

UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND  
EXTENSION



# Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship & Equitation Standards Handbook

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# Maryland 4-H

## Equine Showmanship & Equitation Standards

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The *Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards* program is effective beginning January 1, 2020. This program supersedes all previous editions of the *Maryland 4-H Horse and Pony Performance Levels* and the *Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards* programs. Please check the Maryland 4-H Horse Program website (<https://extension.umd.edu/4-h/4-h-program-areas/4-h-horse-program>) for additional information and possible updates to this document.

Please direct all inquiries to: Maryland 4-H Center, 8020 Greenmead Drive, College Park, MD 20740, Ph: 301-314-9070; Fax: 301-314-7146.

The Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards program (2019) was revised and updated from the Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards program by the following individuals: R. Gunderson, C. Anderson, and Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards Visioning Committee members: T. Adams, R. Anselmo, E. Bailey, D. Buschling, S. Ferrara, and C. Stibolt.

The Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards was originally developed by A. Burk, Ph.D. and R. Cosden, and approved by the Maryland 4-H Animal Science Curriculum Committee, October 2005. Revised and updated by K.M. Wilson, April 2008. Revised and updated by K.M. Wilson and L. Mundy, Fall 2009.

## **I. Overview**

The Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards are designed to help 4-H members progressively develop horsemanship skills throughout their participation in the Maryland 4-H Horse Project. The Standards have been developed to foster learning for individuals that may or may not have access to horses on a regular basis and for those that ride English or Western disciplines.

The Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards are divided into Knowledge, and Handling/Riding components in Four (4) Tiers. The Knowledge Tiers are designed to help members develop proper horse management and husbandry skills with emphasis on horse safety, care and riding. Completion of the Knowledge Tiers does not require use of a live animal by the 4-H member. The Handling/Riding Tiers encourage members to become safe, effective, and confident riders with a sound knowledge of equipment and tack. 4-H members must have access to a horse either by owning, leasing, borrowing, or sharing a horse to participate in the Handling/Riding Tiers. While not required, members are encouraged to become familiar with all riding disciplines. Completion of certain Tiers may be required for participation in State and/or County 4-H Horse programs and events. Completion of Tiers is required for participation in the Maryland State Fair 4-H Horse Show and most Maryland County 4-H Horse Shows. Please see requirements.

Tier achievement will be completed by participation in tests conducted by current and approved Examiners.

All 4-H members should be given the opportunity to participate in the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards. The decision to participate is strictly that of the 4-H member and is not mandatory, except for those who will exhibit at the Maryland State 4-H Horse and Pony Show, and as required by some counties.

Maryland 4-H will offer educational training and resources to UME staff, volunteers, and 4-H members to educate them about the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards.

Copies of the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards materials will be available online on the Maryland 4-H Horse Program. Written tests and answer keys for Examiners' use in conducting member testing sessions will be distributed by the Maryland 4-H Center to County 4-H Offices.

UME Volunteer Leaders should also assist 4-H members in becoming knowledgeable and skillful in the areas covered in each Tier through various learning activities including talks by invited speakers, study sessions, learning activities, and educational clinics on a variety of topics. However, it is the full responsibility of the 4-H member to study, practice, and master the skills required for the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards before participating in a testing session.

## **II. References and Resource Materials**

Educational resource materials will be made available as references without expressed or implied warranty or endorsement and are not intended to be either restrictive or all-inclusive. Study guides

and other resources are available on the Maryland 4-H Horse Program website for Knowledge Tiers, which include suggested references. See <https://extension.umd.edu/4-h/4-h-program-areas/4-h-horse-program>.

### **III. Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards Advisory Committee**

The Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards Advisory Committee will be comprised of approved Examiners and UME staff and faculty. The Committee should meet at least once a year to evaluate the success of the program and to make recommendations to the Maryland 4-H Center if changes become necessary.

