

A Newbie Parent's Guide to Horse Shows

By Jill Marie Fritsche jill-marie@att.net

Disclaimer: This is all to the best of my knowledge....which may or may not be correct...it's just my best guess. If your trainer has different advice or tells you something different, please listen to them! They are the experts, not me.

So, you've bought or leased (or borrowed) a horse. Now, your daughter (or son), wants to show their horse. Ack!

Showing can be great fun for the kids and parents, but it can also be confusing, intimidating, and just plain scary (and do I have to mention, EXPENSIVE). However, it is also rewarding for kids and parents or why would we do such a crazy thing?!

It is a great opportunity to work with your horse, build a show record, and possibly win some ribbons. You don't HAVE to show to have fun and you SHOULDN'T show if you're not having fun. Truly think about this. Make sure it's something your daughter (I'll use daughter from now on, as that's the case 90% of the time...) WANTS to do. There's nothing worse at a show than a pestering, demanding 'stage mom' yelling at her daughter (or trainer) and a crying, frustrated rider, who may take it out on her horse.

EVERYONE is a "newbie" at some point...yep, everyone. You'll have questions about everything. Ask away. Most of the other parents will welcome your questions, but be prepared to get a lot of different answers about some things. When in doubt, ask your TRAINER. (Just don't ask questions at the show, in the breezeway, 2 min. before they're trying to get 4 kids into a class... ☺)

Showing is something that you really have to EXPERIENCE to LEARN. The best advice I have to someone wanting to show their horse is to go to one or more shows WITHOUT your horse, as a spectator. You can see what goes on in the ring. You can decide what classes look interesting to show in. But, you will not have the pressure of having your horse there and having to show.

Schooling shows (like the Notta Shows, Vista Fun Shows and the Copperhill's shows) are THE place to start actually showing yourself. No pressure, no or little traveling, and lots of fun and feedback. And it's CHEAP. \$5 or so per class, so your daughter can try different classes and it won't kill your bank account.

What are some types of events and shows?

1. Rodeo. Everyone's seen the typical Rodeo on TV – PRCA and the like. Rodeo includes Timed Events like Barrel Racing and Poles, Steer Wrestling and Tying, Penning, Roping and a lot more. Most Arabian folk don't compete in these types of shows, but some do. Start with the 4H clubs. There are also High School Rodeo clubs. While this is most popular with Quarter Horses, any breed of horse (even Arabians) can rodeo.
2. Jumping. This is what most people think of when you say 'horse show'. This is an English sport. Jumping includes Hunter/Jumper, timed jumping, eventing, Grand Prix, etc. Most people at Vista don't compete in these types of shows, but a few do. In Utah, you'd go see the UHJA (Utah Hunter Jumper Assoc.) for shows. Popular with Ponies, Thoroughbreds and Warmbloods, but again any breed of horse can jump. www.uhja.org
3. Dressage shows – This is riding patterns, English style. (Again, there's WAY more to this, but let's keep it simple.) Top hats and 'dancing horses' and lots of levels, from Training to the Grand Prix. Most kids don't compete in these types of shows, but quite a few adults do. In Utah, you'd see the UDS (Utah Dressage Society) for shows. Popular with Thoroughbreds and Warmbloods, but again any breed of horse will work. www.utahdressagesociety.net

Now for the shows that our crowd does the most showing at...(and that I'll be talking about)

Schooling or Fun shows – local barn show...no pressure, cheap, just for fun (\$5 to \$65 or so – Notta Shows, Vista Fun Shows, Copperhill's, Cookie Classic, Tri-Equelon, Fall Fun Show, etc.) No *fancy clothing or tack required*, all breed. 1 day show.

All of the following shows **DO** require show attire and tack, stall fees, hauling, etc.

4. Breed shows – These are horse shows just for a particular breed of horse. You must have a Registered horse! Arab shows, Quarter Horse shows, Saddlebred shows, etc. A lot of riders in this crowd, who show, go to the Arabian breed shows. Includes most disciplines “on the flat or on the rail” (meaning anything **except** rodeo, jumping and dressage)... Western & English Pleasure and Equitation, Show Hack, Halter, Showmanship, Reining, Driving (buggies), Costume, Trail, Sport Horse, and lots more – Don’t panic; we’ll go over these in a minute.

Most popular in this crowd are the Arabian and Half Arabian – UAHC (Utah Arabian Horse Club) you must have a registered Arabian or ½ Arabian horse. www.utaharabians.com

