

Trail Challenge Judging Criteria

DISQUALIFICATION

1. No tie-downs, martingales, training equipment of any kind that will restrict head movement.
2. Stallions must be double tied to a trailer and have a yellow ribbon in their tail.
3. No shorts or sneakers.
4. No bareback pads.
5. Fall of horse or rider. Horse is considered down if any point of the horse above the knee touches the ground.
6. Very noticeable lameness or injury. EXAMPLE – severe girth gall, bleeding cut, horse in severe physical stress.

SCORING

1. Horse may lose points for backing away or side stepping an obstacle.
2. Sniffing an obstacle is not a refusal but will not be scored as highly as a horse that demonstrates bravery.
3. Horses have a time allowance to complete an obstacle. Failure to do so will result in no score. Rider may earn a plus (+) if they did a good job with a difficult horse.
4. Horse/rider team can earn a total of 20 points per obstacle, 10 points for horse, 10 points for rider. A (+) may given if a very high level of communication is demonstrated.
5. Refinement will score higher than very obvious cues.
6. Horses opening their mouths and arguing with their riders will receive a lower score. Ex. Ears flat back, kicking out, bucking, or biting.
7. Riders should appear balanced and in control.
8. Leaning will be penalized.
9. Judge to a standard of 10 and deduct penalty points from there.
10. Be consistent! If you are tough, be tough on every competitor and vice versa.
11. Give a partial score for a try at an obstacle (example: horse is asked to trot over a log, but walks instead, suggest team receive a 5). A partial score of 5 pts is given horse and rider (a lower score may be given – judges discretion).
12. A zero is for failure to complete, the competitors must go from the entrance to the exit across the obstacle to receive a score.
13. If a competitor goes off course they will receive a zero. (this is safety issue)
14. Keep competitor safety in mind at all times. You may move an obstacle if the conditions and footing become unsafe.
15. TIME ALLOWANCE – obstacle must be completed in the time allowance. Failure to do so will result in a zero score. Allow a 5 sec grace period on the allotted time.
16. Shank bits should be ridden one hand. Suggested deduction is 3 pts from rider if they go to 2 hands.
17. Horse should not rush obstacles; calmness will score higher than nervousness.
18. Nicking, or stepping on a pole will receive point deduction (suggest 1-3 points). Dislodging a pole will receive a point deduction. (suggest 4 points).
19. Stumbling will receive a point deduction (suggest 5 pts).
20. If a horse is wearing a snaffle bit or is ridden in an English bridle, 2 hands on the reins are appropriate. If a horse is in a shank bit, western style, one hand appropriate.
21. Horse and rider should appear relaxed and natural for a high score.
22. A natural headset is very acceptable in a trail horse – a raised head may show a tense or nervous horse (judge discretion advised)

OPTIONAL JUDGE COMMENTS AND ABBREVIATIONS FOR SCORE CARD

It is not necessary for a judge to make comments on every horse, especially when the ride has a large number of riders. However, many contestants appreciate knowing what they did wrong in the judge's opinion. The following is a list of abbreviations a judge could use to comment on a rider or horse. It should be understood that a rider or horse start off with a score of 10 and points are deducted when errors are made.

RIDERS

- SEAT – (all the judge needs to do is write seat) this indicates the deduction refers to a problem with the rider's seat.
- HANDS – under comments the judge would write down HANDS – this would indicate that the deduction involved the rider's use of their hands (an example would be heavy handed, or reins too long, or hands too high).
- LOOKING DOWN – under comments the judge could write LK DWN – a rider needs to pay attention to what lies ahead in the trail. Therefore, looking down is a point deduction. An exception for this would be looking down on an embankment obstacle. There will be no penalty assessed for looking down on an embankment.
- BALANCE – The judge would write down BAL under comments (this usually refers to a rider leaning to one side or the other. A rider can seriously affect the balance of the horse by leaning).

HORSE

- ATTITUDE – Judge abbreviation ATT. Refers to a horse appearing nervous or anxious, or appearing sullen with ears back or tail swishing.
- ATHLETICISM (ATHL) – Horse appears clumsy or unfocused; stepping on logs is an example.
- CADENCE (CAD) – Horse appears too fast or slow. Unsteady in gait, lack of rhythm, breaks gait.
- STRAIGHTNESS (STRT) – The horse did not move in a straight line either backward or forward. A crooked back is an example of this deduction.
- TIMED OUT (TO) – Failure to complete in the allotted time. The team receives a “0”.
- OFF COURSE (OC) – the horse did not enter or exit through the markers. Team receives a “0”.
- INSUFFICIENT TRAINING (IT) – The horse did not understand what was expected.\

DISQUALIFICATION (DQ)

- Fall of horse or rider (horse’s body above the knee touches the ground).
- Use of any type of martingale, tie down, or head training equipment.
- Improper tack (IM TK)
- Improper attire on part of rider – junior not wearing helmet, wearing shorts or sneakers, etc (IM ATT).
- Lameness or injury or any condition that does not allow horse to finish the ride.

NOTE- A JUDGE MAY DQ A RIDER FOR RUDENESS OR UNHORSEMAN LIKE CONDUCT

OTHER

- Judge or assistant is to ask rider to call out his/her number and division when approaching an obstacle.
- The judge assistant can be used to confirm the number and division with the rider and judge, record the scores, direct traffic flow, watch times.
- Judges are always to be polite to contestants, and be careful that contestants do not overhear their comments.
- Judges are to be observant to dangerous situations and may excuse a competitor
- Judge may only instruct a competitor in trouble (example – please drop the rope or slicker). A score of 0 will be given.
- In a bog situation a judge may instruct a rider to dismount a struggling horse. In this instance a score may be given to the horse and rider team.
- Judges are not required to answer questions about a rider’s individual performance.
- Judges can give tips or give encouragement in general.
- Safety is foremost and a judge can stop any dangerous behavior or unsportsman like conduct.
- If an accident occurs at your obstacle please call management. Do whatever is necessary to assist, however, do NOT move a back or head injury. Please do whatever is necessary to continue the ride as soon as possible.

Remember.....

No judge should ever instruct a rider beyond simple obstacle instructions.

Judge may never grab a horse unless the rider has fallen and the horse is loose.

Scoring

10=excellent, 9=very good, 8=good, 7=fairly good, 6=satisfactory, 5=sufficient, 4=insufficient, 3= fairly poor, 2=bad, 1=very bad, 0=not executed