

## **A Brief Description of all riding and handling disciplines**

You hear a lot of people say that they like to ride or show in a certain discipline. In reality, we all love spending time with our horses, whether it is riding or showing halter or just admiring them in the paddock. This document will help you understand what each area, discipline or style entails.

**Western Pleasure** – Western riding began here in the United States in the mid 1600's. American cowboys needed to work long hours in the saddle over rough terrain, sometimes needing to rope cattle with a lariat or lasso. Because of the necessity to control the horse with one hand and use a rope with the other, western horses were trained to neck rein, that is, to change direction with light pressure of a rein against the horse's neck. Horses were also trained to exercise a certain degree of independence in using their natural instincts to follow the movements of a cow, thus a riding style developed that emphasized a deep, secure seat, and training methods encouraged a horse to be responsive on very light rein contact. Today, it is an enjoyable way of riding for many people. A pleasure horse should look like they are pleasure to ride and you are having the time of your life riding that horse. Smile!

**English Pleasure** – English riding originated in Europe and was brought to America. It was thought to be a traditional type of riding with a lightweight saddle. There are many variations in English riding, but all feature a flat saddle without the deep seat, high cantle or saddle horn seen on a Western saddle. English disciplines are all designed to allow the horse the freedom to move in the most optimal manner for a given task. Most versions of English riding require riders to use both hands on the reins, rather than just one hand. Riders also frequently "post" to the trot (rising and sitting in rhythm with each stride) in many circumstances; though there are also times English riders may sit the trot. Though the differences in equipment appear dramatic, fewer differences between English and Western riding exist than most people think. Both styles require riders to have a solid seat, with the hips and shoulders balanced over the feet, with hands independent of the seat so as to avoid jerking the horse in the mouth and interfering with its performance.

**Huntseat** – This term is used in the US and Canada to refer to a style of forward seat riding commonly found at American horse shows. The Hunt seat is based on the tradition of fox hunting. Hunt seat competition in North America includes both flat and over fences for show hunters. Competition over fences where the horse's movement, form, style and way of going is paramount. May include a "hunter under saddle" section that does not require jumping, judging the horse's movement on the flat. Many show jumping competitors began by riding in the hunter divisions, before moving into the jumper divisions.

**Saddleseat** – This is a style of riding within the category of English riding that is designed to show off the high trotting action of certain horse breeds, like the Saddlebred, Tennessee Walker, National Show Horse, Morgan or Arabian. The goal of the Saddle Seat riding style is to show off the horse's extravagant gaits, particularly the trot. All saddleseat riding is done on the flat

**Reining** - This sport is a western riding competition for horses where the riders guide the horses through a precise pattern of circles, spins, and stops. All work is done at the lope and gallop; the fastest of the horse gaits. Reining is often described as a Western form of dressage riding, as it requires the horse to be responsive and in tune with its rider, whose aids should not be easily seen, and judges the horse on its ability to perform a set pattern of movements. This is the event in which you will see things like flying lead changes and sliding stops.

**Halter** – This event is where you show your horse or pony in a halter or bridle to the judge in hand, meaning that they are led not ridden. You walk and trot with your horse to show the judge your horse's conformation, obedience and way of moving. Classes require that horses be meticulously groomed before entering the ring, be trained to stand correctly in the style dictated by their breed or discipline, and to walk and trot on command in a designated pattern or line. It is a fantastic way to get started at a horse show.

**Driving** - Driving, when applied to horses is a broad term for hitching any equine to a wagon, carriage, cart, sleigh, or other horse-drawn vehicle by means of a harness and working them in this way. It encompasses a wide range of activities from pleasure driving, to harness racing, to farm work, horse shows, and even International combined driving competition sanctioned by the FEI. For training purposes, "driving" may also include the practice of *long-lining* (*long reining*), wherein a horse is driven without a cart by a handler walking behind or behind and to the side of the animal. This technique is used in the early stages of training horses for riding as well as for driving.

**Stadium/Show Jumping** – In this sport, you have to jump with your horse over a course of fences. Your aim is to have a “clear round” This means that you must jump each fence without your horse refusing, running away or knocking any part of the jump down. If a tie occurs, then horse and rider do the course again timed. The fastest - clear round wins.

**Cross Country** – This is another quick paced sport. Horse and rider go through a course of natural and manmade jumps across open fields. Jumps may consist of water, trees, ditches, bushes and rocks and can be on unlevel ground up or down. This competition is also timed so the horses are galloping between jumps. It is a very athletic event.

**Dressage** – A French term meaning *training*, a form of both training and competition on the flat that emphasizes natural training of the horse to perform calmly and quietly in complete obedience to the rider. For dressage, the horse and rider have to perform special movements at set markers or ‘letters’ in the dressage arena. It has many times been compared to ballet or figure skating for horse and riders. The Royal Lipizzaner Stallions have made Classical Dressage a known event.

**Eventing** – In this sport, the horse and rider take part in three phases of competition. They are dressage, cross country and show jumping. Eventing tests the skill of the rider and the ability and obedience of the horse. It is an extremely athletic and exciting competition.

**Endurance** - A sport, in which the Arabian dominates at the top levels, has become very popular in the United States and in Europe. Endurance races take place over a given, measured distance and the horses have an even start. Races begin at 20 miles (32 km) and peak at 100 miles (160 km). Horses are checked by vets at various spots during the race, some known and others are surprises. If a horse does not “pass” the vet check, they are finished with the race.

**Cutting** - This sport requires a cutting horse which is an athletic and willing animal that is trained to instinctively keep a cow from returning to the herd. In the actual event, the horse and rider select and separate a cow (typically a steer or heifer) out of a small group. The cow then tries to return to its herd; the rider loosens the reins “puts his hand down” and leaves it entirely to the horse to keep the cow separated, a job the best horses do with style. You better have a secure seat and yes, you can use the horn!

**Equitation** – This is defined by the art of horseback riding. Words that describe this are smooth, beautiful, flawless, controlled, proper, good posture, quiet independent hands, steady legs and a secure seat. Basically any equitation class is judged with the emphasis on your riding ability and the quietness and effectiveness of your aids. You may be asked to perform a pattern to show off your control and obedient horse. While your horse may make a mistake, you should handle that mistake in a calm and controlled manner.

*\*Some parts of these descriptions were taken from Wikipedia.*