

**Virginia 4-H Horsemanship Skills Program**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. What is the purpose of the Horsemanship Skills Program?**

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) **All Virginia enrolled Junior and Senior 4-H Members** must take and pass Levels 1 and 2 once to show at the State Show.
- b) A change of horse does not require passing Level 1 and 2 again, once the 4-H member has passed Level 1 and 2 on any project animal.
- c) Riders that have previously shown at the State Show do not have to re-test.

**3. Do miniature, showmanship, and driving horses need to complete the Horsemanship Skills Program?**

**Yes.** All youth are required to successfully complete Level 1 regardless of discipline.

- a) Youth only showing in showmanship are required to have completed Level 1 only, including those showing miniatures.
- b) To take Driving Skill Level 2, the 4-H member must have passed Level 1.
- c) Drivers must pass Driving Skill Level 2 only once with their project animal (horses, ponies, miniatures). A change of animal does not require the driver to pass Driving Level 2 again with the new animal.

**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) Level 1 - If a 4-H member does not complete all of Level 1 on their first attempt, they will have to be re-tested on all of the skills in Level 1.
- b) Level 2 - 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.
- c) 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.
- d) The levels are successive. Level 1 must be taken and passed before attempting Level 2.

**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.
- 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. What deadline must Levels 1 and 2 be completed to show at the State Show?**

4-H members must have passed their appropriate test(s) prior to submitting their entry to the State Show.

**7. How do I find a Horsemanship Skills Rider Evaluation date?**

- a) Dates are posted on the [State 4-H Horse Program website](#) and [calendar](#).
- b) If a date is not posted, contact your District Horse Council and let them know of your need.

**8. If I am interested in hosting a Horsemanship Skills Rider Evaluation, who should I contact?**

[Complete this form](#) and submit it to your District Horse Council. Once the event has been approved by the District Horse Council, email information to [horse4h@vt.edu](mailto:horse4h@vt.edu) for it to be added to the [calendar](#).

**9. How can I verify that I have been evaluated and passed?**

- a) Evaluation organizers will submit a list of youth who have successfully completed horsemanship skill levels within two weeks of the date taken to the state office.
- b) This list of evaluated riders is available on the [Horsemanship Skills](#) page.

**Additional Important Information:**

- a) The skill levels of the Horsemanship Skills Program are progressive in nature. Consequently, a rider cannot pass Level 2 until they have passed Level 1.
- b) Horsemanship Skills Evaluations may 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, avoid small group evaluations.
- c) Two trained evaluators must be present at all Horsemanship Skill Evaluations.
- d) 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.
- e) Show attire is not required to participate in a Horsemanship Skills 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.