



Special Olympics Minnesota Equestrian Handbook

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COACH CERTIFICATION RATIO TABLE

The updated coach certification ratio tables can be found in the Special Olympics Minnesota Coaches Portal under policies and fact sheets, or here: [Coach Ratio Table](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Practice ideas, skill assessment/development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI Rules for each respective sport can be found at www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx

The official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Equestrian will govern all Special Olympics competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) rules for equestrian found at <http://www.fei.org>. FEI or National Governing Body (NGB) rules will be employed except when they conflict with the official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Equestrian. In such cases, the official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Equestrian will apply.

RULES OF COMPETITION

Equestrian athletes are separated by age and class-level. All athletes compete according to ability. A maximum of 8 riders are allowed per class. All riders must have had at least 10 riding training sessions within the 6 months prior to competition, with a minimum of 10 hours of training. Entries must be received by the event management on or before the entry deadline. No post entries will be allowed. No dogs will be permitted on the show grounds, except service dogs. Service dogs must be approved by management, confined to a 6-foot leash, and not permitted within 20 feet of riding arena or horses.

Spotters

Spotters, appointed by the event director, will remain in strategic places in the competition area to act in case of emergency for unassisted riders. Other attendants are not allowed in the competition area except at the request of the judges or when specified in the event requirements. Delegations are allowed to use their coaches as spotters, but this should be notified to event management prior to competition.

Assistance

Outside assistance, or rail side coaching, will be penalized at the discretion of the judges. Electronic communication devices used for the purpose of communicating between riders and individuals outside the ring are prohibited. Cue cards may be used for hearing impaired athletes. For the cues to be universal, they should be designated as follows: 1 = Walk, 2 = Sitting Trot/Jog, 3 = Posting Trot, 4 = Canter/Lope, 0 = Reverse, Universal Stop Sign = Halt.

A reader may be requested for C supported riders at the coaches meeting but needs to be provided by the delegation. If somebody needs a signer, they may request so at the coaches meeting, but needs to be provided by the delegation, as well.

Horses

A rider must use the same horse in all events during the entire competition if it is their own. Change of horse is only allowed for safety reasons, or if a horse is sick or unsound. The official veterinarian's decision, if called by the judge, as to the serviceability of a horse will be final for the purpose of awarding the class for which the vet was called. Otherwise, the judges and the equine director will make the final decision regarding a horse's ability to compete.

Tack

All personal horses must provide their own tack, and the saddles must fit the horse. If the competition is supplying horses, then appropriate equipment is provided by event management in agreement with the horse owner. An athlete may use their own saddle if it fits the horse they are riding. Adapted and personally owned saddles must be approved by the event director and horse owner prior to the competition. Western tack for Western riders and English or Dressage tack for English riders is allowed.

Bridles must be appropriate to the class entered and meet the requirements of the class. A lead line must be attached to the halter and not to the bridle. The halter may be over or under the bridle if it does not interfere with the use of the bit or the reins.

Riders may in no way be attached to the horse or saddle with any adapted saddles. Additionally, English riders must provide their own stirrups, leather, and irons.

Bearing, side or running reins are prohibited during warmup and competition. Blinders and nose covers are also prohibited. Seat covers are also prohibited, however if an athlete requires one, please contact event management prior to the competition.

JUDGING

Riders will be judged on the following: control of horse, balance and seat, proper use of aids, ability to follow directions, ring etiquette, safety awareness, sportsmanlike conduct, walk/trot/canter when appropriate, stop, turn, and backup. Please see specific class for any additional information.

Obstacles are judged on the following: proper execution of obstacles and pattern, control of horse, balance and seat, safety awareness, and sportsmanlike conduct.

Credit is given to the horses navigating the obstacles correctly while responding to the rider's cues. If an excessive amount of time happens between obstacles, the judge will move the horse to the next obstacle. Unauthorized assistance by a horse handler, coach, or side walker may result in a penalty to the rider.

To provide a true horse show experience, penalties will be assessed based upon judge's discretion. Penalties will occur if horses are three strides off gait within their designated class. Leaders are meant to keep horses in the patterns, not to lead through a pattern.

OBSTACLES AND PATTERNS

There are a minimum of 6 elements. They may include gates, four logs to ride over (not elevated), walking in and backing out of a straight chute, riding through serpentine obstacles at any gait capable, carrying an object from one place to another, bridge, box, L ground poles, side pass, haunch or forehand turns, or others.