- a. Local Rated show – These are rated by the USEF. A lot of people at these shows are serious and are trying to win to get points to qualify for Regionals or Nationals. (These shows are also called ‘A’ rated or Qualifier) \$400 and up. 3-4 day shows.
 - i. Deseret I & II, UAHC Spring Show, Autumn Classic
 - ii. These shows now have the ACTS program. (formally Youth Saddle)
 1. ACTS classes are great for you if:
 - You own or know someone who owns a horse that would like to get into the show ring.
 - You have/are a 1st or 2nd year rider/shower who would love to show at a ‘big’ show.
 - You want a casual and fun way to be introduced to Class-A showing.
 - You want to do it all for as little as possible. (Entry fee is a flat \$90 or so, per show. Not including hauling, trainer fees, etc.)
 2. ACTS classes provide a fun and easy way to get your horse Class-A show ring experience, allows Novice riders to gain show ring experience, as well as work toward great year-end awards, such as belt buckles.
 3. ACTS includes 4 shows per year, 3 classes per show in 4 age divisions. Age divisions:
**All Ages– walk/trot English or walk/jog Western **13 & under – walk/trot/canter English or walk/jog/lope Western **14-18 yr - walk/trot/canter English or walk/jog/lope Western
**Adult - walk/trot/canter English or walk/jog/lope Western
 4. Classes are open to any 1st or 2nd year shower/rider on ANY breed, ANY experience horse. The rider doesn't even have to own the horse! The horse does not need to be registered!
<http://utaharabians.com/index.php/uahc-youth/uahc-youth-acts-program>

- b. Regionals and Nationals – just what they say.....money is in the thousands

5. All-Breed shows – These are horse shows for, you guessed it, all breeds of horses. Your horse doesn’t have to be registered unless showing in a particular breed class. In Utah, they are put on by the UABHA (Utah All Breed Horse Assoc.) Includes most disciplines “on the flat” (no rodeo or jumping or dressage)... Western & English Pleasure and Equitation, Show Hack, Halter, Showmanship, Reining, Sport Horse, Dressage, Driving (buggies), Costume, Trail and lots more – Again, Don’t panic.

- a. Again, 1 step up from a ‘fun show’...they’re at the equestrian center. Again, little pressure, less expensive - \$250 or so
- b. Experienced folks go for the High Point awards which means they show in a particular class for the 4 shows and hopefully get the most points in that class.
www.uabha.com/Shows

- i. Spring Fling, Summer Classic, Howard Franklin, State Fair

Disciplines

First, let's talk about English vs. Western. This is probably the easiest part.

Western is a very SPARKLY cowboy. Silver, cowboy hats, western saddle, chaps. Western horses generally have a slower gait (walk, jog, lope) than English/Hunter/Saddle seat and the head is carried lower.

"English".....technically any class that uses an English saddle and attire. No saddle horn, different bridles and bits.

In "English", you have the following breakdowns:

*Hunter - English, no jumping, movement to cover ground like fox hunting

*Sport Horse - a more 'natural' gait, horse's head is generally lower/not collected as much as Hunter

*Saddle Seat

*Country English *English Pleasure *Park

- a more 'parade-like' gait, horse's head is high, lots of knee action

**Show Hack **Costume **Driving – these are specialty classes, which newbies usually don't show in. ☺

The above disciplines and classes are divided by a lot of different criteria. The bigger and fancier the shows, the more divisions there are going to be.

They separate classes/disciplines by:

1. Age of the Rider – Age is what age you are on Dec. 1st of the previous year.
 - a. The basic age groups are:
10 and under, 11-13, 14-18, 18 and under (a 'catch all'), 19 and over or adult, over 40
2. Status of the Rider – Are they an amateur or professional? If they've accepted money for riding, training or lessons **and** are over 19 they are Pro. Under 19, they can take all the money they want – they're still an amateur.
 - i. These are often abbreviated...here's a few.
 1. 'A' or Amateur – for any Amateur
 2. ATR – is Amateur to Ride
 3. JOTR – is Junior (under 18) Owner to Ride
 4. ATH – is Amateur to Handle (as in a class such as In-Hand or Halter or Showmanship)
 5. AATR – is Adult Amateur to Ride
 6. Open – Ammy's and Pro's- anyone
 7. JTR – Junior to ride
 8. AAOTr – is Adult Amateur Owner to Ride
3. Breed and Age and Experience of the horse
 - a. At an All-Breed show...
 - i. Arabian – full, registered Arabian
 - ii. HA/AA – at least ½ Arabian and registered
 - iii. Saddlebreds – ASB, Draft Horses – Clydesdale, Belgium, etc
 - iv. Morgans, Paso Fino, Spotted Saddle Horse - SSH
 - v. Friesian, Tennessee Walking Horse – TWH
 - b. Age – Kind of self explanatory, again, but every horse's 'birthday is on Jan. 1 of that year. If your horse was born on Aug. 3 and will be 6 yrs old in Aug., for show purposes, he turned 6 on Jan. 1st, not in Aug.
 - i. 2 yr old/3yr old – seen especially in Halter
 - ii. Junior – 5 and under
 - iii. Senior – 18 and over
 - c. Experience – these definitions may vary a bit show to show and can apply to horse or rider.
 - i. Maiden – no 1st place in a rated or point show
 - ii. Novice – no more than 3 – 1st places in a rated or point show
 - iii. Limit – no more than 6 – 1st places in a rated or point show

So, looking at a horse show class list you might see this:

22 Arabian English Pleasure Jr Horse – (just what it says...only full Arabian horses, English Pleasure riding style and dress, horse must be 5 yrs and under)

23 TBA – (to be announced. There is not a class scheduled, but they could add one in this slot. A lot of times, TBA classes are cancelled.)

