

## Hunt Seat Equitation

### GENERAL STATEMENTS:

Hunt seat equitation on the flat is an evaluation based on the ability of a rider to perform various maneuvers in harmony with her/his horse. The most important factor to keep in mind is the fact that this class is not based on the movement of the class (Hunter Under Saddle). It is judged solely on the ability of the rider to show his or her horse. Thus, the communication between horse and rider through subtle cues and aids should not be obvious. Equitation is judged on the rider and her/his effect on the horse while executing a pattern. The class is judged 75% on pattern work and 25% on rail work (usually following the pattern work). While judged on the flat, the class provides a base for natural progression to over fence class.

### POSITION: (of horse and rider)

**Horse:** The **poll should be level** with, or slightly above the withers, to allow proper impulsion from behind. The head should not be carried behind the vertical, giving the appearance of intimidation, or be excessively nosed out, giving a resistant appearance.



**Rider:** The rider's hands should be over and in front of the horse's withers, knuckles thirty degrees inside the vertical, hands slightly apart and making a straight line from the horse's mouth to the rider's elbow. (Method of hold the reins is optional, and bight of reins may fall on either side. However, **all reins must be picked up at the same time.**) The eyes should be up and the shoulders back. Toes should be at an angle best suited to the rider's conformation; **heels down, calf of leg in contact with the horse.** Iron should be on the ball of the foot and must not be tied to the girth.

	CREDITS	FAULTS
<b>Seat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitting straight down over center of balance middle of saddle such that base of support is seat bones and inner thigh.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitting behind center of balance with hips rolled under</li> <li>• Leaning forward to point that base of support is lost</li> </ul>
<b>Back</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back straight, but relaxed and supple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive stiffness</li> <li>• Artificial arch in back</li> <li>• Over relaxed, slumped so</li> </ul>

		shoulders roll forward
<b>Shoulders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level and square</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoulders too far forward, back, or elevated</li> <li>• Shoulders dropped</li> </ul>
<b>Head</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking straight ahead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking down (ex. to check a lead)</li> <li>• Looking up such that straight eyesight is not just above horse's ears</li> </ul>
<b>Arms/ Hands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arms held such that approximate straight line exists from elbow to horse's mouth</li> <li>• Reins held such that contact is maintained</li> <li>• Hands firm, yet relaxed, and still</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands too low</li> <li>• Hands held high</li> <li>• Excessive contact (causing over-flexing of the neck)</li> <li>• Reins too long requiring excessive hand and arm movement to achieve contact</li> <li>• Hands moving noticeably</li> <li>• Arms stiff and rigid</li> </ul>
<b>Legs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall naturally down horse's side with slight bend in the knee to allow a straight line from ear' shoulder' hip' boot heel</li> <li>• Ankles straight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legs too far forward or too far back (upper body moved off center of balance)</li> <li>• Irons too short or too long causing unnatural bend in knees</li> <li>• Ankles broken to a point where foot rolls inward or outward noticeably</li> </ul>
<b>Feet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foot on iron, resting on ball of foot or in, to the edge of boot heel</li> <li>• Heels down</li> <li>• Toes pointing straight ahead or slightly turned out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Toes only" in iron</li> <li>• Toes down forcing heel up</li> <li>• Toes turned in breaking contact of lower leg</li> <li>• Toes turned too far out</li> </ul>

### **GAITS:**

**The Walk:** Should be a 4-beat gait with the rider in a vertical position with a following hand.

**The Posting Trot:** Figure 8 at trot, demonstrating change of diagonals. At left diagonal, rider should be sitting the saddle when left front leg is on the ground; at right diagonal rider should be sitting the saddle when right front leg is on the ground; when circling clockwise at a trot, rider should be on left diagonal; when circling counter-clockwise, rider should be on right diagonal. The rider should close his/her hip angle to allow his/her torso to follow the horizontal motion of the horse. The upper body should be inclined about 20 degrees in front of the vertical.  
**\*\*\*Rise and fall with the leg on the wall\*\*\***

**Sitting Trot and Canter:** At the sitting trot the upper body is only slightly in front of the vertical. At the canter the body should be positioned slightly more in front of the vertical. As the stride is shortened, the body should be in a slightly more erect position.