ATTIRE

All riders must wear riding boots. Riders who need to wear other footwear must have a physician's statement submitted prior to competition. All riders must wear protective SEI-ASTM or BHS approved helmets with a full chinstrap which must be always fastened when the rider is working around horses. Riding boots, a sleeved shirt, long pants, and a helmet are the only required attire. Below is an extended list of attire for riding classes.

English

- A short, dark colored riding coat.
- A conservative color, preferably white, riding shirt or Oxford style long- or short-sleeved shirt.
- Boots with heels.
- Breeches or jodhpurs.
- Tie or choker optional.
- Gloves optional.
- Spurs optional but must be approved by the horse owner.
- In case of inclement weather, athletes will be permitted to wear a hat cover and a conservative raincoat.
- In extreme heat (above 80 degrees), the judges may permit athletes to show without riding coats.

Western

- Belt under loops.
- Neckties, kerchiefs, bolos, chaps, and gloves are optional.
 - Chaps are prohibited in all gymkhana events and showmanship classes.
 - A western type of hat worn on an approved helmet is optional.
- Spurs are optional.
- Boots or shoes with a slick sole and heel are recommended.

Biteless bridles may be used for Western competition. Otherwise, bit must consist of a metal bar varying from the straight bar to the jointed mouthpiece. Nothing may extend below the horizontal plane of the mouthpiece other than a roller attached to the center of the bit. There is an 8.5-inch shank maximum, from top to bottom. Hackamores are only allowed in game class (barrel and pole).

Reins must be attached to each shank. If using a shanked bit, a one-handed ride is preferred. A snaffle bit may be used regardless of the horse's age. In this instance, two-handed ride is acceptable. Riders must start and finish the class the same way. For example, if the rider starts with a one-handed ride, they must finish with a one-handed ride.

ENGLISH AND WESTERN EVENTS: GAME (BARREL AND POLES)

Only A1, B1, and C1 riders may register for barrel racing or pole weaving. The delegation must provide their own horses at state.

Tack

Saddles and bridles as required in Equitation classes. Prohibited equipment includes lariat or reata, tie-downs, draw reins, and hackamores. Hackamores are allowed in game only. Wire, metal, or rawhide devices as part of a leather chinstrap are prohibited. Shoes other than standard horseshoes are also prohibited.

Execution of Game Events

Riders are required to start the course inside an enclosed ring and may not start until after all gates are closed and secured. Gates may not be opened until the rider has completed the course and returned to a walk or halt.

All events are timed, and the winner will be the competitor with the fastest time. Time begins as the horse's nose crosses the starting line and is complete when the horse's nose crosses the finish line. A 5-second penalty will be added to the time for knocking over a pole or barrel. Athletes are allowed to touch a pole or barrel with their hand with no penalty if the pole or barrel stays upright. The penalty will also be added to the time for each 3 strides over the allotted gait for that division (e.g., trot to canter).

Disqualifications will be assessed for the following: failure to follow the course; failure to cross the start or finish line between markers; failure to have the chinstrap on the athlete's helmet properly fastened for the entire time they are in the arena; re-crossing the start or finish line after completing the course; excessive use of a bat, crop, whip, or rope, as determined by the judge.

In the event of a tie, there will be a run-off using the same course. The competitor declared the winner in the run-off must re-run the pattern within 5 seconds of their original time, or the run-off must be held again.

Facilities and Setup

Riders must use their own horses for both barrel and pole competitions.

Whenever it is possible, the starting line markers or electric timers should be placed against the arena wall. The start and finish lines must be clearly marked. The course must be measured exactly, with 21 feet between poles and 21 feet from the start line to first poles.

ENGLISH AND WESTERN EVENTS: SHOWMANSHIP

The emphasis in the Showmanship class should be on the athlete's ability to handle and show the horse, with safety as the main consideration. The horse is merely a prop to show the ability of the showman.

