



Photo by Alex Palmer

# HOW TO GO WITH THE FLOW AT THE HORSE SHOW

THE MAVERICK FARMS GUIDE TO HORSE SHOW ETIQUETTE





### What is a horse show?

A horse show is a judged exhibition of horse and rider offering an opportunity to test what has been practiced at home. For this reason, horse and rider teams should participate in classes at or slightly below the level at which they have been practicing at home.

### Signing up

Shows typically require riders to enter before the date of the show to avoid a penalty fee. Choose appropriate classes in which to participate by reviewing the premium (horse show schedule).

### How do you know which classes to enter?

It is best to attend a horse show with a trainer. Your trainer can help advise you of the proper classes to enter. In a hunt seat show, the classes are typically divided into the following categories.

- Equitation Flat. Judged on the form and ability of the rider as he or she walks, trots and canters the horse both ways in the arena.
- Hunter Under Saddle. A "flat" class. Judged on presentation, manners, movement and rideability of the horse at a walk, trot and canter both ways in the arena.



- Equitation over fences. Judged on the form and ability of the rider as he or she rides a course of eight fences. Fence heights differ and are listed in the premium (show schedule).
- Hunters. An over fences class judged on the presentation, manners, form and rideability of the horse over a course of eight fences. Fence heights differ and are listed in the premium

(show schedule).

- Jumpers. An over fences class judged on accuracy and speed over a course of eight or more fences. Penalties are given when a horse knocks a pole, refuses a

jump, or goes too slow on the course. The winner is the horse who has the least number of penalties and the fastest time on the course (or jump off).

Make sure you do not exhaust your horse with too many classes. Four jumping and two flat is a reasonable load for a one day show if your horse is in good condition and has been jumping the same height or slightly higher several times per week.

### Preparing the horse

A horse show is the time to show off your horse. Here is a checklist to make sure your horse is at his or her best.

1. **Shoes.** Arrange to have your horse shod or trimmed one week prior to the show if necessary. If your horse is due for shoes the week after the show, consider shoeing early to avoid a lost shoe or sore feet at the horse show.
2. **Clipping.** Clip the whiskers on your horse's muzzle, hair in his ears, bridle path, hair around coronet band, and lower legs. You can do this yourself or hire a professional clipper (ask for a show clip).
3. **Mane.** Pull your horse's mane. It should be two to three inches long and lying on the right side of the neck. If your horse has an unruly mane, consider training it by rubber banding it so it lays flat on the right side of the neck. Start training the mane a few days before the show. Bands must be removed before you get to the show grounds.
4. **Tack.** Make sure you try new or "new to you" tack on your horse. Adjust it and ride with it for at least a week before the show. All new tack should be well-oiled and cleaned the day before the show.
5. **Washing the horse.** Wash her the day before and make sure you put a clean blanket or day sheet on her so she does not get dirty when she rolls. Your horse should be sparkling clean for the show. Scrub the mane and tail and make sure they are brushed and shining. If you use Show Sheen *never* put it on your horse's back --it may cause your saddle to slide back or to the side.



### Preparing the rider

Hunt seat riding is a very conservative sport. The idea is to conform, not to stand out. Any equipment or brightly-colored apparel should be left at home. Here is your list to dress for success.

1. **Boots.** You can wear long black field boots or short black paddock boots with black garter straps. Make sure your boots are properly fitted. Regardless of the boots you choose, they must be cleaned and polished, free of mud and dirt and buffed to a shine. Never put shoe polish on the inside of your boots. It will come off on your saddle, pad, and your horse.



Consider taking your boots to a shoe repair shop to have them professionally polished.

2. **Helmet.** Make sure you wear a black or grey suede ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials)/SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) approved helmet with a snugly fitting chin strap. All hair must be secured by a hair net (matching your hair color) and tucked in the helmet.

3. **Britches.** Khaki is the color of choice. Britches must be clean and look relatively new. If you wear paddock boots, make sure you wear jodhpurs, made to be worn with paddock boots.

4. **Hunt coat.** Navy blue is the best choice. The coat should fit the rider well.

5. **Show shirt.** White, light blue or other conservative colors are good choices. Go with long sleeve and make sure your collar is monogrammed with your initials or your name. Your shirt must be tucked in.