### **IV. General Requirements**

1. All youth attempting the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards must be enrolled in the Maryland 4-H program via 4-HOnline, and enrolled in a 4-H Horse Project.
2. Each 4-H member must start out at Tier 1, regardless of age or previous experience, and they must pass all Tiers in sequential order.
3. A horse may be owned, borrowed, or leased for the testing session, but may not be shared by two (2) individuals at a testing session unless permission is obtained from the Examiner conducting the testing session, at least one week prior to the testing session.
4. A 4-H member's Knowledge Tier may exceed their Handling/Riding Tier at any time; this is to allow participation in the program for 4-H members that do not own or have easy access to a horse.
5. A 4-H member's Handling/Riding Tier may not exceed their Knowledge Tier by more than one Tier; this is to ensure that the 4-H member's management and husbandry skills are developed in addition to their handling/riding skills.
6. The Handling/Riding and Knowledge Tiers are separate tests and may be administered separately, at different times. However, it is suggested that they be administered on the same day. Each Riding testing session should be completed in its entirety in one day. Multiple Tiers beyond Tier 2 should not be tested on the same day (i.e. A 4-H member cannot test for Handling/Riding Tier 3 on the same day they tested for Handling/Riding Tier 2; however Tiers 1 and 2 can be tested on the same day).
7. The Knowledge will consist of a written exam. Written exams will be provided by the Maryland 4-H Center to the County Extension Office.

### **The following guidelines apply to all Tiers:**

1. The 4-H member should contact their 4-H leader when ready to test. The 4-H leader will work with the County Extension Office and local Examiner to coordinate a testing session. Testing sessions will be coordinated to accommodate multiple 4-H members when possible.
2. A 4-H member may be tested at their home riding stable for Tier 1 and 2. Tiers 3 and 4 must be off site for testing.
3. A 4-H member may complete Tiers 1 and 2 at the same testing session (time and location). Tiers 3 and 4 must each be completed at separate testing sessions.
4. No family member or instructor/trainer of a 4-H member will be allowed to serve as the Examiner for the 4-H member.
5. The 4-H member must provide all tack and equipment needed for all testing requirements (i.e. lunging and bandaging), in addition to providing a suitable horse.
6. A 4-H member may attend a Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards testing session in a county other than their own with approval from the Examiner within the host county that is conducting the testing. There may be an Impartial Observer designated by the Examiner or testing session organizer.

### **V. Scoring the Test**

1. 4-H members will receive a Certificate of Achievement following successful completion of each Tier.
2. Each Knowledge and Handling/Riding Tier is comprised of multiple sections. Each section is graded as Exceeds Standards (ES), Meets Standards (MS), or Does Not Meet Standards (DNMS). ES and MS are passing scores. DNMS is not a passing score.
  - a. If a 4-H member does not pass one or two sections of a Tier, they may retest that/those sections within 60 days with the original Examiner.
  - b. If a 4-H member does not pass more than two sections of the Tier, they must retest the entire Tier at a different testing session. Retesting of an entire Tier does not have to be done with the same Examiner that performed the original testing. It is recommended that a 4-H member who needs to retest allow adequate time for study and practice before retesting. The recommended retesting period is 30 to 90 days from the original testing session.
3. Examiners must document reasons why the 4-H member did OR did not meet expectations on the examination scoresheets and discuss the decision with the candidate at the testing session. All Examiner comments and test sheets should be copied. With one copy remaining with the Examiner and a copy mailed to 1) the County Extension

Office and 2) the 4-H member within 30 days following a testing session. The County Extension Office should enter this data in 4HOnline by the end of the year deadline.

4. Examiners may not give the test back to the youth.

## **VI. Responsibilities of the 4-H Member**

1. A 4-H member can request testing information for the club, county, or state Tier by contacting the appropriate club, county, or state leader and indicating which Tier and what discipline they will be riding if requesting a Riding test
2. Provide proof of passing preceding Equine Showmanship & Equitation Tier (or corresponding Horsemanship Standards Program Level) through one of the following:
  - a. A completed Equine Showmanship & Equitation Tier Scoresheet (or corresponding Horsemanship Standards Program Level Testing Sheet) signed by an approved Examiner, or
  - b. A copy of their Certificate of Achievement from the previous Tier (or corresponding Level), **or**
  - c. Written verification from the County Extension Office or completion of previous Tier (or corresponding level).
3. Provide safe, appropriate, and correctly fitting tack and attire for horse and rider.  
(Note: Any unsafe or unsuitable tack or attire may be grounds for dismissal from testing at the Examiner's discretion.)
4. Bring an appropriate horse to the testing for Handling/Riding Standards testing. The horse must be capable of completing appropriate Tiers. Horses that the Examiner considers unsafe for the rider or others will be excused from the testing.
5. Secure and prepare all required apparel and equipment needed for testing (See Section XI. Required Apparel and Section XII. Horse Turnout Checklist) bring it with you on the day of the testing session.
6. Come prepared to discuss and/or demonstrate any of the study requirements for the Tier being tested and previous Tiers. Be willing to accept constructive criticism and suggestions with an open mind.
7. Acknowledge that the Examiner has full authority to pass or not pass any 4-H member at the testing and that the Examiner's decision is final.