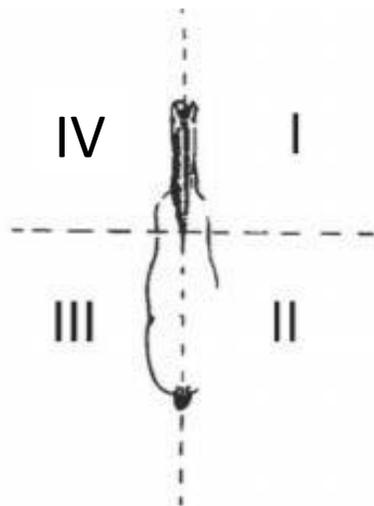
In Western Tack style, athletes may use a halter and lead shank made of leather or nylon. Chain leads are also acceptable. Western attire, including an approved safety helmet, is appropriate. In English Tack style, athletes may use a suitable English bridle or halter of either leather or nylon. English attire, including a helmet, is appropriate.

Quarter Method

The quarter method of showmanship will be used. The following suggested guidelines of movement are meant to serve as an illustration of movement around the horse while showing in Showmanship classes and are for the exhibitors and coaches to know.

Imaginary lines bisect the horse into 4 equal parts. The quadrants will be numbered I, II, III, and IV for ease of identification. One line runs across the horse just behind the withers, while the other imaginary line runs from the head to the tail. The athlete should move around the horse in the following manner:

- When the judge is in I, the handler should be in IV.
- As the judge moves to II, the handler should move to I.
- When the judge moves to III, the handler should move to IV.
- As the judge moves up the horse to IV, the handler returns to I.



This method of showmanship is based on safety, as the handler can keep the horse's hindquarters from swinging toward the judge should the horse become fractious.

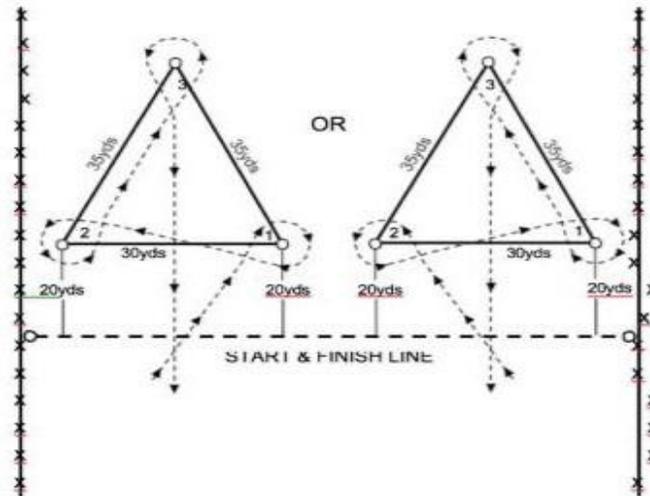
Each of the following maneuvers are considered acceptable elements for individual test patterns: lead the horse at a walk or jog/trot, back in a straight or curved line, halt, pivot or turn (quarter, half or full), and set up square.

BARREL RACING

Only A1, B1, and C1 riders may register for barrel racing.

Facilities and Setup

Three barrels are set in a triangle. Barrels 1 and 2 are set 27.43 meters (90 feet) apart and 18.29 meters (60 feet) from the start/finish line. Barrel 3 is set in the center, as the top of the triangle, 32 meters (105 feet) away from barrels 1 and 2. See layout below.



If the course is too large for the available space, the pattern should be reduced in increments of 4.57 meters (15 feet) until it fits into the arena. Remember to leave adequate space between barrels and any obstacles. The distance from barrel 3 to the finish line does not need to be reduced by these increments if there is sufficient room for the horse to stop. When measuring the area for the barrel course, remember to leave ample room for horses to complete their turns. Setup will be done according to what the judge decides is a safe size for the class.

There must be at least 13.77 meters (25 feet) from the start/finish line to the end of the arena. Upright poles should mark the start/finish line. Brightly colored 55-gallon plastic or metal drums may be used.

Execution of the Course

The barrel course may be run either right or left. The instructions are written right.

At a signal from the starter, the athlete will run barrel 1, passing to the left of it and completing an approximately 360 degrees turn around it. Next, they will go to barrel 2, passing to the right of it and completing a slightly more than 360 degrees turn around it. Then, they will go to barrel 3, passing to the right of it and completing an approximately 360 degrees turn around it. Last, they will sprint to the finish line, passing between barrels 1 and 2.

STOCK SEAT EQUITATION

Any or all riders may be required to execute appropriate tests included in the class requirements. Tests may be performed either collectively or individually. Individual patterns consisting of a combination of elements may be called for.

