

Virginia 4-H Horsemanship Skills Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the purpose of the Horsemanship Skills Program?**
 - a. The Horsemanship Skills Program was designed to evaluate the preparedness and safety of horse and rider combinations attending the State 4-H Horse Show and State Fair Show.

2. **Who needs to be tested?**
 - a. **Junior Members:** All junior youth must take and pass Levels 1 and 2 with any new horse that they have not previously taken or passed Horsemanship Skills with.
 - b. **Senior Members:** Seniors who have previously taken and passed Levels 1 and 2 must now test and pass only Level 2 (with proficiency shown in the Level 1 Skills) with **ANY new horse** that **has not been shown with THAT RIDER** at the State Horse Show or State Fair.
 - i. Horse/Rider combinations that have previously shown at the State Show or State fair **do not have to re-test if that horse/rider combination is not changing.**

3. **Do miniature, showmanship, and driving horses need to complete the Horsemanship Skills Program?**
 - a. **Yes!** All youth and horses, as outlined above, are required to successfully complete Horsemanship Skill Level One regardless of discipline.
 - i. Horses and ponies who will only be showing in showmanship are only required to have completed Horsemanship Skill Level One.
 - ii. All miniature horses must complete skill level one, which covers ground handling. Miniature horses who will also be driven at the state show will also be required to complete Driving Skill Level Two.
 - iii. All driving horses and ponies will be required to complete Driving Skill Level Two, once they have successfully completed level one.

4. **If a rider does not complete a full level on their first attempt, do they have to be re-tested on the entire level or can they just retest the skills they missed?**
 - a. It depends on the level at which that rider was being evaluated:
 - i. If a rider does not complete all of level 1 their first attempt, they will have to be re-tested on all of the skills in level 1.
 - ii. If a rider does not complete all of level 2 on their first attempt, they will only be required to be re-tested on the skills that they have not previously completed.
 - b. If a rider attempts either of the levels and needs to be retested, they can be retested again on the same day, at the evaluator's discretion.
 - c. **The levels are considered successive, Level 1 must be taken and passed before attempting Level 2 in the cases where Level 1 must be taken by a horse/rider combination.**

5. **Do Walk/Trot Riders have to complete Level 1 and 2 Horsemanship Skills? Including the canter portion? Why?**
 - a. Yes – any rider wishing to attending the state shows in riding class must take and pass both Levels 1 and 2 Horsemanship skills according to the outlined information above
 - b. The Walk/Trot Division is not meant for riders who cannot canter, but for those riders or horses that may not feel comfortable to be cantering in large classes.

6. **If a horse and rider combination is planning to attend the State Horse Show, by what deadline must they have completed levels 1 and 2 of the Horsemanship Skills Program?**
 - a. Horse and rider combinations must pass both levels prior to submitting their entries to the State Horse Show.

7. **If I am interested in attending a Horsemanship Skills Rider Evaluation, how do I find one?**
 - a. Horsemanship Skills Program events will be posted on the regular State 4-H Horse Program [calendar](#).
 - b. An additional listing on the State 4-H Horse Program website will list all Horsemanship Skills Program Events. This listing can be located [here](#).

8. **If I am interested in hosting a Horsemanship Skills Rider Evaluation, who should I contact?**
 - a. You should contact your District Horse Council contact to set up the date and location. Once the event has been approved by the District Horse Council, it should be emailed to leonar@vt.edu so that it can be added to the calendar.

9. **How can I verify that I have been evaluated?**
 - a. Evaluation organizers will submit a list of youth who have successfully completed horsemanship skill levels to the state office after each evaluation
 - b. This list of evaluated riders is available [here](#)

Additional things to keep in mind:

- The skill levels of the Horsemanship Skills Program are progressive in nature. Consequently, a horse/rider combination cannot pass level two until they have passed level one, and so on.

- Horsemanship Skills Evaluations can be held at a rider's or horse's barn, so long as there are **numerous individuals** who can be evaluated and it is open to riders from outside of the barn.
 - In order to respect the time and expenses of our evaluators, we must avoid small group evaluations.

- **Two trained evaluators** must be present at all Horsemanship Skill Evaluations.

- Trained evaluators do not serve as instructors or trainers when on-site at a Horsemanship Skill Evaluation. Their job is to assess the safety of demonstrated skills, but they will provide direction on skills youth need to improve, or when inherently dangerous practices are occurring.

- **Show attire is not required for horse/rider combinations participating in a Horsemanship Skills Program evaluation.** Horses should be clean and well-groomed, but are not required to be braided/ banded. Riders should be dressed neatly, and use well-cleaned tack. Show coats and formal attire are not required.