper body, seat, legs, feet, arms and hands while moving at a walk, trot and canter. Identify some of the commonly observed faults with a rider's body position when riding hunt seat.

### Diagonals at the Posting Trot

Hunt seat saddles allow for posting at the trot. Diagonals refer to the movement of the rider in coordination with movement of the horse when posting. Which statement is correct?

1. When moving to the left (counter-clockwise) at the posting trot, the rider's seat should move forward when the horse's front left leg (inside leg) moves forward.
2. When moving to the left at the posting trot, the rider's seat should move forward when the horse's front right leg (outside leg) moves forward.

*Thoughts and discussion:* Can you easily determine diagonals when observing other riders? Do you have to look down to determine diagonals when riding? Why would looking down be undesirable?

### 'Evaluating Myself'

Being able to objectively evaluate your actions is an important skill for success. The first step is being able to identify your actions and ideas, then reflect on how your actions and ideas worked. By doing so, your future actions and ideas become more effective in reaching your goals.

This guide contains a list of questions to help you develop self-evaluation skills. Some questions may not have a single, correct answer. Some follow-up questions for your own thoughts and possible group discussion are provided for each question.

It is hoped that completing this guide will help you learn more about yourself and your actions, and help in future decision making. If this is done with a group, you will be able to learn from experiences of others. Group discussions should be positive, encouraging and non-judgmental. Otherwise, you and others won't feel comfortable speaking with one another. Remember, different methods and actions are not necessarily wrong, and there isn't necessarily only one right or wrong answer to the questions.

## Which Maneuvers?

Using the descriptions listed below, how would you describe you and your horse's ability to perform the maneuvers listed below?

1. Out of control, scared for my life
  2. I'm in control, but it isn't pretty to see or enjoyable to perform
  3. I'm in control, but it takes a lot of effort on my part to keep the horse acting correctly
  4. OK most of the time, I think my equitation is good, and my horse is pretty dependable to do what I ask
  5. Better than OK, we do the maneuver with a little precision, style and smooth actions
  6. We are pretty good, but I would like to fix a small problem that seems to happen frequently when....
  7. We are actually pretty good at this, my position is good, my cues are easy, and my horse responds quickly
- Moving from a walk or sitting trot to a posting trot
  - Moving from a standstill to a canter
  - Stopping at a specific place from a canter
  - Picking up the correct leads and simple lead changes
  - Turning by moving the front or hind legs after stopping
  - Changing diagonals at a posting trot
  - Extending the trot or canter in a controlled manner
  - Moving forward and laterally at a trot, i.e. two tracking

*Thoughts and discussion:* What does precise or precision mean? Are there particular actions that your horse does routinely that you feel needs a lot of correction, i.e. slings his head when stopping, pinning his ears, running off? Does your equitation or lack of security in the saddle cause particular maneuvers to be performed poorly?

## You Be the judge

Can you describe what an ideal maneuver would look like (your equitation and your horse's performance) when performing the following maneuvers? Can you also describe one or two common errors that would be considered faults in the performance?

- Stopping and backing at a designated place
- Serpentine (series of 1/2 circles, each changing directions) at a posting trot
- A 90 degree turn on the hindquarter
- A 90 degree turn on the forequarter
- Movement from a posting trot to an extended trot

*Thoughts and discussion:* Describe the position of a horse's body when it performs a medium sized figure 8 at a canter including a simple lead change in the center of the circles.

## Explain Your Cues

Can you clearly identify how you cue your horse for the following maneuvers?

- Walking followed by cantering in the left lead in a straight line
- A 90 degree turn on the forequarters to the left (hindquarters to the right)
- Stopping from a trot and backing five steps
- Posting trot figure 8
- Canter in the left lead from a standstill

*Thoughts and discussion:* How often and when do you use your voice as a cue? Do you change your seat position to alter your center of balance when doing different maneuvers? Are you consistent with your ability to use your rein cues from your left and right hand separately and appropriately to the needs for the cueing of different maneuvers?

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## How Your Horse Moves

Would you describe your horse's movement through a pattern as:

1. Generally a little lazy and sluggish
2. Generally wants to go too fast
3. Usually has a pleasant attitude but not very quick to respond
4. Usually nervous
5. Moves in a straight line easily with little cueing
6. Moves more easily one (to the left or right) direction with less cueing
7. Ok sometimes, but gets mad and acts up when I cue for certain maneuvers
8. Generally pretty responsive to cues and able to do the maneuvers without much hesitation

*Thoughts and discussion:* Does your horse tend to perform one way during practices but act differently when showing?