

# IEA HUNT SEAT EQUITATION JUDGING GUIDELINES

To be used by and distributed  
to IEA Judges, Stewards,  
Show Hosts and Coaches

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*In loving memory of Nancy Kohler-Cunningham, who dedicated her life to  
educating young equestrians. Nancy was a long-time member and supporter  
of the IEA. She was loved by many and is sorely missed.*



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## IEA Hunt Seat Equitation Judging Guidelines

Welcome to the world of judging IEA Hunt Seat shows. This guide is meant to give you some information regarding the format of these shows and what you will see in the ring. You will find that there are some differences (*as well as similarities*) between judging these types of shows and other shows.

Questions regarding IEA protocol, horse use, courses and testing may be raised with the steward. The show steward will watch horses warm up, help management decide their class assignments, and enforce the rules of the IEA. The show steward may share any horse behavior pertinent to judging rides on those specific horses. A good relationship with the show steward can help the judge's day go smoothly.

**Judging:** This is an equitation-based discipline. The riders are being scored on their overall equitation, horsemanship, finesse, and effectiveness on the horse. According to IEA rule 7101: "Riders will be judged on seat, hands and ability to control and show the horse. Results as shown by performance of the horse are NOT necessarily to be considered more important than the method used by the rider in obtaining them." The horse's jumping style and way of going should not be judged.

**Format:** IEA shows utilize a draw format. Riders do not know the horses they will be riding prior to the show:

- Riders may ride different horses for flat and fences, or could draw the same horse.
- Riders and coaches have access to a horse description list that includes tips on riding the horse.
- The horse description list also includes a list of which artificial aids may be used.
- Prior to over fences classes, riders may take two unjudged schooling jumps.
- After the two warm up jumps, riders will begin their course. If warm up jumps are in the show arena, judges note when the course begins, and recognize that warm-up jumps should not influence their judging of the course.
- Prior to flat classes, riders are only permitted to adjust their stirrup length. There is NO warm up before flat classes. Riders entering the ring for a flat class must enter at a walk and remain at the walk until given further direction (Rule 4502.4).



**Tack:** The horse provider determines the appropriate tack for the horse, including if a crop or spurs are optional. *(They are never required).*

- NO restrictions on types of bits. (Rule 4506.7- #2)
- Martingales are allowed on all horses and in flat classes (standing, running and German).
- Draw reins, homemade tie-downs and elastic training aids are NOT allowed. (Rule 4506.7- #5)
- Riders and coaches may NOT adjust ANY tack or equipment except stirrup length, but may ask a show steward or horse provider to check it. (Rule 4502.2)

**Horses:** IEA shows will have a variety of horse types being used throughout the show. Please keep in mind that it is not the horse being judged, rather the performance the rider gets out of the horse. As a judge, you should feel that the horses in each class are appropriate for the level of rider in the class.

- Upper level classes may have highly trained horses, but also may have green, sensitive or challenging horses.
- Lower level classes should have more patient, forgiving horses who can tolerate an error, but these horses may be hard to get going and/or may break gait more frequently.
- Horses are NOT required to have a flying lead change in any IEA competition.
- Horses should be safe and serviceably sound.
- If a judge questions the suitability or soundness of a horse, they can discuss this with the steward.
- It is common to see a horse show in more than one trip in an over fences class with each ride scored separately.



**Courses:** The judge should inspect each course to make sure the tracks are rideable, the lines set appropriately, and the jumps are set correctly (Rules 4404.7 and 6305). If there is a question regarding a course or a jump, that should be addressed with the steward.





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## Judging IEA Equitation Over Fences

- Judges should be familiar with sections 7100, 7200, 7300, and 7400 of the IEA rule book.
- It is the judge's job to rank the class as they see fit. The judge should keep in mind the level and type of horse the rider is on, and the skill the rider is using in communicating with the horse. Excellent horsemanship, position and use of aids should be rewarded.
- Please keep in mind that simple changes are permissible and should not be penalized.
- Well-executed simple changes are equivalent to well-executed flying changes. A rider should NOT be penalized for performing a well-executed simple change (*regardless of the horse's description*).
- Jumping style of the horse is not to be considered unless it is the fault of the rider. Refusals that are the fault of the rider should be judged and scored accordingly. Refusals that are a result of the horse's behavior are potentially eligible for a re-ride. (*See page 5 on re-rides.*)
- In the event of a rail down, the judge should use discretion regarding the cause of the rail and score accordingly.
- The number of strides between jumps should be well planned, appropriate for the horse and consistent throughout the course.
- Cross cantering, unsafe distances, incorrect leads/diagonals, break of gait (*other than in a simple lead change*), and poorly performed lead changes should be penalized accordingly, keeping in mind the class level being judged.
- Riders are expected to walk in and out of the show ring, though some horses may be quirky when entering which would not be scored against the rider.
- Testing: The judge has the option to test riders. (*See page 4 on testing.*)

## Judging IEA Equitation On The Flat

- Judges should be familiar with sections 7100, 7200, 7300, and 7400 of the IEA rule book.
- Riders should be judged on position, horsemanship and effective and efficient use of the aids.
- Incorrect leads/diagonals, break of gait and loss of control should be penalized, keeping in mind the class level being judged.
- IEA rules state classes cannot be split unless there are twelve or more riders in a class. If the judge feels a flat class is too large to canter as a group (*very common in the lower levels*), they may decide to split the class for the canter.
- During flat classes, it is wise to manage your ring to keep horses happy doing their job, particularly in the lower level classes. Example: some judges keep the length of the canter short, or use the two-point as a test rather than sitting trot.
- Sometimes, due to horse suitability, a large flat class may be run in heats. It is common to pin after the last heat without a final callback. This decision is made by the show manager based on available horses, and should be discussed in advance with the judge.





