

# Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation

## Horse Shows: Showing in the Trail Class

4H-ANSI-418

The Trail class requires horses to be ridden over a series of obstacles. The variety of obstacles and differences in how patterns are designed make for a challenging and interesting class. The horse and rider are judged on how correctly the horse moves through the course of obstacles. Riding through the obstacles requires a broke horse that is under control of the rider and responsive to the rider's cues. It requires the rider to use very specific cues and the horse to be willing and responsive. To receive credit, a horse must work through the course correctly and with ease, willingness, attentiveness and with reasonable speed. Missteps of the horse's legs in obstacles are penalized. As with any competitive event, success requires preparation, practice and self-evaluation. This 4-H member guide provides questions for you to answer about your knowledge of and ability to perform the trail class. Hopefully, you will have the chance to discuss your answers with others and identify some of the ways others prepare for and perform during shows. You will likely find that a rulebook will be needed, so ask your leader or parent for a copy before you work through the questions.

### How the Class is Judged

The Trail class is judged on the performance of the horse over obstacles, with emphasis on manners, response to the rider and quality of movement. Similar to Reining and Western Riding classes, each obstacle receives a maneuver score ranging from  $-1 \frac{1}{2}$  to  $+1 \frac{1}{2}$ . Missteps, resistance, mannerism problems, poor quality of movement between gaits, or moving excessively slow or fast are errors that led to negative maneuver scores. If the horse completes an obstacle correctly without style or some degree of speed, it will receive a maneuver score of 0. To receive a positive maneuver score, the horse must work through the obstacle correctly and appear willing, attentive and capable of moving to and through the obstacles with little cueing from the rider. The horse should move in a balanced frame, carrying his head and neck in a relaxed and natural position. The sum of the maneuver scores are added or subtracted from a score of 70. Penalties, as outlined in the rules, will be deducted from this sum to determine the overall pattern score. Receiving a positive score (greater than 70) is fairly difficult because of the potential for multiple penalties at each obstacle.

### 'Evaluating Myself'

Being able to objectively evaluate your actions is an important skill for success. This guide contains a list of questions to help you develop self-evaluation skills. Some questions may not have a single, correct answer. Some follow-up questions for your own thought and possible group discussion are provided for each question.

By completing this guide you will learn more about yourself and your actions to help in future decision making. Completing this with a group will allow you to learn from others experiences. Group discussions should be positive, encouraging and non-judgmental, so you and others will feel comfortable speaking with one another. Remember, different methods and actions are not necessarily wrong, and there isn't necessarily only one right or wrong answer to all the questions.

### Do You Know the Equipment Rules?

Trail, as with all judged classes, has specific rules about allowable tack and attire. Which of the following are allowed?

- A rope attached to the saddle
- Leg wraps on the horse
- A tiedown
- Two hands on the reins
- A snaffle bit
- An English saddle

*Thoughts and discussion:* You may have answered 'depends' on some of the choices above. Explain when or how it would depend. When is it allowed to ride with two-hands on the reins?

## Obstacles

Show rules will usually require that certain obstacles be part of every trail pattern. Which of the following are required for trail at the shows you have shown at recently?

- Opening, moving through and closing a gate
- Riding over logs or poles
- Backing through an obstacle
- Side passing
- Walking over a bridge

*Thoughts and discussion:* What other obstacles have you seen or ridden through as part of a trail class at a horse show? Which obstacles do you like the best? Which one is the hardest to do correctly?

## How Do You Cue Your Horse?

Think about riding to, going through and moving away from a gate obstacle. Explain how you cue your horse to work through the obstacle.

*Thoughts and discussion:* How do cues differ when instructions call for you to pull the gate to you when opening it verses instructions to push it away from you when opening it.

## How Do You Cue Your Horse?

One of the obstacles may require you to walk your horse into a square made from four logs, stop inside the square, complete a full turnaround and walk out the other side of the square. Explain the path and movement of the horse's legs as he moves through the obstacle.

*Thoughts and discussion:* How do or would you cue a horse to complete a full turnaround? You decide what direction of turn. Be specific about your hands, legs and other ways you might cue.

## Riding Over Poles

The current trend for trail patterns is to have several logs or poles to move over at the walk, trot or lope. The distance between poles in an obstacle is specified in most rules. Which gait is the specified distance the widest? Which gait the narrowest between the poles? Do you know the allowable distances for spacing poles to be walked, trotted or loped over?

*Thoughts and discussion:* Demonstrate on foot, the preferred steps a horse would take when correctly walking over four poles in one obstacle. Where and in what order does each of the legs step?

*You Draw a Pattern:*  
Use the arena to draw a trail pattern with six obstacles of your choosing. If you can, provide the distances between and the spacing within obstacles.

