

English Learn to Ride Levels 1 – 10 Overview

Rider 1

Riders at Level 1 should be in the beginning stages of their equestrian development. At this stage, riders are well started with the basics of riding and are able to demonstrate a good position, knowledge of “aids” and an appreciation for “safe” habits. Riders at Level 1 should not be balancing on the horse’s mouth. Hands should be independent at walk. The use of a neck strap in the absence of a standing martingale (neck strap) is allowed to be used periodically at the trot. Contact is applied to step, turn and slow down, reins are then returned to an inactive state. The Rider 1 evaluation is comprised of a written test, a practical horse knowledge component and a flat riding component.

Rider 2

Riders at Level 2 will demonstrate more polish and knowledge than Riders at Level 1 and will be more independent in both riding and stable management skills. The Rider 2 evaluation is comprised of a written test, a practical horse knowledge component and a flat riding component.

Rider 3

Riders at Level 3, will now demonstrate the ability to ride independently. Hand contact should be as steady and sympathetic as possible to the horse’s mouth at all three paces with equal contact in both hands. They have to understand the impact of the hand effect on the horse’s mouth to achieve a goal, (i.e. slow down) and to release the pressure when the goal is achieved. There should be evidence of an effective position becoming established. The movements should be demonstrated with accuracy, although loss of bend etc. is to be expected at this level. Riders are expected to know and to demonstrate knowledge of correct diagonals throughout the riding portion, including in the “jumping” phase. Although riders at Level 3 are now expected to ride an individual flat test, other horses should be in the vicinity so riders will not have to deal with a panicked, lonely horse. The Rider 3 evaluation is comprised of a written test, a practical horse knowledge component, a flat riding component as well as a jumping component.

Rider 4

Riders at this level are starting to co-ordinate the use of independent aids (i.e. leg being used to support hand contact). Riders can establish but not maintain a soft sensation with the horse’s mouth and can feel when the horse is responding softly to the bit (i.e. relaxing jaw, mouthing bit – the “wet mouth”). They can demonstrate bend although not necessarily maintain bend. Riders are expected to complete a flat test and ride jumps at a height of 2’ (0.6m). Written and practical portions also tested at this level. The option continues at Rider Level 4 to take either the full riding component or only the flat component.

Rider 5

Riders at Level 5 have a solid awareness of a horse moving forward willingly and maintaining rhythm and relaxation. Riders should be able to recognize “tracking up” or lack thereof, by observing other horses in the test. This level introduces non-progressive transitions walk to canter/halt to trot. The rider should know the five different rein aids and the theory of their influence on the horse. Riders are in the LTED phase of Learning Training to Ride. Riders at this level will be jumping fences at a height of 2’3” (0.7m) in addition to a flat test and a lunging phase. Written and practical portions also tested at this level. The option continues at Rider Level 5 to take either the full riding component or only the flat component.

Rider 6

Riders at Level 6 will demonstrate the ability to ride forward from leg to hand. They will be able to ride the horse forward with impulsion while maintaining rhythm, regularity and evenness of pace. The contact demonstrated will not impede the horse's desire to move forward and is beginning to create a "round" outline, particularly at the trot. Overuse of the hand and lack of leg will be penalized. The evaluator should give consideration to a candidate who is riding a horse as forward as the horse's ability allows without excessive speed. Riders at Level 6 will complete a flat test and jump fences at a height of 2'6" (0.75m) in addition to a flat test and a lunging phase. Written and practical portions also tested at this level. The option continues at Rider Level 6 to take either the full riding component or only the flat component.

Rider 7

Riders at Level 7 should ride on consistent contact supported by the leg maintaining rhythm, suppleness contact and straightness. Riders are now aware of lateral and longitudinal suppleness and appropriate exercises to demonstrate suppleness. They will be executing simple lateral movements at walk. They can lengthen and shorten stride at trot. Riders at Level 7 should continue to demonstrate working trot and a true three beat working canter throughout the flat test. The Rider 7 should be able to identify the loss of true bend and true straightness by observing other horses. Riders at Level 7 will complete a flat test and jump fences at a height of 2'9" (0.88m) in addition to a lunging component. Written and practical portions also tested at this level. The option continues at Rider Level 7 to take either the full riding component or only the flat component

Rider 8

Riders at Level 8 are competent with sound English equitation skills and are able to recognize "true" quality of movement. Riders are beginning to ride the horse with impulsion and engagement. They have the ability to achieve consistent bend and straightness as required and can demonstrate the ability to control the outside shoulder. They can demonstrate the achievement of bend by the correct use of the inside leg and outside rein. The horse should be consistently "round" at all paces. They are able to identify basic training problems and offer options for their correction. Over fences, the Rider at Level 8 will jump a medal type course of 2'9 – 3' (0.85- 0.90m), with confidence and authority. The rider should be able to influence the horse in a positive fashion and improve its way of going. In addition to this there is a flat test and lunging component presented. Written and practical portions also tested at this level. The option continues at Rider Level 8 to take either the full riding component or only the flat component.

Rider 9/10

Candidates for Rider 9 have realized that their skill progression has been achieved by doing, and now have developed their ability to assimilate information by exposure to various training opportunities. They can now apply it to their own practical application in the riding, training and care of their horses. In the jumping module, candidates will ride a predetermined medal style course set at 3'3"-3'6" (1.0-1.10M). For the Dressage module, the test will be a Third Level. Candidates taking the Eventing module will be expected to ride at the Training Level. The Rider 10 will be required to perform all of the requirements of the Rider 9. However, the Rider 10 will be evaluated on their ability to ride three unfamiliar horses at the evaluation.