

About Show Jumping

1. Walking the course.

On the day of a show jumping competition, arrive well ahead of time in order to walk the course. Walking the course means to walk around the set of jumps, without your horse, in order to memorise the track you should take. Show-jumping etiquette (which you will regularly see ignored, but you do need to be taught it anyway) is that you must walk the course wearing the clothes you will be wearing during the competition, including your helmet, boots and whip if you will be using a whip when you ride. Do not jump the jumps as you walk around, you are supposed to approach the jump, look at it, then walk around it and continue to the next jump. You should look not just at the jump, but at everything the horse will be looking at as it approaches the jump for anything that might cause your horse to be alarmed, or to misbehave. What will your horse be thinking about the jump? Is there a frightening looking tractor just on the other side of the bunting? Is there a smoking BBQ alongside? You may need to anticipate your horse's alarm and push them harder than normal. Follow the course in jump number order, consider what the ground is like underfoot on both sides of the jump, and on any corner ... will your horse be likely to slip? Do you need to slow down and be more careful in that area? If there is a different course for a jump off, make sure you walk that course too, and rehearse the jump off in your mind – where can you cut corners to make a faster time? (if fast time is what this competition requires). It is useful to take a pen with you, and to write the jump off on your hand. Not so that you can read it while riding (that doesn't work very well), but so that you can rehearse it while waiting for your turn.

2. Flags.

Make sure you familiarise yourself with the position of the start and finish flags. Rehearse in your mind the path you will take around the jumps when you warm your horse up. You must not go through the START flags until you are ready to start your course (and if you have gone through BACKWARDS because your horse is overly excited then be sure to turn around and get going on the course ASAP!). You must go through the FINISH flags in order to finish your course, but it does not matter if you go through the finish flags in the middle of your course. The clock starts when your horse's nose passes the line between the start flags, and it stops when your horse's nose passes through the line between the finish flags AFTER you have jumped the last jump in the course. Sometimes the start and finish flags are the SAME.

RED flags MUST ALWAYS be passed so that they are on your RIGHT HAND SIDE, white flags are on your LEFT HAND SIDE. In properly set up competitions all jumps will be flagged, and sometimes (usually in cross country courses) there are stand-alone "compulsory flags" which you have to include in your course rather than cut a corner. So it is important to always remember - **Red flags on your right.**

If you pass a flag on the wrong side, you must retrace your steps and pass it on the correct side before you jump the next jump. Otherwise you will be considered to have made an error of course, and you will be eliminated.

3. While you are waiting for your turn.

If it is possible for you to avoid going first – do. Take the time to watch three or four people jump the course before you. It helps you remember the course, and it also demonstrates which jumps or combinations of jumps are difficult. Do those horses refuse at any jump? Any sign of a horse baulking at a jump is enough to let you know that you need to push your own horse a bit harder at that point. How many strides does that horse take between the two jumps of a double – did it have any difficulty? Is that horse about the same size as your own horse and do you think that you will need to slow your horse up to shorten stride, or push it to lengthen stride when it is your turn? There's a lot to learn from watching other rounds.

But – if it is wet underfoot, don't wait for long, or the ground will become chopped up and slippery!

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4. In the Marshalling Yard.

Before you start your jumping round, you will be given the opportunity to warm your horse up. Usually, someone will call you into the warm-up area – only a certain number of horses will be allowed in the area at a time. There will be a specified direction that you are to ride in, and you must stick to that – no turning around and riding in the opposite direction to the other horses in the area – space is usually confined, and that can be dangerous. The practice jumps should be flagged so that the red flag is on your right! And that is the way they must be jumped. Leave lots of room between you and the horse in front of you. Don't jump a jump that has just been partially knocked down – circle and wait for the warm-up ring attendant to put it up again.

5. At the Judge

Now the marshaller has called you into the ring. Go up to the judge, salute and say your name. Wait to be acknowledged. If you have any queries about the course or the rules, if there has been conflicting advice given to you by the crowd of kids waiting to ride then **ASK THE JUDGE**. It's the only way to be sure. Once the judge has acknowledged you, you may start your ride. Do not go through the start flags. Listen hard for the bell (or whatever substitute signal-maker is in use). Once you hear the bell you have **60 seconds** to start your round. If you don't go through the start flags within that 60 seconds you will be eliminated. Sixty seconds is usually long enough to canter once around the course, or to trot a large circle. In front of the judge. On your warm-up circle you are allowed to ride a path through the jumps, but you are **NOT** allowed to obviously **SHOW** a jump to your horse. It is advisable to ride your horse past any jump that you think might alarm him, but you can't actually stop at it and let the horse sniff it etc!

