

## Donated by the OPRC Freedom Chapter Judged Pleasure Trail Ride Information Sheet

### What is a "Judged" Pleasure Trail Ride?

A Judged Pleasure Ride covers approximately 10 miles. Each rider may proceed at his/her own pace, there is no time limit. The trail is well flagged with surveying tape, and a drag rider follows the last competitor to make sure everyone makes it home.

Along the trail are 10 obstacle stations, usually announced by a paper plate sign with the station's number. At each station is a patient and kind volunteer judge who is spending his/her entire day sitting at that spot watching you ride by. (Please thank them on your way through!) Each station is designed to provide some type of obstacle one might conceivably encounter on a pleasure trail ride.

How the rider and horse negotiate the obstacle is judged. Each judge has been instructed on some general points to look for, as well as particular actions either good or bad specific to that obstacle.

For a good score (7-9 points) a judge would look for the horse that willingly waits its turn without crowding or displaying herd behaviors, proceeds through the obstacle or chore with attention to its job and its rider (ears pricked, looking where its feet are going), and who's rider is cheerful, confident, and patient with his/her mount and proceeds through the obstacle with forethought and safety. An excellent score (10 points) would include the horse/rider team taking the perfect, centered, path through the obstacle.

### General Points

- Attire: Rider to wear boots; helmet is required. Tack to be maintained in good order, with stirrups and safe girths. Typical, casual, safe trail riding gear is all that is required.
- Reins: For Western riders, loose rein is desired, but no penalty for shorter reins. Could make the difference between a 9 and a 9+, which can be a tie breaker. For English riders, light contact is desired, with no penalty for loose reins. Looser reins ("on the buckle") could make the difference between a 9 and a 9+, and be a tie breaker. In all cases, tight reins and clear holding back of the horse over or through any obstacle are penalized.
- Rider awareness: the rider should be paying attention to the directions with the horse positioned at a safe distance from the judge.

**Skills:** The following abilities will help riders negotiate obstacles successfully. This list is meant only to provide a reference for riders. Riders and horses may need to perform the following skills in the negotiation of trail obstacles:

- Responds to halt cues without argument
- Horse stands quietly when asked.
- Execute all gaits calmly and as directed. All gaits natural to a breed are acceptable.
- Be able to move the horse laterally [side to side].
- Make turns on the forehand and/or hindquarters.
- Be able to back the horse in a straight line and/or around corners. When backing, the rider should demonstrate awareness by looking in the direction they are traveling.

### Judging – Score Sheet Standards

- Jumping: Jumping on, into, off of, through, or over any obstacle is a major fault.

- **Refusal:** The definition of refusal is a horse that moves their feet away, in any direction, from the obstacle. Looking and snorting are not considered refusals. If a horse refuses at an obstacle, the participant will be allowed a total of three attempts to complete. Each refusal results in a 3-point loss at that obstacle. If the horse refuses a third time, the participant is disqualified from the obstacle.
- **Evaluating the obstacle:** The rider should evaluate the obstacle before proceeding, and during the obstacle. Inattention should be penalized with a notation on the score sheet.
- **Horse awareness:** It is a fault if the horse is too aware by spooking or spinning or if the horse is unaware and is just "going through the motions". If a horse stumbles because of lack of awareness, team will be penalized. If the horse lunges through the obstacle or damages it due to nervousness, team will be heavily penalized. Team will not be penalized for a mild stumble due to rough terrain.
- **Horses' Response to Cues:** When the rider applies aids or cues to the horse, the horse is to react appropriately. The rider should not have to resort to very strong aids to obtain a response from the horse, nor should cues make the horse over reacts. The horse should approach an obstacle as cued (i.e., straight on, side pass) and not avoid direct approach.
- **Balance:** This applies to both rider and horse. The rider should be well balanced in the saddle. For uphill, the rider should lean slightly forward with legs balanced under rider and not hitting horse's flanks, and deep in the saddle and but not hitting the back of cante. Rider may also assume a half seat or stand in the stirrups, as long as the same proper balance is applied. For downhill, the rider should lean slightly back. The rider is not to lean excessively forward, back or sideways. The horse is to be balanced while negotiating obstacles. For downhill obstacle hindquarters should be under the horse and the horse should not lean on forehead.
- **On Course:** The rider is to follow directions as given and stay on course. Excessive response, avoidance, or rider's misunderstanding of the direction will be penalized. The participant must remain within the boundaries of the obstacle as marked. Avoiding or going outside marked boundaries constitutes being off course.
- **Bypass or Disqualify:** It is the participant's responsibility to bypass any obstacle they deem as beyond their team's skill level. Safety and common sense should always be kept in the participant's mind. A rider choosing to bypass receives no points for that obstacle. The team has three opportunities to attempt an obstacle; with 3 points to be penalized for failing each attempt. After the horse refuses three times the rider is disqualified for this obstacle and can receive no higher a score than a 1, depending on level of rider skill at the obstacle.

