

American Vaulting Association

Standards of Proficiency For Horsemanship Levels 1 & 2

The American Vaulting Association Horsemanship Program has been established to promote the development of confident, safe, well educated vaulters, lungers, trainers, riders, coaches, & horse owners. The AVA Horsemanship Program provides an educational curriculum and standards of proficiency in horsemanship as well as recognition of excellence in horsemanship for AVA members through evaluations/testing & certification of proficiency. In addition AVA members may also receive recognition of excellence in vaulting skills through the AVA Medal Testing Program.

Each Horsemanship Level builds on the previous one in a progression starting with Level 1 and ending with Level 5. You must demonstrate proficiency of Level 1 before you may take the Level 2 examination, etc.

HP Level 1 - explores the fundamentals of horse care and introduces beginning skills with an emphasis on safety for both, the horse and the handler as well as having fun.

HP Level 2- expands on the basic skills & knowledge of daily horse care while developing an understanding of the reasons for good basic horsemanship.

HP Level 3- encourages learning to become an active horseman able to care independently for their horse and equipment while demonstrating an increased understanding of good horse horsemanship. Riding skills are introduced at this level in addition to groundwork and handling of the horse.

HP Level 4- covers more advanced horse management knowledge and skills and requires a greater depth of knowledge reflecting more awareness, competence, and self-analysis in the care and handling of horse and in teaching those same skills to others.

HP Level 5- recognizes the mastery of good horsemanship reflecting confidence, competence and in depth knowledge, the ability to train and teach with tact and effectiveness, as well as demonstrate the passion to pursue further knowledge and proficiency in their career with horses.

AVA encourages the following progression to be used for vaulter development & for volunteer and coach/lunger/horse trainer development.

Vaulter Development

HP Level 1 - Novice Trot Pin/Trot Medal

HP Level 2 - Novice Canter Pin

HP Level 3 - Bronze Medal

HP Level 4 - Silver Medal

HP Level 5 - Gold Medal

Volunteer & Lunger/Horse Trainer Development

HP Level 1 - Volunteering to Help with Horses

HP Level 2 - Volunteering with Horses/Horse Handler

HP Level 3 - Training to be a Coach/Lunger/Horse Trainer

HP Level 4 -Lungers /Horse Trainers/Riders

HP Level 5 -Lungers/Horse Trainers/examiners

HP Level 1 Horse Management Standards/Expectations

Candidates should be able to demonstrate simple skills; if necessary assistance is allowable, and understand the basic reasons of the everyday care and knowledge routinely used for his or her vaulting horse. Each candidate's knowledge will vary widely depending on age and experience.

Horse Parts, Breeds & General Knowledge

- Identify 1 body part the examiner indicates and then identify 4 more of your choice.
- Name & describe/identify 6 colors and/or markings for horses.
- Name 5 horse sports other than vaulting and discuss them including purpose & skills needed.

Conformation, Gaits, & Lameness

- Discuss what conformation is.
- Identify the 3 basic gaits a horse uses to move forward.

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Foot & Shoeing

- Discuss reasons for daily foot care including picking out feet.

Health Care & Veterinary Knowledge

- Discuss what a veterinarian is.
- Give 1 reason the vet might come & treat your vaulting horse.

Conditioning & Nutrition

- Describe what a horse looks like that is in poor condition, good/fit condition, & obese (fat) condition.
- Describe what & when your vaulting horse eats.
- Demonstrate how to give a tidbit to a vaulting horse safely.

Stable Management

- Describe the following stable vices & discuss what causes them: cribbing, wood chewing, kicking, pawing, & weaving.
- Discuss good vs. bad examples of stall & pasture safety including fencing.

Turnout & Tack

- Demonstrate how to correctly brush a horse & pick out feet with assistance.
- Identify 5 parts of the surcingle & bridle.
- Discuss 2 reasons for cleaning tack.
- List 3 examples of unsafe tack/equipment.