24 HA/AA Hunter Pleasure Limit Horse – (1/2 Arabian horse, Hunter style riding and dress, horse cannot have more than 6 -1st places)

25 Open Country English Pleasure JTR 18 & under (open to any horse, country English riding style and dress, junior to ride – 18 and under)

26 Open Adult Walk/Trot, Walk/Jog 18/over (open to any horse, Western or English riding style and dress, no cantering/loping, 18 and over)

27 Arabian Western Pleasure AAOTR 40 & Over (only full Arabian horses, Western riding style, adult amateur (no trainers) owner (must be the owner on the horse's papers) to ride, 40 and over)

28 Open English Pleasure – (free for all...☺, open to all breeds of horses, English riding style, no age or experience restriction....Arabians vs Quarter horses, 10 yr olds ride against trainers)

Most of the time, the less restrictions on the class, the more challenging the competition will be. But, we don't all want to have our 10 yr old who is riding a novice horse being judged against a Pro Trainer with 20 years of experience riding a National Champion horse, thus all the class divisions.

Are we judging the Rider or the Horse? Yep, there's a difference and generally they are judging just one or the other.

Pleasure classes = judging the horse

Just remember, your child's HORSE is what's being judged. At a rated show, the **horse** gets the points. Your daughter will cue the horse and direct the horse and may have even helped train the horse, but the rider is not being judged.

For newbie horse show parents, this scenario can be quite frustrating and bewildering. As proud parents, all we want to see (in the beginning, anyway) is that our child goes around and doesn't fall off. We want to hoot and whistle and clap loudly for our brave daughter and her magically safe and brave mount, and we want her be rewarded with a bright blue ribbon. Sadly, this doesn't usually happen every time.

- a. Horses are to be shown at a walk, trot (jog), and canter (lope) both ways of the ring and may be required to back. Horses are to back easily and stand quietly. In certain classes they may ask for a hand gallop (faster than a gallop and the rider two- points/jockey position).
 - i. If you are in a rated show, such as the Arabian shows, the points go on the horse's show record.
 - ii. Points are to qualify the Horse (or Rider) for Regionals or Nationals.
 1. Points awarded are based on how many other horses or riders you beat, including yourself (basically anyway, this does get more complicated than this)
 - i. If you were in a class with 6 horses and you won 2nd, you would get 5 pts.

Ok, back to judging the horse. What are some things they are looking for?

1. Is the horse a 'pleasure' to ride?
2. Manners – no fighting the bit, throwing his head, prances sideways, etc. - This horse is NOT a pleasure to ride.
3. Correct gaits – was the horse walking when it was supposed to walk?
4. Smoothness of gaits
5. Smoothness of transitions ('shifting gears') – transitions are walk to trot, trot to canter, etc.
 - a. It's not a race to change gait, the important thing is to do it smoothly, seamlessly
 - b. Get the right lead. The INSIDE leg should be in front while loping or cantering.
6. Moves easy off of the rider's cues
7. Consistency of performance – For example, it the horse's trot the same, doesn't speed up, doesn't slow down. Is the horse's head consistently in one place....not up one minute and to the ground the next.

8. Willingness to stop and back up.

Position on the rail, closer or in the middle, etc. doesn't matter as far as judging. The riders and trainers have their preferences based on the horse and rider needs.

1. The riders/horses enter the ring at a trot/jog and go counter-clockwise.
2. The horse (or rider) is only judged from the moment when the announcer says "This is your class." & closes the gate.
 - a. This is so the 1st rider in isn't penalized for being the 1st in.
 - b. The class is over being judged when the judge turns in the judge's card.
 - i. **Make sure you know your daughter's/horse's NUMBER! They all look the same in the ring and that's the way the placings are called....number 1st.**
 - ii. Regular classes are announced starting with 1st place and going down. They usually just place the top 6 or 8. Feel free to clap and yell and holler when you daughter's name is called, or for any of the girls!
 - iii. ACTS/Youth Saddle classes are announced last to 1st. (It's just hard to start to show and to be called last or not at all if you don't get 1st.)
3. Changing direction – Again, not a race. It's how smooth and seamless it is.
4. Riders may get crowded. If they do, the judge can't see how awesome their horse is, so they may cut across the arena or make a loop, etc. This is a good thing and smart riding.
5. After they have walked, trotted and cantered both directions, the ring steward will have them line up. Again, not a race, but they should do so in a timely manner.

Western - Some things the judge is looking for:

1. Western has slower gaits than English. Walk (4 beat), jog (2 beat), lope (3 beat). Again, consistency and good smooth transitions.
2. The horse's headset (where they carry their head) is lower. The horse's head shouldn't move around a lot.
3. Depending on the bit, the rider's may ride with one hand.