**Scoring** - Scoring values will be assessed per each section of judging per obstacle as follows:

10	Perfect, no discernible mistakes, optimum path through the obstacle.
9	Very good, one very minor mistake, such as a less than optimum path or visible rider aids.
8	Good, two to three very minor mistakes.
7	Above average, a number of minor mistakes, or one-two big mistakes
6	Above average, skills need development
5	Adequate job, obvious mistakes
4	Below average, not well negotiated, but safe attempt made
3	Negotiated poorly, beyond team's skill level, made a good attempt
2	Negotiated poorly, beyond team's skill level, but made an attempt
1	Not successfully negotiated, beyond team's skill level
0	Disqualified, did not complete obstacle in reasonable time, chose to bypass

## Judged Pleasure Trail Ride Scoring Guidelines

Obstacle	Optimum Method	Typical Penalties/Scores Scores are calculated as subtractions from the perfect score of 10	
Safety	Safety of the horse/rider team is paramount.	A rider on an unsafe horse, or an unsafe rider, will be penalized. Rider choosing to negotiate the obstacle in an unsafe manner will also be penalized.	Horse negotiating the obstacle unsafely (such as blindly and carelessly jumping a stream or ditch, or running down a hill) will be penalized heavily.
Riding	A rider handling his horse through challenging terrain, over logs, through tight spaces, etc., shall make sure he or she has a secure position prior to asking the horse to negotiate the obstacle. All obstacles to be negotiated at a walk.		
Approach to an obstacle	Horse should wait quietly until asked to begin the approach. Rider will announce their rider number to the judge during the approach, and wait for clearance from the judge before beginning. Approach should be performed steadily at a walk, without hesitation, although the horse taking a good look at the obstacle is a plus, as long as forward motion is sustained.	Horse should not meander or appear to avoid the obstacle. Rider should not need significant leg or voice aids.	Jigging and circling while waiting will be penalized, as will rushing the approach.
Leaving an obstacle	Horse continues past the obstacle quietly, at a walk, past a point at which any horse following is neither inhibited nor overtly encouraged by the position. Care should be taken to ensure that the following horse has plenty of room to continue along the trail without a hold-up or having to brush by too closely.	Waiting for a riding partner will not be penalized. Waiting too closely will, and may affect the score of the partner as well.	Jigging while waiting will also be penalized.
Negotiating an obstacle	Horse/rider team takes a deliberate and considered path through the obstacle that provides the judge a clear view, is safe, is performed at a walk, and meets the challenge of the obstacle. For example, moving through a row of logs at the lower point is a perfectly legitimate path to take. Moving through the same row at the very center is the optimum path, and will generally receive a higher score, although in some cases, small ponies should not be penalized for riding the lower end.	Jumping, rushing, refusing (including hesitating), dancing, and displaying extreme nervousness will be penalized.	Jumping over, through, or out of a creek or ditch crossing will also be penalized, although a strong effort that is not a jump will not be penalized.
Uphill	Before beginning ascent, horse and rider focus on a finding a safe path. Rider is to be positioned appropriately, maintaining the center of balance, but in a forward position, a half seat, or standing in the stirrups. No penalty for holding the mane or neck to secure the forward position. No advantage to standing over using a half seat or forward position. Horse to negotiate slope in a safe manner, without meandering or wandering back and forth.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unbalanced – 1 or 2 Unsafe – 5 Nervousness – 2-4	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Galloping – 5 to 7 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Downhill	Before beginning descent, horse and rider focus on a finding a safe path. The rider to be positioned appropriately maintaining the center of balance, in a slightly weight back posture. Riders may use a hand on the saddle to support themselves, but must not do so in such a way as to unbalance the horse. Horse to negotiate the slope in a safe manner, without meandering or wandering back and forth.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unbalanced – 1 or 2 Unsafe – 5 Nervousness – 2-4	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Galloping – 5 to 7 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Water crossing	The horse should walk quietly through the water. Horses will not be penalized for stopping to drink. Horses will not be penalized for acknowledging the obstacle before entering it.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unsafe – 5 Jumping into or out of water – 4 Pawing in water – 2 Attempting to roll - 4	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Galloping – 5 to 7 Hesitating – 1 Refusal – 3 Nervousness – 2-4
Mud crossing	The horse should walk quietly through the mud, as close to centered as possible. Jumping or rushing will be penalized.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unsafe – 5	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Galloping – 5 to 7