Guidelines Only				Mandatory
	Good	Minor Faults	Major Faults	Elimination
Seat	Keeping center of balance Complete contact with saddle Straight Back	Sitting off center Sway back Round back Losing center of balance	Excessive body motion Popping out of saddle	At judges discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Hands	Quiet light hands Maintaining consistent head position	Unsteadiness Restrictions causing untrue gaits	Horse's mouth gaping Heavy hands Constant bumping	At judges discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Legs	Secure leg position Proper weight in stirrups Controlling motion Weight evenly on ball of foot Heels lower than toes	Uneven stirrups Motion in legs Insufficient weight in stirrups	Interfering with another rider Excessive spurring Loss of contact between legs & saddle foot & stirrup Coming in contact with fence or other riders	At judges discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Control	Maintaining horse in good form at consistent gaits Ability to maintain horse under adverse conditions	Breaking from walk to jog Breaking from jog to lope Not standing in line up	Breaking from jog to walk Breaking from lope to jog Allowing horse to back crooked Missing leads	At judges discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Overall Appearance	Suitable well-fitted outfit Well-groomed horse Clean equipment	Saddle not suitable to rider's size Unfitted outfit Dirty boots	Unclean equipment Ungroomed horse Untrimmed horse	At judges discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider

WESTERN TRAIL

This contest is neither a stunt nor a race but should be performed with reasonable speed. Western trail is a competition in the performance and characteristics of a good, sensible, well-mannered, free and easy moving horse.

Horses will be judged on riding qualities of the gates and change of lead (simple, interrupted, or flying), and the athlete's ability to influence the horse.

WESTERN TRAIL JUDGING GUIDELINES

Trail	Guidelines Only			Mandatory
	Good	Minor Faults	Major Faults	Elimination
Walk Jog/Trot Lope/Canter (on the course)	Consistency of gait Clear transitions	Inconsistency of gait Wrong lead at lope or canter	Break of gait Failure to perform gait called for	At judges' discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Control Obstacles Gates Back thrus Side passes Turns on forehand and hindquarters Serpentine	Smooth Good position Responsive	Slight touches Slant side passes Wide positions Slow response Backing crooked	Knock down elevated elements Stepping out of confining elements Losing gait Fussiness and extreme tension Refusals	At judges' discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Agility Obstacles Walk overs Trot or lope Cavaletti Bridges	Attentive Careful Willing Low poll	Slight touches Too hesitant Failure to stay on center lines	Knock downs Refusals Failure to maintain gaits Off side of bridge	At judges' discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider
Calmness Obstacles Plastic Brush Plants Carrying objects	Steady going Alert Careful but willing Low poll Calm when carrying objects	Tense over or thru obstacles Spooking when carrying objects	Jumping over or stampeding thru obstacles Refusals	At judges' discretion Fall to the ground of horse or rider

All horses with clean or minor faults trips will be considered before major fault horses

DIVISIONING

Equestrian athletes are not separated by gender or age. According to the Special Olympics Sports Rules, divisions should consist of 3-8 riders.

Athletes are divisioned based on ability to perform a series of patterns with their horse. Special Olympics Minnesota levels of competition are as follows:

- A1: Can perform walk, trot, and canter independently
- B1: Can perform walk and trot independently
- BS/B3: Can perform walk and trot supported
- C1/B2: Can perform walk independently
- CS/C2: Can perform walk supported

Please note that all B1 independent riders that have a physical disability prohibiting them from the trot will be listed as C1 riders. The same for BS being listed as CS/C2. Any riders needing any support in the arena, will be considered supported.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes by leading by example.