Hunter/Sport Horse - should suit their purpose of hunting and jumping. They should move in a long, low frame and be able to lengthen their stride and cover ground, as in traveling over hunt country following hounds. Horses should be serviceably sound, and quick, short strides should be penalized. They are ridden with light contact on the mouth. So their heads higher than Western, but not as high as Saddle Seat, like Country English.

Saddle Seat - Saddle Seat is divided into quite a few classes, usually based on how high the horse can trot. The riders generally wear a suit (long coat, hat, and short, shiny boots). The crowd is generally louder in these classes and hoot and holler for the trot, etc.

Country English Pleasure (CEP) is the 'lowest' trot. Horses are more animated than the Hunter horse. The big thing here is the CEP horse must have manners and must walk and halt and back up. Country horses cannot 'cross enter' into English or Park or visa-versa.

English Pleasure is a higher trotting horse. More animated than the CEP horse, manners aren't quite as important and horse does not halt or back up in the class.

Park is the highest trotting horse. Even more animated than the English horse.

Specialty Classes

Costume – the Arabian breed has a native costume class. Generally, costume horses are the high trotting saddle seat horses. No trotting in this class, just walk and canter and hand gallop.

Show Hack – These are fancy classes that show off 9 gaits in each direction. Riders generally wear an outfit with tails.

Halter or In-Hand classes (not a riding class) - Judging the horse's conformation (suitability for breeding, think dog show here)

1. Things like straight legs, good hips, proportional neck, overstep, soundness, how well they travel (gait), etc

Equitation classes = judging the rider

1. If you are in a rated show, such as the Arabian shows, the points earned go to the **rider's** show record.
2. The rider is judged on a number of criteria, depending on what discipline (western, hunt, saddle seat) they are riding. Posture, hand position, leg position, etc. It's very technical. If they are riding hunt or saddle seat, they must be on the correct diagonal when posting at the trot.
3. If it is a rated show and a medal class, they must do a rail class and a pattern. They are judged on both. Patterns are, again, very technical, and the rider is judged on performing the pattern correctly.

Showmanship classes (not a riding class)

1. Like a halter or in-hand class, but the handler is the one being judged - mainly. It's not a conformation class. They have a pattern and the handler must remember it and get the horse to do the pattern...walking, trotting, backing, pivoting, setting up etc.

Attire for Halter & Showmanship: Generally, you dress either Hunter or Western. You generally use a show halter, but can use a show bridle.

Easy, right?

"English" (As in a general term, doesn't use a western saddle. There is a specific discipline called "English Pleasure" also. Most newbies will use the term "English" to mean anything not western. Most experienced show folk will use the individual division name such as "Hunter" or "Country English")

1. Hunter Pleasure Attire

Look and ask around as you can find most of this 2nd hand – girls grow out of everything. On that note, buy the clothes a size or two bigger than you wear to get more use out of them.

You CAN make shirts and bibs and western shirts yourself. Make sure you (or whoever) knows how to sew really well. The best patterns I've found are the Suitability patterns.

Basically it's:

- a. Tan breeches – starting @ \$45+
 - b. Black tall boots (up to the knee) or paddock boots (ankle) with half chaps – starting at \$150+
Break these boots in well before the show! 'Dress' boots = no laces. 'Field' boots = laces. As a 'Show Mom', I HIGHLY advise zippers in the tall boots. Really, zippers are life savers. At least once a show, we'll have a girl, that can't get out of their boots and who has 4 people helping to pull them off. Sprinkling baby powder in them before you put them on helps with the pulling off afterwards.
 - c. Thin, knee high nylon socks (\$8 – Zocks)
 - d. Black or brown thin belt
 - e. Shirt or bib with banded collar. (\$45+) White is good, but it can be any color. Bibs are great for hot summer days. Use pastels and white for rated shows. White for equitation.
 - f. Lapel pin. (\$10+)
 - g. Hunt Coat (3 button, conservative color, black, blue, gray, green or brown) (\$90+) Hint: Be prepared to be the 'Coat Holder' and 'Glove Holder' until your daughter is ready to enter the ring. That way, she doesn't sweat to death.
 - h. Black gloves
 - i. Helmet with black velvet helmet cover (\$50) or dress helmet straps for equitation (\$150) or hunt cap (it doesn't have a strap, so it's not a protective helmet and it already comes with the black velvet top - \$65)
- Hair in a bun, net usually with sparklies in it

www.doversaddlery.com www.statelinetack.com www.schneiders.com

Tack/Horse

- a. Saddle
 - a. Hunt saddle
 - b. Bridle & bit - Hunter
 - c. Saddle pads – White contoured, may have black pad under white.

d. Braids in the mane. May braid the tail.