		Jumping into or out of mud – 4 Nervousness – 2-4	Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Step over / Logs	This is a forward motion obstacle. Horse to look at an obstacle and proceed over carefully, avoiding striking the obstacle. Size of an animal relative to an obstacle to be considered. Small horses and ponies not to be penalized for hopping very tall logs, if they otherwise negotiate the obstacle calmly and with deliberation.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unbalanced – 1 or 2 Unsafe – 5 Touching logs – 1 or 2 Walking on or moving logs – 4-6	Nervousness – 2-4 Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Galloping – 5 to 7 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Bridge	The horse should walk across quietly. No penalty for acknowledging the obstacle before starting to cross. Horse should step on and off the bridge quietly.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unsafe – 5 Jumping onto, off of, or over bridge – 4 Nervousness – 2-4	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Ditch	Horse should acknowledge the ditch on approach, and slide or step down with weight on haunches. Rider should be in the downhill position. Moving out of the ditch should be taken at a walk, not a jump, and the rider should assume the uphill position. Thus, the ditch has three stages: downhill, level, and uphill.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unsafe – 5 Jumping into or out of ditch – 4 Rider not in correct position – 1-2	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Hesitating – 1 Refusal – 3 Nervousness – 2-4
Brush	The brush obstacle tests the horse's willingness to push through natural material that might be found on any trail without strong reaction to the material touching its legs or belly. Rider should negotiate the obstacle through the center. Dancing or getting nervous due to the brush touching its legs or body will be penalized.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unsafe – 5 Jumping into or out of brush – 4 Nervousness – 2-4	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Sidepassing	The horse/rider team approaches the pole/log and prepares a plan. Team assumes a position next to the obstacle, and sidepasses cleanly over it. Rider may ask the judge if the obstacle may be crossed from either direction. Clipping the pole/log, moving it, or stepping over it during the sidepass will be penalized.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Uneven progress – 2 Stepping over the pole -4 Nervousness – 2-4	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3
Backing	In all cases, optimum path is centered, with any turns negotiated quietly and directly with no overcorrection of the horse. The backing in obstacle may alternatively be a backing through exercise, with the team completing the backing exercise out the back of the backing frame. The backing out obstacle involves rider entering all the way into the obstacle, as far as possible, then backing the horse out before turning down the trail.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Meandering – 2 Unsafe – 5 Nervousness – 2-4 Not going all the way in – 2-5	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Hesitating – 1 Refusal – 3 Stepping outside obstacle – 3-5
Gate	Competitors may be required to negotiate a gate either mounted or dismounted. The horse and rider combination will move through the obstacle quietly, deliberately and under the rider's direction.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Nervousness – 2-4
Drag or Pull	The rider may hold the rope or dally it. No tying hard and fast. The rider should demonstrate awareness by looking at both the drag obstacle and the direction they are going. The horse or rider should never become entangled in the rope. Horse to stand quietly during preparation then pull or drag an item quietly and in control. Wrapping the rope around the rider's working hand is to be severely penalized.	Shortening reins halfway through – 2 Tight rein – 4 Hesitating – 1 Refusal - 3	Obvious aids, mild – 1 Obvious aids, strong - 4-5 Rushing – 2 or 3 Nervousness – 2-4