## Testing: On the Flat and Over Fences

The judge has the option to test riders (Rule 7402). A Hunt Seat judge may choose from the following tests (Rule 3304):

- 1-5 for Beginner Walk/Trot riders
- 1-7 for Beginner Walk/Trot/Canter riders
- 1-10 for Novice riders
- 1-13 for Intermediate riders
- 1-16 for Open riders
- Instructions for performance of the test must be publicly announced.

### IEA Hunt Seat Tests:

1. Ask an appropriate horsemanship question that is tailored to the rider's ability level
2. Halt
3. Sitting trot
4. Two point position at the walk and/or trot
5. Figure eight at trot, demonstrating change of diagonals
6. Figure eight at canter on correct lead, demonstrating simple change of lead
7. Change horses
8. Ride without stirrups at the trot
9. Jump a shortened course
10. Trot a jump
11. Ride without stirrups at the canter
12. Change leads down center of ring, demonstrating simple change of lead
13. Half turn on forehand and/or half turn on haunches
14. Canter on the counter lead
15. Hand gallop
16. Jump without stirrups  
*(Jumping tests should be used only in over fences classes.)*

**IEA Rule 6303:** No one shall approach a judge with regard to a decision unless they first obtain permission from a steward, who shall arrange an appointment with the judge at a proper time and place. In order to inspect a judge's card, an exhibitor must first obtain show management's permission and be accompanied by their coach and the show steward. Questions regarding the judge's decision must be addressed with the show steward within 30 minutes of the end of competition.

**Judge's Scorecard:** Many show managers will look at the judge's cards after the show with their riders. Some show managers will ask judges to give feedback to riders after the show. The judge may decide if they are willing to meet with riders. In this situation the judge may want to keep a more detailed score card. Though a judge may choose not to meet with riders, it is possible riders and/or coaches will view the judge's cards with the show steward. Scorecards will be submitted by the show manager to the IEA National office after the competition and are held on file for the remainder of the competition year.



### Use of Crop and Spurs:

- Use of crop or spurs should not be penalized when it is appropriate to the situation and/or mount. (Rule 4507.3)
- Excessive use of crop or spurs should be brought to the steward's attention, and should be penalized accordingly. (Rule 4507.4)
- Riders are strictly forbidden from using the crop outside of the show ring. Therefore, it may be necessary for a rider to use the crop appropriately in the show ring. (Rule 4507.2)
- Beginner riders (those in Walk-Trot and Walk-Trot-Canter) are NOT permitted to wear spurs and will be eliminated for doing so (Rule 4507.7)



### Re-rides/Unsafe Horses/Riders:

- IEA rule 4505.1: "when through no fault of the rider, a horse performs so poorly that it is impossible to fairly judge the rider's ability, a re-ride may be granted."
- IEA Rule 4505.3: "Only the coach of the rider involved or the judge may request a re-ride."
- IEA Rule 4505.4: "Although they may confer with show management and the judge, only the show steward may grant or deny a re-ride."
- IEA Rule 4505.5: If a re-ride is granted in a class in which riders compete individually, it shall be judged as if the first ride never occurred and the re-ride shall take place after all other riders in that class have been completed.
- IEA Rule 4505.6: If a re-ride is granted in a class in which the riders compete together, it will be the judge's discretion whether to restart the class from the beginning or resume the class from the point when it was stopped.
- If a horse is performing in such a manner that the judge cannot fairly judge the class, the judge can stop the class and request a re-ride from the steward.
- Other situations where the judge should consult with the steward:
  - Unsound horses
  - Unsafe riders
  - Unsafe horses
  - Poor sportsmanship from coaches, riders and/or spectators

### Fall of Horse and/or Rider:

- IEA Rule 4504.2: "Falls during the judged portion of competition will result in elimination unless it is undeniably clear that the rider fell from the horse through no fault of said rider and due instead to the unanticipated actions of the horse."
- Re-rides after falls can only be granted by show stewards, but the judge may be consulted as part of that decision.

### Horse of the Show/Sportsmanship Award:

- The Steward may ask the judge to pick a Horse of the Show. There is latitude in this decision, but generally the award goes to a reliable, generous horse.
- The Sportsmanship award goes to an IEA rider member at the show. If the judge notices particularly exemplary behavior, the judge should mention it to the steward.



### IEA Post Season Competition:

- At Region Finals, Zones and Nationals, there are separate TEAM classes and INDIVIDUAL classes. Riders competing in team classes earn points toward their team's total. Riders competing in individual classes are vying to earn spots to advance to the next round of competition.
- Judges at Region and Zone Finals should know how many riders are moving forward in individual competition.
- Testing is encouraged in post-season competition, especially in individual classes. The judge should feel confident that the top riders are advancing to the next phase of competition. ■■■