6. Rules of the course.

Faults for a **KNOCK-DOWN** are incurred in show-jumping if:

- a) the horse knocks down any part of the jump such that it falls to the ground. Poles can be displaced, but if they don't fall, there are no faults. If a pole falls **AFTER** you have crossed the finish line, it is not counted, unless (an interesting technicality!) it is the **LAST** jump, in which case you better get out of the arena in a hurry, because it **WILL** be counted if it starts to fall **BEFORE** you cross the finish line, and hits the ground **BEFORE** you leave the arena!
- b) the horse puts its foot in the water at a water jump.

Faults for a **DISOBEDIENCE** are incurred if:

- c) the horse runs out to either side of the jump in such a way as to avoid having to jump it or
- d) the horse stops directly in front of the jump, refusing to jump it – including times when the horse slides into a jump, and knocks it down. In such a case, the judge will ring the bell, and you must circle your horse in the ring while the jump is being rebuilt. The judge will ring the bell again when it is time for you to try the jump again.

If you have a refusal or runout **AT THE SECOND OR THIRD FENCE** in a **COMBINATION**, then you must start again from the **FIRST** fence, and jump the complete combination in one go. **ELIMINATION** occurs if:

- a) you jumped a jump **BEFORE** crossing the start line or **BEFORE** the bell was rung.
- b) you **DIDN'T** cross the start line within 60 seconds of the bell
- c) you **SHOW** your horse a jump before the start, or after you have had a disobedience.
- d) you jump a jump which was **NOT** included in the course, or you jump the jumps which **ARE** included in the wrong order or in the wrong direction, or you **MISS** a jump that should have been included.
- e) you forget to restart from the **FIRST FENCE** of a combination after a disobedience on that combination.
- f) you exceed the time limit
- g) you do not cross the finish line before leaving the arena (and this includes jumping the bunting **OUT** of the arena during the course of your round!)
- h) you have had a total of 3 disobediences (2 at higher grades in some competitions)

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i) you receive unauthorised assistance – your friends & relatives can clap and cheer, but they can't coach you from the sidelines. You *can* (and at higher level competitions most certainly *will*) be eliminated if mum calls out 'slow down' because she is stop-watching your optimum time round, or if dad yells 'the bell has gone!' when you are waiting to start your round.

j) you fall off or your horse sustains an injury that prevents it from continuing.

The judge will ring the bell if you are eliminated. You are expected to stop your round, and leave the arena as soon as you have been eliminated, but it is customary, if elimination is due to a **DISOBEDIENCE**, to allow a rider to jump another obstacle on the way out of the ring ... essentially so that the horse is less likely to think it got away with that disobedience.

Also be aware that judges can **DISQUALIFY** you if you are riding dangerously in the warm-up area, if you treat your horse cruelly, if you warm your horse up over non-approved jumps in an area other than the warm up area, if you show your horse any of the jumps on the course, or if you enter the arena on foot once the competition has started.

It is never advisable to talk back to a judge! Take your medicine politely and retire with good grace even if you disagree with what you've been told! You are usually able to lodge protests with the organisers of an event – don't do it with the judge while the competition is in progress.

7. Grading

To enter any pony club show jumping competition, other than at beginner's level, you must be graded. A grading day is usually held at the beginning of the pony club year, and there should be other opportunities to be regraded during the year. Grading is done for a horse and rider combination. You cannot carry your grade over from your previous horse to your new one – you must be re-graded on the new horse before entering a competition. To be up-graded on the same horse you will need to be watched again by a qualified pony club instructor and, when upgrading from C to B and B to A, you may also require performance points, awarded in competitions.

These conditions are set out on the performance card that you will be given if graded C or above.