**Two Point Position:** The pelvis should be forward, but relaxed, lifting the rider's weight off the horse's back and transferring the weight through the rider's legs. In this position the two points of contact between horse and rider are the rider's legs. Hands should be forward, up the neck, not resting on the neck.

**Hand Gallop:** A three-beat, lengthened canter ridden in two-point position. The legs are on the horse's sides while the seat is held out of the saddle. When at the hand gallop, the rider's angulation will vary somewhat as the horse's stride is shortened and lengthened. A good standard at a normal hand gallop should be about 30 degrees in front of the vertical.

### **DISQUALIFICATIONS:**

- Failure by exhibitor to wear correct number in visible manner
- Willful abuse
- Excessive schooling or training
- Fall by horse or rider
- Illegal use of hands on reins
- Use of prohibited equipment

**FAULTS:** cause for **disqualification**, *except in novice amateur or novice youth classes*, which shall be faults, scored according to severity:

- Head carried too low (such that the poll is below the withers consistently)
- Over-flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical consistently

**SEVERE FAULTS:** (do not disqualify exhibitor)

- Touching horse
- Grabbing any part of the saddle
- Cropping or spurring in front of the shoulder
- Omission or addition of maneuvers
- Turning the wrong way
- Knocking over a cone or working on the wrong side of the cone
- Kicking at other horses, exhibitors or judge
- Severe disobedience or resistance by horse including, but not limited to rearing, bucking or pawing.
- Head carried too high
- Head carried too low (such that the poll is below the withers)
- Over-flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
- Excessive nosing out

**SUGGESTED SCORING:**

SCORING may be on a basis of 0-20 with 1/2 point increments an approximate breakdown follows:

**20:** Excellent equitation including body position and use of aids. Pattern is performed promptly, precisely and smoothly.

**18-19:** Generally excellent performance with one minor fault in appearance and position of exhibitor or execution of the pattern (performance).

**16-17:** Generally good pattern execution and equitation with one minor fault in precision or execution of pattern (performance), or appearance and position of exhibitor.

**14-15:** Average pattern that lacks quickness or precision, or rider has obvious equitation flaws that prevent effective equitation, or commits two or three minor faults in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.

**12-13:** One major fault or several minor faults in the performance and/or appearance and position of exhibitor that precludes effective communication with the horse.

**10-11:** Two major faults or many minor faults in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.

**6-9:** Several major faults or one severe fault in the performance, or appearance and position of exhibitor. Exhibitor demonstrates a complete lack of riding ability or commits a severe fault in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.

**1-5:** Exhibitor commits one or more severe faults in the performance, or appearance and position of exhibitor, but does complete the class and avoids disqualification.

**Example Scoring System:**

<b>Composite</b>		<b>Component (Each Maneuver)</b>		
20 -19	Excellent	5	=	Excellent
18-17	Good	4 ½	=	Good
16-15	Average	4	=	Average
14-13	Below average	3 ½	=	Below Average
12-10	Poor	3	=	Poor
9-6	Off pattern	2 ½	<	Off Pattern
<6	Failure to comply	1 ½	<	Failure to complete

**Example score sheet**

<b>Horse Number</b>					<b>Total Score (20)</b>	<b>Place</b>
<b>1</b>						
<b>2</b>						
<b>3</b>						
<b>4</b>						

*Sources: Colorado State University Judging Guide – Dr. Dave Denniston, AQHA Horse Judging Manual, APHA Rulebook, Dr. Jim Heird, and Texas Tech University Judging Manual – Dr. Kris Wilson*

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