

Intro to Horse Shows

Horse Shows are competitive events sponsored by a breed or performance association or local horse group. There are many types of shows and a wide variety of classes in horse shows.

Schooling Show: This is a “practice” show. Sometimes you can dress more casually than you do for a regular formal horse show, and often you can use training tack. Riders from outside barns do not participate in our schooling shows. Review Ceremonies are schooling shows.

Open Show This type of show is open to all ages and breeds of horses and all ages of riders. Riders from other barns do compete in our open shows.

Equitation: A class judged on the rider’s seat, position, turnout, and control of the horse.

Hunter: A class judged on performance, manners, way of going, and style over a course of natural jumps.

Jumper: A class judged on time and faults over a set course of brightly painted jumps.

Attire/ What to Wear: Make sure your clothes are all clean and your boots are polished. Don’t wait till the day before a show to check your clothes.

A young rider looks well turned out in jodphurs, garters and paddock boots. (garters should be buckled under the knee with the strap end facing toward the rear of the pony.)

When you are older (and taller) it’s time to wear britches and boots.

Hair: see attachment

Riding Coat: navy blue, gray, or dark green are a good choice. Avoid loud colors and bright plaids.

Show Shirts (ratcatchers) and chokers: should be in solid pastel colors or white. A choker or shirt collar should fit well. Anything too large or baggy looks very sloppy. Many girls put monograms on their chokers. Wear the absolute minimum of jewelry. Boys should wear conservative ties that are neatly tacked down—not flapping in the wind.

Gloves: If you are riding in the equitation, you should wear black gloves.

Helmets: ASTM/SEI approved helmets are a **MUST** every time you ride your horse or pony. Make sure the chin strap is tight.

Flat Classes

The hunter seat equitation judge will compare basic position of the riders—seat, legs, hands—as well as their control over the horses or ponies. He or she will also be judging the rider's influence on their mounts. Inexperienced show riders usually rush to obey judge's commands. Be as prompt as possible, but not at the cost of getting the wrong lead. Although it is important to be seen by the judge, make sure you are not rude to your fellow competitors. Try not to cut them off or, worse yet, bump into them!

The procedure for flat classes is usually (but not always) as follows: all competitors go into the ring and begin tracking left (counter-clockwise). The command will be to walk. Find a place by yourself so the judge can see you. After the trot the judge will probably call for a walk and then the canter. Then you will be asked to reverse and repeat the pattern. When it is time to line up, follow the announcer's directions (for example: line up in the center of the ring, facing away from the viewing room). Also try to be close to the judge so s/he can see your number.

Jumping Classes

For the classes over fences, be sure that you know the course and try to watch as much as possible before you go. Review the course plan with your instructor. A diagram of the course will be posted at the in-gate. As you study the course, make sure that if there is a dotted line, you know where it is. ***A dotted line across the ring on the diagram means that anyone who crosses that line while making his circle will be eliminated.***

Hair How-To

When a rider graduates from the pony ranks and beginner equitation, it's time for breeches and tall boots, and for girls to put up their hair under the hunt cap.

Girls should not wait until the horse show to put up their hair the first time. Practice at home until you have it down pat. If you want to look poised and polished at your first horse show and every one thereafter, tidy hair is a key factor. Keep in mind that your hat will fit correctly if you buy it to fit you with your hair up, but it will be way too loose if you settle for a ponytail when you ride at home. Boys should keep their hair short enough for a neat appearance.

Neatly braided pigtails (right) are cute for young girls (up to 10 or 12 years) still wearing jodhpurs. The matching ribbon in the pony's tail is a nice touch — okay for local shows but not for the big A shows.



1. Here Clementine covers her hair with a hairnet and pulls it down over her ears to a very low ponytail in the back. Then she fastens it securely with an elastic or a hair clip, tucking wispy hairs inside the hairnet.



2. Next she flips up the ends and holds them with one hand as she slips the hat on from back to front. Some riders like to secure the ends with a hair clip or bobby pins.



3. Once the hat is on and the chin snap securely fastened, she checks that all loose ends are tucked in.