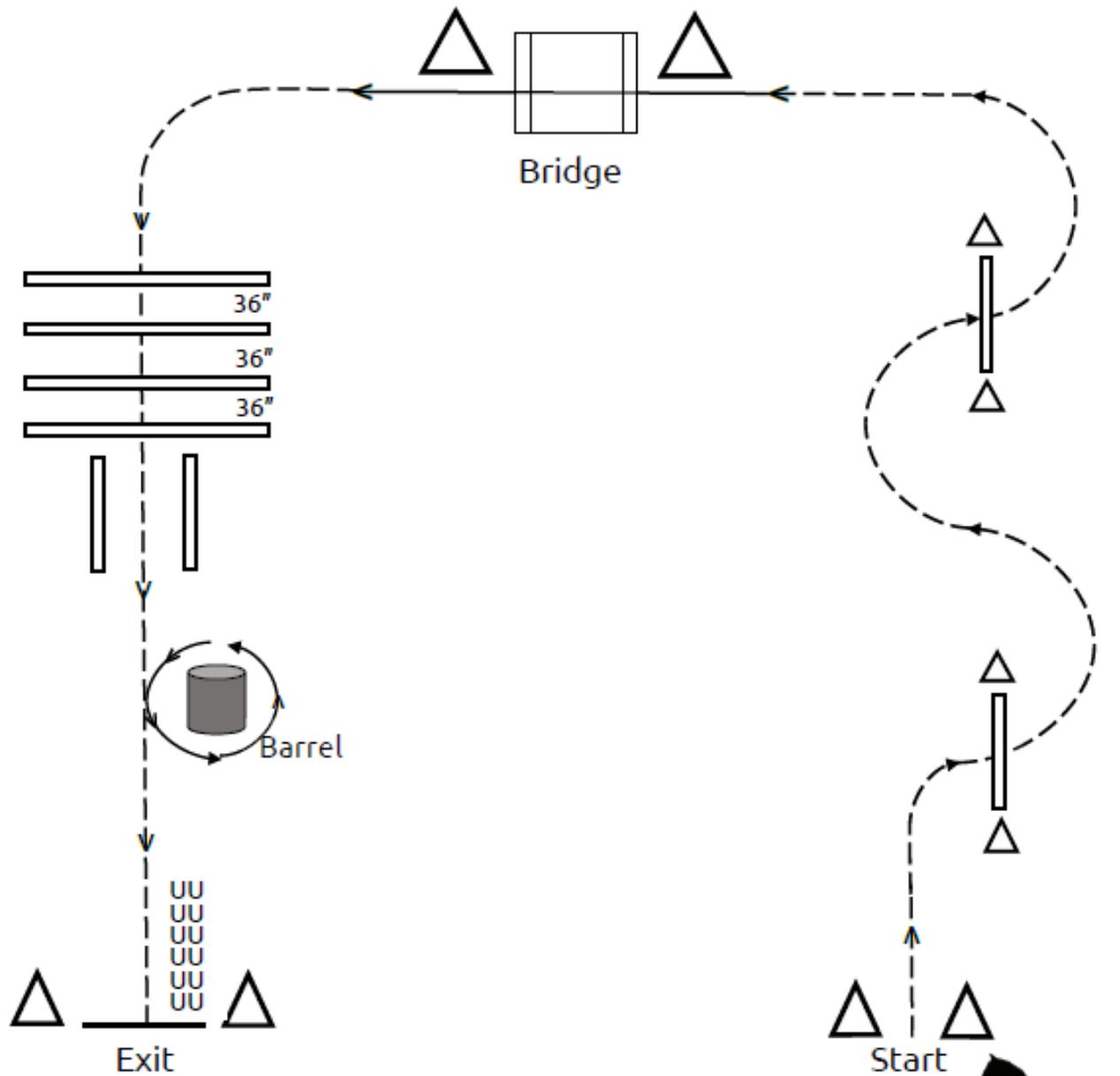
Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition
- Always finish an event; Never quit

Fair Play Always

- Comply with the rules
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play
- Respect the decision of the officials
- Strategy discussions with any athlete and/or partner are prohibited once the class begins
 - If an official determines that a coach, partner, or spectator is violating this rule, the official may sanction the offending individual. Sanctions may include verbal warning, citing the coach/partner with unsportsmanlike conduct, or expulsion from the games.