6. **Belt.** This is the accessory you can have fun with. It is hidden under the jacket, but many riders wear belts with sparkles and rhinestones. Just make sure the belt is comfortable and fits on the britches.



Try all your show clothing on the week before the show to make sure it fits, is clean and in good shape.

### Packing for the show

It is a good idea to gather all your show items together and pack them in the car or trailer the night before the show. Here are some handy packing lists.

Packing List (Horse)	Packing List (Rider)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saddle (soaped and oiled)</li> <li>• Show quality bridle</li> <li>• Show pad (should be white, clean)</li> <li>• Short crop</li> <li>• Halter (if riding horse to show)</li> <li>• Equitation boots</li> <li>• Splint boots and bell boots for schooling</li> <li>• Food for the horse</li> <li>• Treats/supplements for the horse</li> <li>• Bucket for water</li> <li>• Grooming supplies (brushes/hoof pick)</li> <li>• Cloth</li> <li>• Show sheen</li> <li>• Hoof polish</li> <li>• Bute or Banamine if multi day show</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helmet</li> <li>• Show shirt</li> <li>• Hunt coat</li> <li>• Britches</li> <li>• Belt</li> <li>• Boots</li> <li>• Hairnet</li> <li>• Spurs</li> <li>• Gloves</li> <li>• Show crop (short black)</li> <li>• Boot polisher (travel size)</li> <li>• Checks</li> <li>• Cash</li> <li>• Camera</li> <li>• Sunglasses</li> <li>• Sweatshirt</li> <li>• Sun screen</li> </ul>

### Helpful hints for staying organized

Keep the following in a “show bag” or “show trunk” and use them only at horse shows

- White saddle pad
- Show bridle
- Show martingale
- Leather girth
- Equitation boots
- Short crop
- Show boots
- Show helmet

### Getting to the show

You will either ride your horse to the show or have him trailered. Either way, you should arrive at the show with plenty of time to check in at the show office, and pick up your number. It’s also a good idea to settle your horse into the show grounds by lunging him or walking him around and learn your first course. If the show offers warm-up rounds or allows you to ride in the arena before the show starts, it is a good idea to participate in warm ups or have your trainer ride your horse.

### Riding in the show

Success in the show takes careful planning. Here is a suggested timetable to help you plan your day. Remember to check with your trainer because timetables vary depending upon what is best for your horse.

- 2 hours before your first class (or warm up round): arrive at show and check in.
- 1 hour before your first class: get all your show clothing on and learn your course.
- 45 minutes before your first class: start getting your horse ready
- 30 minutes before your first class: begin warming up your horse.
- Before your other classes-make sure you know your courses: start memorizing the course for the next class right after you finish a course.



### Horse show expenses

Finally, it is important to understand what types of expenses you will be incurring at a horse show. The list below should give you an idea of the different expenses you may incur.

- **Trailer**ing. Cost of hauling the horse to and from the show.
- **Schooling**. Fee paid to your trainer for working with you at the show. This is typically a daily fee.



- **Class fees**. You will pay a fee for each class you enter.
- **Show fees**. There are certain mandatory fees you will pay just for entering the show. These fees can include drug testing fee, office fee, grounds fee, association non member fees.

- **Late fees.** Penalties incurred if you enter the show after entries are due.
- **Grooming.** If you have groom service, a daily fee is assessed, plus a 10% tip per day is recommended.
- **Lease fee.** If you are leasing a horse, you will typically pay an extra fee to the lessor for showing the horse.
- **Stall fee.\*** Cost for a stall to keep your horse in at the show.
- **Shavings and feed.\*** If you have a stall, you will also need to purchase shavings and feed. Sometimes this is split between all the horses at in the barn attending the show and charged on your show bill.
- **Trainer expenses.\*** Parking, hotel and other show related expenses are split between all horses in the barn attending the show.
- **Medication for horse.** It is kind to give your horse Bute or Banamine after he has worked hard at a show. Make sure to check with your trainer for “legal” doses. Some horses need additional medications such as Adequine or Legend prior to a show. Do not give any medication to your horse without discussing specific dosage and timing with your trainer. If your horse is given an illegal dose of medication, not only are you stripped of your ribbons, but your trainer can incur significant monetary fines and be banned from horse shows for one year.

\* Mostly charged for multi-day shows.