2. Sport Horse

- a. This is a fairly new venue for people who love the breed that have interest in Dressage and Hunter/Jumper. Horses that are ideal for this discipline are free forward movers with the desire to excel as dressage mounts, flat hunter, or over fence horses.
- b. This venue opens many doors for people that want to get out of the Arabian competitions, which can have very stressful training styles and can be very expensive to pursue. The horses in Sport Horse divisions are not judged by AHA judges, but by USDF and USEF judges. They are judged exclusively on quality and athletic ability as a Sport Horse prospect; not on political and financial support. Form to function is the emphasis. "Pretty" is not at the top of the list.
- c. We find it a breath of fresh air in the industry. The people are enthusiastic, the shows smaller and more friendly, the training/shoeing methods more humane, and the judging more fair.
- d. Under Saddle – can be shown as Hunter (*see above*) or Dressage
 - i. Dressage
 1. This is riding patterns, English style. (Again, there's WAY more to this, but let's keep it simple.) Top hats and 'dancing horses' and lots of levels, from Training to the Grand Prix. Most kids at don't compete in these types of shows, but quite a few adults do. Dressage is included in larger Sport Horse shows and mainly the UDA and USDF.
 2. Attire
 - a. Black dressage jacket (4 button and it can have a little bling)
 - b. White banded dress shirt
 - c. White breeches
 - d. Black dress boots
 - e. White or black gloves
 3. Tack – dressage saddle, white/square dressage pad, dressage bridle
 - e. Show Hack – for advanced riders/horses
 - f. Jumping – at bigger shows riders/horses
 - g. In-Hand – judging horse for conformation
 - i. Attire
 1. White, collared shirt – can be short or long sleeved
 2. White or light beige docker type pants with belt
 - a. Basically a school uniform
 3. White tennis shoes – you have to be able to run in them
 4. You can also wear full hunt attire, but can you run in it? 😊
 - ii. Grooming
 1. Braid mane and forelock – not tail
 2. Only clear hoof polish or you can have none at all
 3. No face grease, don't bald face.

Look at Horse Crazy tack here in Sandy or AA Callisters. They have new and used outfits and boots. So does Horse Lover's Haven. Also, check out eBay.

Saddle Seat - Saddle Seat is divided into quite a few classes, usually based on how high the horse can trot. The riders generally wear a suit (long coat, vest, hat, and short, shiny boots).

3. Country English Pleasure

4. English Pleasure

5. Park

Attire

Basically it's:

- a. A Saddle Seat suit. In Arabians, suits generally match (jacket/pants) and are a conservative color (black, brown, blue) (used \$500+, new \$2000+) Popular makers are Show Season, Frierson's, Carl Meyers, etc. Used suits can be found on Facebook groups, consignment shops and other trainers/riders.

- b. A collared shirt (with tie bar) and vest (\$120+). Some trainers like conservative colors, some like bling, it's all up to fashion, trainer and rider. You can get a reg. men's/boys shirt (\$30+) or they do make specially made shirts (\$90+)
- c. Short 'jod' boots, generally black and shiny. (\$100+)
- d. Thin, knee high nylon socks (\$8 – Zocks)
- e. Lapel pin. (\$10+)
- f. Black gloves
- g. Hat – generally a derby or homburg (A rider can ALWAYS wear a helmet in a class without penalty. The current style/fashion is to wear a hat. \$150+)
- h. Hair in a bun, net usually with sparklies in it.
- i. Attire gets more conservative in Saddle Seat Equitation and at higher levels; you may need a separate suit and outfit.

Tack/Horse

- a. Saddle- Saddle Seat saddle
- b. Double Bridle & bits - Saddle seat
- c. Saddle pad – Black contoured
- d. No braids in the mane or the tail.

Western

6. **Western Pleasure** – Expensive, Shiny, Sparkly, Silver clothes and tack. The more the better. Don't go crazy on the tack and attire until you know it's something your daughter really wants to do. Short term, **you can borrow stuff from someone or a few someone's....just make sure you return it in better condition than you got it.**

*Again, the best thing to do is to go to a show and LOOK. See what people are wearing and what you like. The most important thing is to pick something that you **look good** in and that you feel **comfortable** wearing and that you can **afford!***

http://www.hobbyhorseinc.com/09_dress_for_success/dress_for_success_main.shtml Is a great site to look and see what's in and has lots of suggestions.

- a. Attire – look and ask around as you can find most of this 2nd hand – girls grow out of everything quickly. On that note, buy the clothes a size or two big to get more wear out of them. Used outfits/tack can be found on Facebook groups, consignment shops and other trainers/riders.
 - i. Cowboy hat – Black and White being the most popular colors
 - 1. They CAN wear a helmet, if you like. It is not against the rules, just not the 'fashion'.
 - 2. Get a nice blocked, well-shaped hat, not a Wal-Mart hat. (\$100+)
 - ii. Hair in a bun, net usually with sparklies in it
 - iii. Shirt
 - 1. For boys, this can just be a good cotton western shirt, long sleeved and collar and tie or bolo.
 - 2. For girls
 - a. A 'slinky' – like a leotard, but with a collar. Sparkles and rhinestones are very popular. Some have cuffs, some don't. No tie or pin needed. No jacket needed. (\$60+)
 - b. You can also do a slinky with a vest.
 - c. A collared western shirt – usually has bling and appliques. Can be from \$150 to \$1000's.
 - d. Western tunic/blazer – popular in showmanship, but can be worn in a riding class.
 - e. The key here is that most girls wear a LOT of sparkles on their shirts/slinkys/vests/tunics.
 - iv. Chaps
 - 1. Black and brown are the most popular colors. They come with fringe, no fringe, suede or smooth leather, scalloped or not. You'll see every kind of color though. (\$200+)