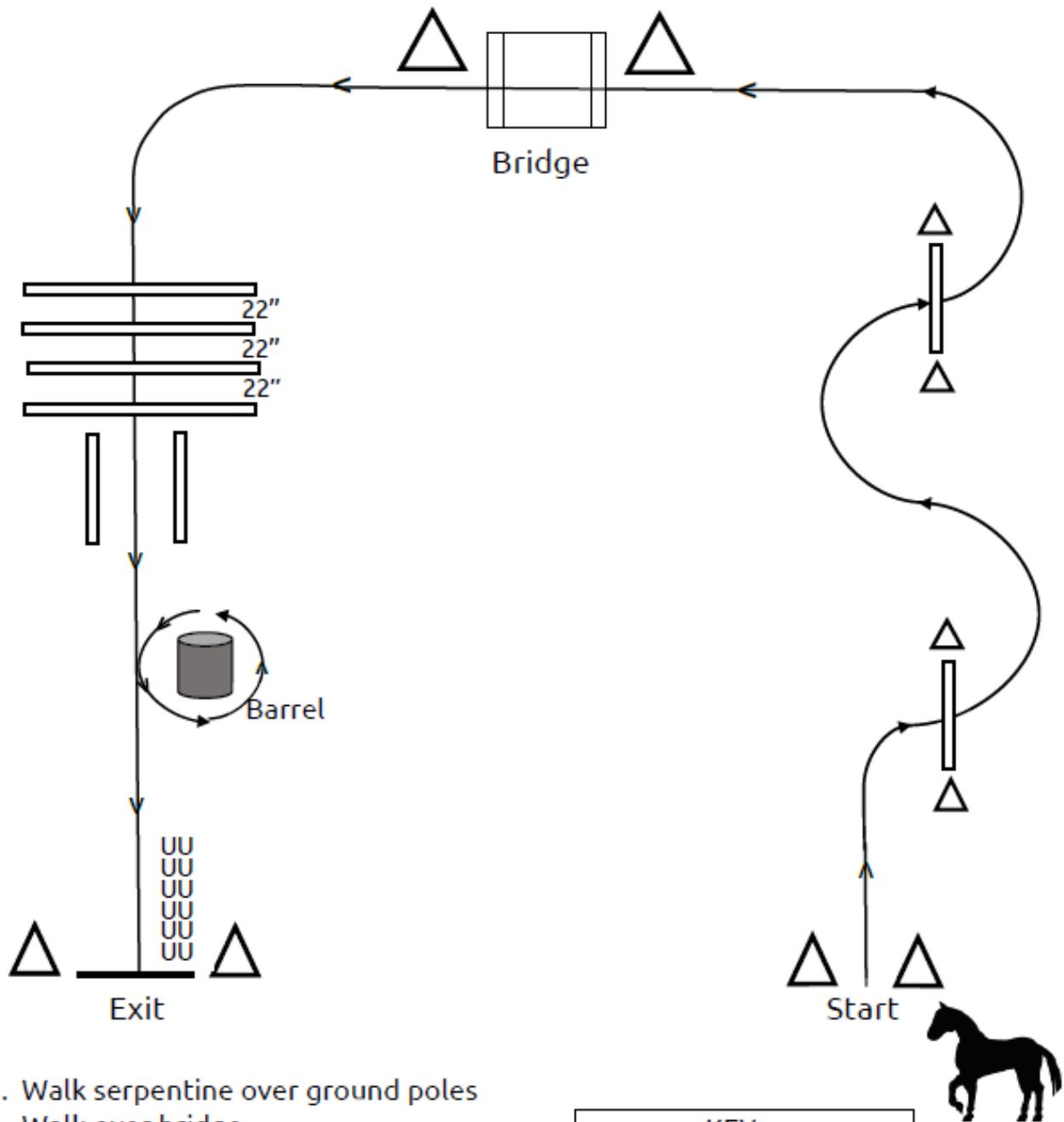
A & B1 WALK/TROT PATTERN – OBSTACLE



1. Trot serpentine over ground poles
2. Walk over bridge
3. Trot over and through ground poles
4. Trot in a circle to left around barrel
5. Trot to end, stop, step back 3 steps, then exit arena