The grades and their heights / widths are as follows:

Grade	Height	Width
E	0.45m	0.50m
D	0.60m	0.75m
C	0.75m	0.90m
B	0.90m	1.20m
A	1.05m	1.50m

8. Optimum Time

Pony Club competitions at E and D grade level are always run to Optimum Time. This means that you must not complete your round too quickly, or too slowly, and the winner of the competition will be the rider who had a clear round in the time closest to the Optimum Time. The intention of this time restriction in the lower grades is to ensure that young riders don't attempt to race around the course against-the-clock. Instead they are encouraged to ride at a sensible pace, and present their horses to each jump correctly. Optimum Time is usually calculated at 350 metres per second over the length of the course. This can be very hard to judge, and it relies substantially on the course the course-builder takes when measuring the length of the course. A handy hint here is that you should watch the course builder when they are measuring the course (usually they walk around with a rolling wheel on the end of a stick). Try to memorize which way they went – depending on your horse's personal style (fast / slow) you should follow their path (wider turns / tighter turns). Optimum Time *usually* means a slow canter, with wide turns. Another handy hint is to watch and time some of the riders who go before you. How does their speed compare with your horse? And were they too fast or too slow at that speed? The Optimum time is usually posted on the course plan.

Sometimes Optimum Time applies at higher grades too. Always make sure whether your event is under optimum time or not. If you are unsure **ASK THE JUDGE!**

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Glossary – Time Allowed – you must complete the course within the time allowed, or you incur **Time Faults** – ¼ of a penalty for every second outside the time allowed. Maximum time allowed is usually 10 seconds more than the optimum time, Minimum time 10 seconds less. In the first round of a competition, of course, this penalty means you didn't get a clear round and won't be invited to go in the jump-off. In the jump-off it means that the competitor closest to optimum time wins. Where times are equal, above and below the optimum time, the rider *below* the optimum time wins.

When riding in an optimum time competition, you are not allowed to wear a watch, or any other timepiece. In practice, it is pretty impossible to do a good show-jumping round while checking your watch anyway, and looking to mum for an indication as to whether you are too fast or too slow doesn't work either! Practice the pace you need to do on your horse. And practice good sportsmanship – optimum time is quite a lottery, you may be on a great showjumper, and never win a prize because you can't get the time spot on.

9. Types of Competition

There are many different types of competition – see the Blue Book for more details. This is a precis of the most common ones held in our zone. Always check the rules published on the day of competition – they DO vary!

Competition over two rounds – all competitors ride in the first round, and then all competitors who were not eliminated ride again in a second round. The second round might be over a different course, in which case another course-walk would be held. Competitors are placed by adding the penalty points (which includes time penalties if 'against the clock' is specified) incurred over both rounds. For those sharing first place a jump-off against the clock will be held over a shorter course, and the jumps may be increased in size. If the competition is expected to be large, there may be a limit as to the number of competitors admitted to the second round, and this will be determined in accordance with penalty points incurred in the first round.

Competition in two phases – a competitor rides the first part of the course and, if clear over that phase, receives a bell from the judge, allowing them to continue immediately over the second phase of the course. **Power and Speed** is a competition over two phases where the first phase must be completed within a time allowed, while the second phase calls for the fastest time (A,B,C grades) or optimum time (D & E grades) over that section of the course.

Take Your Own Line – the rider must jump every jump in the course, but can do so in any order. The winner will be the person who completes the course in the fastest / optimum time. The start and finish lines can be crossed in either direction, and jumps can be jumped in either direction, unless otherwise specified by a one-way arrow on the course plan. Take particular note in your course walk of jumps that must be jumped in a certain direction – you will be eliminated if you jump them the wrong way.

AM3 – first round not against the clock, but with time allowed, jump-off against the clock in the event of equal penalties in the first round.

AM4 – like AM3, but the first jump-off is not against the clock, and there will be a second jump-off against the clock if there is still a tie after the first jump-off.

AM5 – first round is against the clock and if there is a tie (unusual) there will be a second jump-off against the clock.

AM6 – like AM5, but goes on the a second jump-off if required (even less likely!)

10. More Glossary

Table A – Faults penalised in points – 3 points for 1st disobedience, 6 points for 2nd disobedience, 4 points for a knock-down or foot in water.

Table C – Faults penalised in seconds, usually about 3 seconds for a knock-down on a standard course. No faults for a disobedience where jump is not knocked down (due time taken to represent to the jump).