2. If you're on a tight budget, simply buy the best pair of chaps you can afford in a neutral color; they'll last you for years.
 3. Dark colors and less fringe may be best for your beginner rider to conceal movement.
 4. Wear pants the same color (or close) as your chaps. Breeches or stretchy pants are most comfortable.
 - v. Belt - Good western belt – again silver is very popular
 - vi. Boots - Cowboy boots that match your chaps. (\$100+)
 - vii. Gloves
 1. While most people wear black gloves conservative colored gloves that match your outfit are ok.
 2. Dark colored gloves would be the best choice to conceal unsteady hands.
- b. Tack/Horse
- i. Saddle
 1. Light or dark stain
 2. Usually has some silver on it – the more the better, but not more than you can afford...Colored saddle seats are not used for Arabian shows.
 - ii. Bridle & bit - Western show – lots of silver
 - iii. Saddle pads
 1. Bright colors are ok here – conchos and silver are good extras – Navajo type blanket patterns are good too.
 - iv. No braids in the mane or tail

7. **Reining** – again, not usually for newbies. Reining, generally, has more conservative attire and tack than Western Pleasure. Not as much silver and sparkles.

There are many other disciplines and classes. Costume, English Show Hack, Driving, Trail, Working Cow, etc. These aren't newbie classes and all have their own attire and tack. Equitation classes may have special attire.

These are all just general guidelines to give you an idea of what's going on. **ASK YOUR TRAINER BEFORE BUYING TACK OR CLOTHING!!!** Do NOT depend on your child to tell you what to get.

Again...Don't buy tack or bits or clothes without talking to your trainer, even if your daughter insists that she **MUST** have it. If you do, I can guarantee that you will be stuck with a useless bit, a saddle that doesn't fit and clothes she doesn't need. (But that she looks fabulous in. ☺)

Show Etiquette

Unfortunately, we will have at least one parent a year who needs to be reminded of basic show etiquette.

Rule #1 - **DO NOT YELL AT YOUR DAUGHTER OR TRAINER!**

Rule #2 - DO NOT YELL AT YOUR DAUGHTER OR TRAINER!

Rule #3 - DO NOT YELL AT YOUR DAUGHTER OR TRAINER! (Have you got this one yet? ☺)

Rule #4 – DO NOT YELL AT ANYONE! Not at other riders or parents or Judges or show personnel or grooms.

If you feel you are about to break Rules #1 thru 4 you can...

Take a walk or a ride. Leave for a while. Shake it off. Sit in the car.

If your daughter is yelling at you, do not yell back. The best thing to do is to tell your Trainer. Yes, you are still the parent. But, when it comes to horsey stuff and shows, it's best handled by the Trainer and not by the emotionally involved parent. The Trainers have years and years of experience dealing with this. Yelling and screaming and crying and throwing things between Moms and Daughters are not only embarrassing and unprofessional, they upset and affect all the riders and horses around them. Don't do it.

Rule #5 - **Be on time. Be rested and fed.** Both you and your daughter.

Rule #6 – **Do not nag.** Do not follow your daughter around, asking her things repeatedly. Just grab it or do it, if you can. Hand her the helmet, pin the number on, make sure the food is there, or just grab it yourself and check it off your list, but don't nag and pick, it leads to breaking rules 1-3.

Rule #7 – **Don't come to the show with high expectations.** Judging is subjective. It is a good possibility that in the same class, with the same horses and riders that 2 judges may prefer different horses or riders. It doesn't take a long time for moms (or dads) to see this, but takes a long time to understand and just accept it.

From the book 'Horse Show Mom's Survival Guide' – "There is no yelling "Pass the ball" (to encourage your daughter or her horse). Instead, there are very particular non-verbal aids and cues that she gives to a very large animal several times her body weight. And for the most part, it works – miraculously. It can be a thrill and a wonder to watch. And then again, the sight can also be amazingly boring or disappointing, exhilarating or exhausting.

Your child might be having a good day, but her mount is in a slump. On other days, her horse is perfect, but your child is tired, or cranky, or just not 'on'. And then there are those days when they are both at their peak and it never gets better than this, no matter what the level of competition. Riding a horse is one of the most intense multitasking sporting activities in the world, and when it all comes together; it is a particularly beautiful thing to watch."

In Pleasure classes "No matter how good your child is, the horse needs to be better than the other horses in the class....Then why does your daughter sometimes place 1st and sometimes place last? **In any competition, the placing depends more on the other competition than just the skill of your child or her horse.** She can compete in a class of 20 and come out on top, but in a class of 10, with more talented competitors, she might place on sixth. This is where it gets hard to keep the more detached Horse Show Mom composure."

Just like in any other sport, no one wins all the time. Your reason for showing should be that it's FUN. If you're showing only to win, you may be sorely disappointed and it won't be fun.