KEY	
—	- Walk
- - - -	- Trot
▬	- Ground Pole
ΞΞΞΞΞΞ	- Back
△	- Cone

B2, B3 & C's WALK ONLY PATTERN – OBSTACLE

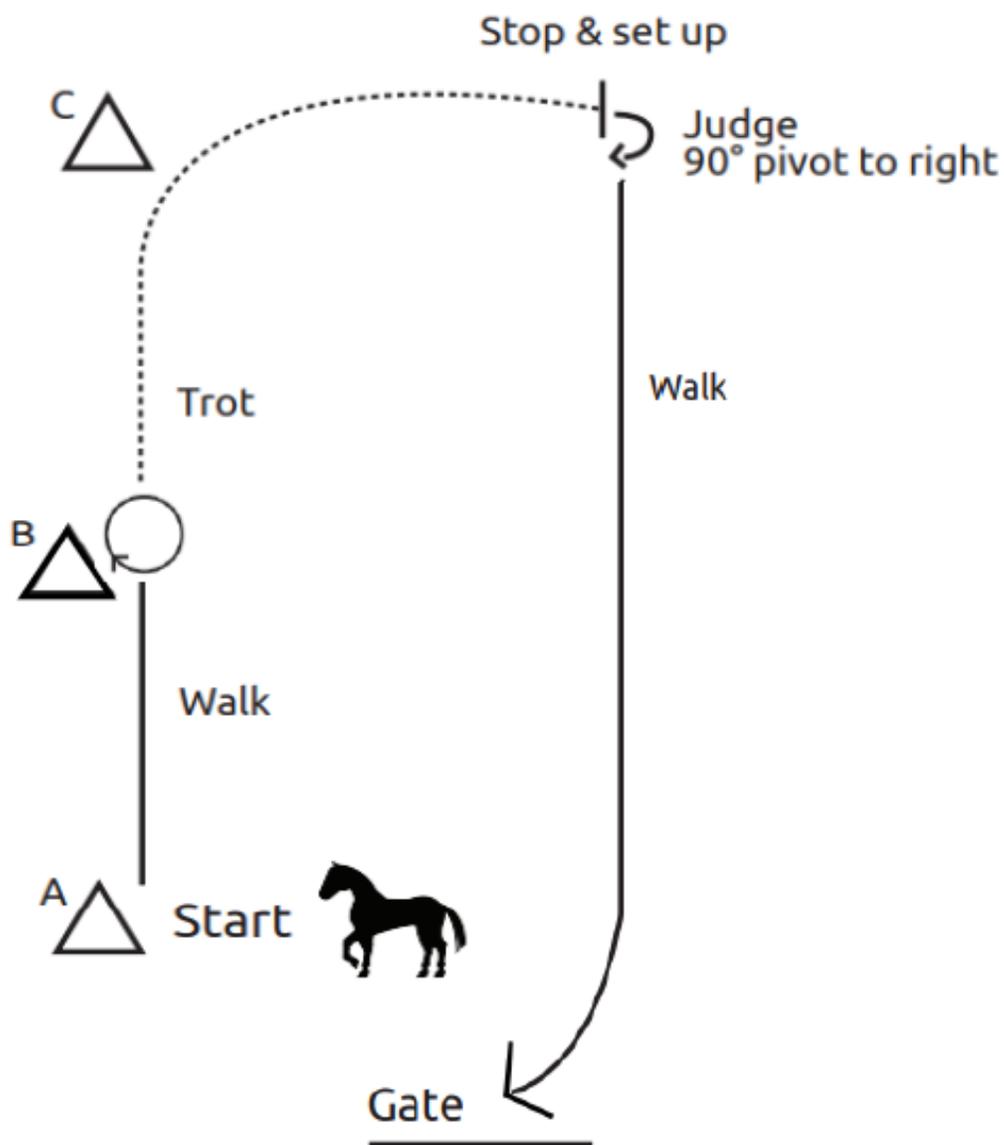


1. Walk serpentine over ground poles
2. Walk over bridge
3. Walk over and through ground poles
4. Walk in a circle to left around barrel
5. Walk to end, stop, step back 3 steps, then exit arena

KEY	
—	- Walk
▬	- Ground Pole
≡≡≡≡≡≡	- Back
△	- Cone

SHOWMANSHIP AT HALTER/BRIDLE A & B1 Level Riders

1. Start at cone A
2. Walk to cone B and stop
3. Pivot 360° to right
4. Trot to cone C and continue trotting to judge
5. Stop and set up for inspection
6. When released, do a 90° pivot to the right and leave the arena at a walk



SHOWMANSHIP AT HALTER/BRIDLE B3, C1 & C2 Level Ride

1. Start at cone A
2. Walk to cone B and stop
3. Pivot 360° to right
4. Trot to cone C and continue to judge
5. Stop and set up for inspection
6. When released, do a 90° pivot to the right and leave the arena at a walk