Travel Safety & Bandaging

- Discuss common sense safety rules to use when in a large group of horses, riding in an arena, riding in the open, leading a horse, & for tying a horse.
- Name 3 different types of horse boots and/or wraps.

Groundwork & Lunging

- Demonstrate approaching a vaulting horse safely and haltering it correctly.
- Demonstrate how to tie a quick release knot correctly & safely.

Vaulting Sport Knowledge

- Describe safe & appropriate attire for vaulting.
- Discuss 2 rules of safe vaulting in the vaulting arena with the horse.
- Demonstrate how to safely enter/exit the vaulting circle.
- Name the trot compulsories in the correct order.
- Describe the difference between compulsory and freestyle exercises.

HP Level 2 Horse Management Standards/Expectations

Candidates should be able to demonstrate simple skills without assistance and to discuss the reasons/importance of the everyday care and knowledge routinely used for his or her vaulting horse.

Horse Parts, Breeds & General Knowledge

- Identify 5 body parts the examiner indicates & then identify 10 more of your choice.
- Name & describe/identify 10 colors & markings for horses.
- Discuss/demonstrate how to accurately measure the height of a horse including unit of measurement.
- Name 5 horse or pony breeds & describe the characteristics & uses they are breeding for.

Conformation, Gaits, & Lameness

- Discuss good & bad conformation.
- Discuss common conformation faults of the neck, back, shoulders, head, & legs of a horse.
- Discuss the 3 basic gaits a horse uses to move forward including how many beats each one has, leads, and desirable characteristics.

Foot & Shoeing

- Identify common farrier tools and describe their uses.
- Give 2 reasons why you have your vaulting horses feet regularly trimmed or shod.
- Describe obvious signs of a hoof that needs to be trimmed or re-shod.

Health Care & Veterinary Knowledge

- Give 2 reasons why you have your vaulting horse routinely checked by a veterinarian.
- Name 3 symptoms of a sick or injured horse that would cause you to call a veterinarian.

Conditioning, Nutrition & Record Book

- Discuss 1 reason for cooling out a vaulting horse after practice & describe 2 different ways to know if the horse is properly cooled out.
- Discuss what roughage & concentrates are.

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- Discuss good rules of feeding for horses to keep them healthy & happy.
- Discuss what kinds of records & information would be important to keep in a record book for each individual horse.

Stable Management

- Demonstrate how to correctly clean & bed a stall giving reasons for each step.
- Demonstrate how to blanket & un-blanket a horse safely.
- Discuss good safety practices both human & equine for around the barn & arenas, including fire prevention.

Turnout & Tack

- Name 5 grooming tools & demonstrate how to correctly groom & pick out feet with them.
- Present your horse vaulting horse for an informal inspection in a halter or bridle; pony should show evidence of regular grooming with attention to the mane, tail, & feet.
- Identify 15 parts of the surcingle and bridle & discuss the purpose of each part.
- Demonstrate how to correctly clean & condition tack with attention to stitching & stress points.

Travel Safety & Bandaging

- Discuss 2 ways you can help your vaulting horse be safe & comfortable in a horse trailer.
- Discuss 2 reasons why you would bandage/ wrap or use boots on a horse's leg.

Groundwork & Lunging

- Demonstrate leading & turning a vaulting horse in hand safely at the walk.
- Demonstrate walk-halt-walk transitions in hand safely.

Vaulting Sport Knowledge

- Discuss 2 examples of unsafe attire or vaulter conduct/behavior.
- Discuss/demonstrate an example of 'good mechanics' in one of the compulsory exercises.
- Name & describe 6 judging abbreviations or marks commonly written on your score sheets.
- List the different levels of AVA recognized individual and team competition.
- List the rules for a horse to be used in AVA competition.

- Discuss what 'consideration for the horse' means and what the consequences are for overusing or overloading a horse.

