

Saddle Seat Equitation

JUDGING GUIDELINES

I. List of Faults

1. Minor Faults

- 1 to 2 steps on the wrong diagonal or lead.
- Break in gait of 2 to 3 steps.
- 1 to 2 feet ahead or behind point on the pattern.
- Uneven character (Geometry) of circle or half circle.
- Deviation of straight line.
- Poor/rough transitions.

2. Major Faults

- 1/4 to 1/2 of the element performed on wrong lead or diagonal.
- Break in gait of 4 to 6 steps.
- Over 3 feet ahead or behind point in pattern.
- Obvious looking for lead or diagonal.
- Circles or half circles are lopsided (pear or egg shaped).
- Missed halt or pivot leading into element (if required).
*(A halt is 3 seconds.)
- Dropping a rein or stirrup.

3. Severe Faults

- Over 1/2 of an element executed on wrong lead or diagonal.
- Break in gait of 1/2 or more of the element.
- Loss of control of the horse.
- Straight line not executed.
- Fall of horse or rider.
- Failure to perform prescribed element of the pattern. (Off Pattern)

4. Falls

- The fall of horse or rider does not necessarily cause elimination, but is penalized at the Judge's discretion per USEF rules.

II. Judging Criteria for Pattern Work -

1. Horsemanship

- 10-9 An excellent maneuver with horse and rider in perfect unison.
- 8-7 A very good maneuver, with horse and rider in very good position with very good transitions and form. Good pace and impulsion.
- 6-5 A satisfactory maneuver, maintaining rhythm, tempo, and impulsion.
- 4-3 An average maneuver, loss of impulsion and rhythm. Loss of form.
- 2-1 A below average maneuver, loss of impulsion and rhythm.

2. Overall Picture

- 10-9 Rider in excellent position and working well with the horse to present a very pleasing performance, able to maintain rhythm, tempo, with ideal transitions and form.
- 8-7 Rider in a very good position, hands, legs, and body.
- 6-5 An average performance of horse and rider. Rider in good position with slight movement of legs, hands, or body.
- 4-3 A poor performance. Not in unison, uneven tempo, and impulsion. Movement of hands, legs, and body.
- 2-1 A very poor performance. Conflict between horse and rider. Poor position, transitions, and lack of balance.

3. Judging Criteria for Rail Work

- 100-90 Excellent equitation, including body position and use of aids. Smoothly and precisely demonstrates a high level of professionalism.
- 89-80 A very good rider, correct equitation and use of aids. Excellent rider that commits a minor fault, or an excellent rider that commits a major fault.
- 79-70 Good equitation but lacking adequate style. A very good rider that commits a minor fault.
- 69-60 Rider has obvious position and/or appearance faults that prevents effective equitation. Rider that commits one minor fault, or a very good rider that commits a major fault.
- 59-50 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.
- 49-40 Severe fault, two or more major faults or multiple minor faults in the performance of the exhibitor that demonstrates a lack of riding ability and knowledge of correct body position.
- 39-1 Exhibitor commits more than one severe fault or multiple major faults in performance, exhibits poor riding skills, but completes the class and avoids disqualification.
- **Fall of rider does not disqualify.** The fall of horse or rider does not necessarily cause elimination, but is penalized at the Judge's discretion per USEF rules.
- **Equipment, Control of Horse and Completion of Class**
 - Illegal Equipment^[1]_[SEP](Prohibited)

- -Unable to control unruly horse. (Must be excused)
- -Unable to complete class. (Retired, Excused, etc)

II Rules for Saddle Seat Equitation

Rider Position

- **Hands**

- The position of the hands should not be exaggerated in any manner. They should appear to be in an easy position, neither perpendicular nor horizontal to the saddle. The height of the hands should correspond to the head carriage of the horse, the length of the rider's arm, as well as his/ her height...The hands should not be excessively far apart (not more than 8 inches in most cases). Hands should be useful, showing control and sympathy, adapting to any situation. Any necessary movement of hands is done subtly without obvious or snatching movements. The method of holding the reins is optional however both hands must be used and all reins must be picked up at one time. Bight of rein should be on the off side.

- **Basic Position**

- a) The basic position or seat in the saddle depends on each individual rider and the particular saddle used.
- b) To obtain proper position, the rider should place himself comfortably in the saddle and find his center of gravity by sitting with a slight bend at the knees.
- c) Proper riding position should be similar to correct posture, in which the head, shoulder, hip, and ankle are all on the same perpendicular line.

- **Upper Body**

- . a) The upper body, including the arms and hands, should give the appearance of elegant style and complete control, but without the impression of stiffness, posing, or exaggeration.
- . b) The head should be carried high but in no way stiff or tipped to either side. The head is the highest point of balance and should be directly over the midpoint of the shoulders. The line of the rider's back should be straight and perpendicular to the saddle. Elbows should not be pinched into the body nor pointing out to the side. The lower arm to the wrist may be raised higher than the elbow.

Lower Body

- . a) With the seat firmly in the center of balance, the inner thigh should be secure against the saddle; the legs should lie easily along the saddle with a slight bend to the knee. The ball of the foot sits firmly in the iron with the heel slightly lower than the toe. The length of the stirrup is determined by this proper leg position. If the heel is distinctly lower than the toe, the stirrup is too short. If the toe reaches for the iron, the stirrup is too long. The foot faces forward or slightly outward, never in an exaggerated inward or outward position.
- . b) The foot faces forward or slightly outward, never in an exaggerated inward or outward position.
- . c) A flared lower leg and/ or cocked ankle is major faults.