Rule #8 – **Bring a good sense of humor and patience.** Horse shows are 'hurry up and wait.' 2 hours of getting ready, grooming, warming up, getting dressed, make up and hair. All this for 5 minutes in the ring.

Rule #9 – **Don't bug your trainer with questions that can wait,** when they are busy trying to get riders/horses into a class. Wait until it's quiet.

Rule #10 – **Don't interrupt your daughter's lesson or trainer.** You're paying your trainer for a reason. If you disagree with something, pull the trainer aside afterwards and voice your concern.

Rule #11 – **Don't be a poor sport and don't tolerate it from your daughter.** Other than the yelling and screaming, there's nothing worse than a rider stomping, crying and complaining down the breezeway and worse yet when her Mom does the same thing. Or just complains extremely loudly and goes on forever about how she or her daughter was cheated out of a ribbon and how the judge sucks and the other horses suck. Don't do it.

On this note: **If the judge didn't see it, it didn't happen. Sometimes this is in your favor, sometimes not, but that's the way it is, period. If the 1st place horse missed a lead or flubbed a transition and the judge had her back turned, it DIDN'T happen.**

Rule #12 - **Be supportive to all of the riders and horses.** This is up there with Sportsmanship. It's important to support your Team. Give hugs and high-fives to the other girls, even if she may have just beaten your daughter. It could be reversed in the next class. A ribbon is never worth hurt feelings, really.

Rule #13 – **Look out for horses and get out of the way.** In the aisles, entering the warm up, where ever...horses have the right of way. Don't stand by the gate. People/horses need to get in and out. If you're going to converse, get to the side, out of the way of riders/horses. You can clap and shout, only when the placings are announced after the class or in Saddle seat classes or Costume Classes or Liberty. It's not a ball game. ☺ When in doubt, follow what the crowd is doing.

Rule #14 – **Be respectful of the Show Personnel.** In general, shows are run by volunteers. Volunteers at the gate, handing out ribbons, announcing, show manager, etc. BE NICE. The Show Manager and Show Secretary are there to help the Trainers, Riders and parents and to make sure the show is running smoothly.

Show Etiquette and RULES are that riders/trainers/parents DO NOT speak to the judge. If you have a concern or question, let the show manager know or, at a rated show, let the Show Steward know. They can probably address your concern or make an appointment for you to speak with the judge AFTER your classes are done.

Rule #15 – **If a horse rears or bucks or a rider falls off or any other unusual thing happens in the ring - DON'T PANIC, DON'T YELL or SCREAM.** Noise scares the horses and makes it worse. We don't want to make it worse. Trainers and show personnel will handle it. In the event a horse or rider is hurt, (which doesn't happen often) a vet is on call and at bigger shows, an EMT is present.

Rule #16 – **Be mindful of the horses. Horses are FLIGHT animals.** Even the most well-trained, mellow horses will freak out about something. **Do NOT stand at the rail when it is above the ring.** To the horse, you could be a bobcat waiting to pounce. **Other evil, scary things are bags, baby strollers, coats, buggies, kids jumping or running or screaming in the seats/bleachers, etc. Do not go over to the rail and take off your coat and get your lunch out of a grocery bag.** You could spook a horse in the ring and ruin their class or worse the horse could take off and someone could get hurt. Everyone there paid good money, just like you. And it's a shame when stupid things like screaming kids spook their horse and ruin their class.

This is particularly important when young riders (Walk/trot) or young horses (junior) are in the ring.

Let's go over the parent's part of the show. **Money.** Yep, that's what a parent's main job is at the horse show....writing the check. The trainer takes care of the horse and hauling and set up and getting the girls ready and to their classes and your job is to write the check. Sounds terrible, I know. We can pretend to be useful at the shows, but most of us just aren't that much help.

Food bringers, i.e. parents, are seriously, very important. Some parents bring a lunch or snack for everyone or just their own kid. **But, make sure your daughter has food and snacks and drinks** (juice and Gatorade and water are best). Also, make sure she has a little (\$5-10) money to buy a drink or nachos at the show or to join in if someone is making a McDonalds or Café Rio run. "Take out" is what you'll need, too, and don't dawdle....you may miss that 2 minute class that you drove 30 miles and waited all day to see.

Make sure your daughter is to the show **ON TIME** (ask your trainer when, but you generally need to be at the show 1-1 ½ hours before your class). The classes do **NOT** have an exact time on them....in fact, it's pretty vague. 1st of the morning, after 1st break, after lunch, etc. The trainers can make their best guess, but just to be sure, don't have anything else going on that day. Showing up for your kid's horse show is not like showing up for a baseball game. Horse shows generally run all day, have many different divisions, and you daughter may show in one to several classes throughout the day. What this means for the parent is that **you could be there all day**, and have the thrill of watching her compete in very short segments, and then wait around for the next class. And repeat the process.