Information for Level 1 & 2 Candidates

Requirements for Candidates Testing

- Be an AVA Member in Good Standing.
- Be recommended by their Coach.
- Have a thorough knowledge of requirements of the level of Horsemanship Proficiency being tested and be able to demonstrate any requirements from previously attained standards.
- Candidates must be evaluated on and successfully meet the standards on all sections of the test selected before being awarded the new certificate.

AVA Horsemanship Examination Fees

- Each Club or candidate must submit an application and a \$15 examination fee per Exam for Levels 1 & 2. The Online Application is available on the Horsemanship page of the AVA website and applications will also be available on site at the testing.
- Candidate's applications received less than 30 days prior to the exam date may NOT receive their badge/patch on the day of the examination and will receive them from the Exam Organizer when the examination has been completed and processed by the Horsemanship Secretary.
- Individual Fees will NOT be refunded/ credited but may be transferred to another vaulter in the same club for an Exam on the same date only.

Attire for Candidates Testing

- Safe, workmanlike attire including proper foot wear must be worn during the examination.
- Proper foot wear is a shoe that is securely fastened, entirely closed, covers the ankle, thick soled, and in good condition; a sturdy leather boot or shoe is recommended.
- Clean, neat appearance with a club shirt or short sleeved polo with riding breeches or other pants is recommended.
- A properly fitted equestrian helmet, securely fastened, containing certification that it meets or exceeds the criteria established by a national or international safety body is required to participate in any mounted activities.

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Equipment & Presentation of the Horse

- All equipment must be safe, clean, in good repair, and should comply with the AVA Rules for Equipment.
- When presenting the horse the candidate should stand by horse, on near side, with Examiner, facing rear, reins in left hand below the bit, slack in the right hand, and should change sides with Examiner.

Appropriate Horses for Testing

- Safety for all horses and candidates is of paramount importance and unsafe horses will be excused from an examination which may result in the candidate being unable to complete their examination.
- Candidates may bring their own, borrowed, or leased horses to a test. A candidate may present their skills with more than one horse at a test.
- The candidate is responsible for the care of each of the candidate's horses during the examination. And it is the responsibility of the candidate and his/her parents to bring or arrange for appropriate horses to be at the testing.

Information on Conducting a Test

- Please review the AVA Guidelines for Local & Regional Horsemanship Testing.
- Tests are designed to and should be conducted in one day. If due to unforeseen circumstances a test cannot be completed in one day the remaining portions of the test need to be completed within 30 days.
- Oral testing and/or demonstrations are required for all part of the examination. Written tests are not allowed; however, at the examiner's discretion a candidate may use their own drawing and/or writing to supplement their answers during the discussion periods of the test.
- The examination should be an educational session, covering all of the requirements listed on the standards of horsemanship; however, it is not a "lesson".
- Candidates may opt to take the Horsemanship Level 1 & 2 tests at the same time in one examination; all other tests must be taken in sequential order one test per examination.

Examiners for Testing

- Examiners should be selected with care and should be completely competent and knowledgeable of the Horsemanship

Standards of Proficiency they will be testing as well as the levels above and below the level they will be conducting. Head Coaches and/or Regional Supervisors are responsible for making sure examiners have all of the current Standards, test sheets, & study guides prior to the exam.

- Examiners should be mature and sensitive to a range of candidates from very young to adults and should be a neutral, unbiased party that does not have a personal relationship with the candidates.
- Examiners should conduct the test in a positive educational setting and make sure to give ample opportunities to draw the best from each candidate without allowing the test to become a lesson.
- Examiners should be careful to make sure they encourage candidates to communicate what they know rather than directing or demonstrating what the examiner knows.

Recommended Reading & Study Materials for Testing

The following materials are recommended for Levels 1 & 2 of the AVA Horsemanship Program.

- USPC 'D' Level Manual; Basics for Beginners by Susan E. Harris
- USPC 'C' Level Manual; Intermediate Horsemanship by Susan E. Harris
- Current AVA Rule Book
- Current FEI Guidelines for Vaulting
- The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Horse Breeds by Susan McBane or The New Encyclopedia of The Horse by DK Publishing