## **VII. Responsibilities of the Examiner**

1. The Examiner must be a University of Maryland Extension (UME) volunteer currently enrolled in 4HOnline and in good standing. (Volunteer status is approved at the county level).

2. Attend a Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards Online Training and Testing. Tiers 1 and 2 will be a webinar, 3 and 4 will be in person.
3. Take the necessary certification tests for each Tier and be approved by the Maryland State 4-H Office as an approved Examiner. This approval will be on file through 4HOnline.
4. Examiners are required to attend a Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards advisory meeting/webinar yearly OR as needed to update the standards in order to keep their Examiner status. This is to ensure that the Examiner stays current with rules and regulations within the program.
5. Be familiar with all aspects of the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards and subject material.
6. Act as a role model for 4-H members including:
  - a. Dressing appropriately.
  - b. Utilizing and following all safety equipment and guidelines.
  - c. Acting professionally and diplomatically at all times.
7. Be prepared to discuss, and/or demonstrate techniques correctly when asked by a 4-H member.
8. Establish communication and rules with parents and 4-H members at the onset of a testing. Insist upon good sportsmanship and safety at all times.
9. Be sensitive to the 4-H member and be able to conduct the test in a positive, educational framework. Examiners must provide written comments on the test sheets and share those with the 4-H member in a kind, positive, and well-communicated way. Examiners should notify 4-H members when they have not met a requirement, and in the interest of the 4-H member provide the 4-H member with one more additional opportunities to meet that requirement. 4-H members that have not met requirements on three or more sections of a test may be given the option by the Examiner to go on or discontinue the testing.
10. Understand that the safety of 4-H members, Examiners, horses and all others involved with the Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards is of primary importance at all times. Any activity or practice posing a threat to the safety of those involved may result in dismissal from the testing at the discretion of the Examiner.
11. Ensure the overall safety of riding areas, jump courses, and weather conditions. No riding is permissible during thunderstorms, excessive rain, unsafe footing, or other extreme circumstances. The Examiner may cancel a testing should the facilities or weather prove to be unsafe.
12. Excuse/disqualify any unsafe or unsuitable horses or tack from the testing, with an explanation to the 4-H member.
13. Excuse/disqualify any 4-H members or parents acting in an unsafe or unsportsmanlike

manner.

14. Examiner must know how to use the Impartial Observer (IO). The IO should be introduced to Examiners, 4-H members, and spectators, and be present during the entire testing. The IO cannot be related to the 4-H members that are being testing or the Examiner. They must be familiar with the requirements of the relevant Standard, testing procedures and philosophy. The function of the Impartial Observer is as follows:
  - a. To watch the conduct of the test and note any unusual circumstances regarding horses, facilities, weather conditions, schedule, etc., which might affect one or more 4-H members.
  - b. To encourage a positive and friendly atmosphere.
  - c. To explain the order of the test to the 4-H member, parent, and other observers.
  - d. To act as a liaison between parents, 4-H member, and Examiners who are under the obligation of completing the test on schedule.
  - e. To gather information from parents during the testing, and listen to any positive or negative concerns.
  - f. To report impartially on the conduct and circumstances of the test, on the 4-H member/Examiner/spectator relationship, and the overall atmosphere of the test.
  - g. Comments that are overheard about an individual 4-H member's progress are strictly confidential and are not to be discussed with anyone during or after the testing.
15. Understand that testing sessions can be highly stressful for horses and 4-H members and be aware of signs of distress, overriding, or over-facing by horses and riders.
16. Parents and 4-H members may disagree with the Examiners evaluation. The Examiner will give explanations for why a 4-H member was excused or marked down on the testing sheet and reinforce it with a verbal explanation.
17. If testing a 4-H member from another county, an Examiner is encouraged to check with other Examiners and club leaders of the 4-H member's county in order to find out why they are testing out of county.
18. The Examiner's decision is final and will be adhered to at the testing session.



## VIII. Reasons to Excuse a Horse or Rider from a Testing Session

### Horse

1. Obvious unsoundness.
2. Unsuitability (i.e. unsafe or dangerous to spectators, other riders or horses at testing).
3. Over-faced by the nature of the testing (specifically, young or green horses).
4. Unconditioned or otherwise physically strained by work required at the Tier being tested.