Be early and be rested! Just like for a big test at school, **sleep and eat well** before class. ☺

Parents, especially the 1st year, are great horse holders, number pinner on'ers, boot duster off'ers and class number time checkers, but that's about it. Don't expect much out of yourself. Some of the more proficient 'horse mom's' help groom , do hooves, give the horse a bath, braid, longe horses, etc., but until you can, it's best to **get out of the way**.

What to do at a show and some hints: (In no particular order...)

- Make a list of your daughter's classes. The class number, class name, day, approx. time. The class # are also written on the back of the number they wear on their back. The number goes with the HORSE, not the rider.
- **Make sure you know your daughter's NUMBER! They all look the same in the ring and that's the way the placings are called....number 1st.**
- Check the white board. The trainers have put down any memos, classes and notes for the day here.
- Find your barn's table inside the arena, if they have one.
- The best place for you to be 10 min. before and when your daughter is in the class is up on the bleachers. That way, you're in place for pictures and videos and you're **not** in your daughter's space while she's warming up her horse and preparing herself.
- Double check your camera and video. Are the batteries dead? Do you have memory?
- Bring a book or knitting....
- Make sure you put your child's or horse's name on EVERYTHING. It gets lost and mixed up and loaned out.
- Make sure that if show clothes get filthy (especially the ACTS/ Youth Saddle clothes) go ahead and wash them and make sure to **bring them back**. **DON'T FORGET TO TAKE THE NUMBER OFF THE SHIRT 1ST!** Use a cheap garment bag to help keep them clean.
- Don't take everything other moms or people say to heart. They may be wrong. They may not know as much as they think they do. Everyone has an opinion about how certain riders and horses did in the class. My daughter has been showing for 8 years now and I still only pick the top winners maybe half the time. I can just now notice a wrong lead, but I still can't tell whether they're on the correct diagonal. Don't feel bad if you can't see what your daughter or her horse did 'wrong'. She may have done nothing wrong, just other horses/riders did better. Sometimes, even the Trainers don't know why. Don't sweat it.
- Now, on the other hand, experienced show moms DO have a lot of knowledge to offer. Don't be afraid to ask or take advice.

Here's some stuff you should put on the Mom's (or Dad's) list.

- Comfortable clothes. Nothing fancy. Preferably those clothes you don't care about. One thing a horse show isn't, is a fashion show. (out of the ring, at least) No white shirts, no heels, no sandals. Shoes should be waterproof, manure-proof and non-slippery in the mud. They should be well-broken in and ones you can run in...as in back to the tack room or to the car for whatever your daughter inevitably forgot.
 - Make sure your jacket or pants have large, deep pockets. Bring extra jackets even if you don't think you'll need them.
 - Stressed because you didn't have time for makeup and your hair's in a scrunchy? Join the crowd.
 - I've found wearing contacts to a show is bad. The wind and dust and shavings just really irritate the eyes. Sunglasses are great!
- Food. Did I mention food? ☺ Bring a small flexible cooler for water bottles, etc.
- Leave your purse at home. You just can't keep track of it and carry everything else. Put your debit card and some cash, etc in your pocket.
- Paperwork: Keep a 'Horse Show Bible'. Keep several COPIES of your Lease agreement, bill of sale, registration papers, USEF & AHA membership cards for the rider and trainer in this binder. Your trainer may do this or may have you do this.
- Keep a copy or write down what classes you signed up for. If you have more than 1 horse or more than 1 rider, keep track of those classes too!
- You can ADD classes at the Arabian shows, but not scratch the class (well, you can, but you won't get your money back.) When in doubt, don't pay for the class ahead of time – add it later.
- When writing your check for the entries.....consider writing a blank check. Yes, a blank check. I've never, ever heard of bad things (fraud) happening and it is SO MUCH EASIER than trying to figure things and checks out at the end.
- DO keep track of classes added and subtracted (at fun shows and all breed shows, you can drop classes and get your money back.)
- DO go up to the show secretary and 'check out' at the end of the show. Make sure your and their accounting is right.
- The Trainer's will set up the stalls, haul the horses, get food and water, set up drapes for the tack.
- If you have to add/scratch a class, go up to the show office. Everything is under the HORSE and HORSE NUMBER.
 - For example, Lillie and Kat are riding Superman at the show. They will wear the same number.
 - Kat is riding Superman and Mo at the show. She will wear #1 for Soup and #2 for Mo.
 - Generally, The trainers will get ALL of the horse numbers.
 - Do NOT lose the number! Do NOT wash the number!
- Don't feel overly guilty if you can't see all of her classes, all day for 3-4 days is a bit much to fit into a schedule.....she has plenty of trainers and teammates cheering. Have another parent get some pictures.
- The lunch and dinner breaks are generally just for the judges. Lunch and dinner breaks are open arena times for the kids to practice and get a lesson. Again, check with your trainer.
- If the show is far away from your house, for example in Spanish Fork, see if the Trainers or others are getting a hotel room. For a fee, your child could stay with the Trainer (or another mom) and thus have an easy ride in the morning. Again, check with your Trainer. Even for closer shows, sleepovers and carpools are great.