### Rider

1. Injury or illness while unmounted or mounted that impairs the ability to safely control a horse.
2. Obvious disregard for safety or welfare of horse.
3. Excessive use of natural aids or corrections using artificial aids.
4. Disregard for or refusal of Examiner's instructions or requests.
5. Unsportsmanlike behavior at any time.
6. Once testing session has begun, 4-H members or others may be dismissed at any time for outside coaching.

### Tack

1. Lack of an approved ASTM–SEI safety helmet or an improperly fitting helmet.
2. Lack of safe and appropriate riding apparel including long pants, sleeved shirt, and hard soled, heeled riding boots.
3. Tack that is in poor condition including, but not limited to frayed stitching, cracking leather, or rotting.
4. Inappropriately fitting tack that cannot be corrected at the testing through the use of a hole punch or replacement of leathers or other pieces of equipment.

## IX. How the Testing Session Will Be Organized

**Organization of Testing Session-** The testing session may be organized by the 4-H Club Leader, Examiner, or UME Volunteer.

**Knowledge Testing** – Testing for the Knowledge Tier will consist of a written exam provided to the Examiner by the Maryland State 4-H Office or County Extension Office.

**Handling/Riding Testing** – Testing for the Handling/Riding Tier consists of: 1) presentation of horse and rider, 2) handling/riding exam, 3) oral practical, and identification of equipment, and 4) handling or demonstration involving horses (where applicable).

**Approved Examiner** – A list of approved Examiners may be obtained from the Maryland 4-H Center, online ([www.4horse.umd.edu](http://www.4horse.umd.edu)) or from the County Extension Office. The Examiner does not need to be from the county that is hosting the testing session. Please contact Examiners as early as possible to allow for scheduling.

**Determine the Testing Session Location and Date** – Knowledge Tests do not require horses to be present. The exams may be taken at any location that has a quiet environment for written tests.

Several considerations for Handling/Riding Tests should be made including:

- ◆ Parking availability and space for trailers and unloading
- ◆ Flat areas for riding on the flat, over fences, and/or lunging (these may include outdoor or indoor rings)
- ◆ Footing suitability and fencing conditions
- ◆ Availability of jumps, cavaletti, and/or ground poles
- ◆ Area and seating for written exams and discussion
- ◆ Bathroom facilities
- ◆ Overall safety of facility (no holes, foreign objects, etc.)
- ◆ Weather conditions and forecast (Heat Index, Temperature, Humidity, Availability of Shade)

Also note that if a private facility is used the owners may require additional release forms or paperwork to be completed.

**Exams**—The County Extension Offices will contact the Equine Coordinator to get access to the exams.

**Paperwork** – UME Health Forms and Release Forms must be signed and turned in for all participants (riding or not) and be available to the volunteer in charge. Accident/Incident Guidelines and Report Forms should also be readily available. Additionally, if a private facility is used, participants may need to complete additional releases, paperwork, or horse health requirements (i.e. required vaccinations, Health Certificate, etc.). 4-H members are reminded that when transporting horses anywhere in the state of Maryland they are required to carry proof of a negative Coggins test (Equine Infectious Anemia test) and a Self- Certification of Health, and will be asked to produce it at the testing session.

**Provide Volunteers** –Volunteers may be needed to place required ring equipment, steward a ring, assist the Examiner, hold horses, or supervise 4-H members. The Examiner cannot be everywhere at once, so it is suggested to have a Testing Session Organizer that can take care of paperwork, check-in 4-H members and help answer questions that people may have. 4-H parents or leaders may volunteer for some roles at the discretion of the Examiner.

**Food/Water** - 4-H members should bring their own food and water to testing sessions.

**Spectators/Pets** – Parents, family members, non-testing 4-H members, and other spectators should be encouraged to watch the testing session. Dogs and other animals (including horses that are not being ridden in the testing session) should not be allowed on the grounds unless they are stabled there. If a testing session is held at a private facility please adhere to any additional requests made by the owners.

**Safety** –It is the Examiner’s responsibility upon arrival to ensure that the facilities are adequate and safe. If for any reason the facilities or weather are not sufficient, the Examiner may cancel the testing session. All 4-H members are expected to adhere to the *Maryland 4-H Horse and Pony Show Rule Book* safety guidelines and other conduct rules. Helmets and appropriate attire must be worn at all times when mounted. There will be a safety inspection at the beginning of the testing session for all 4-H members. Additionally, if any 4-H member or spectator is

observed acting in an unsafe manner it should be reported to the Examiner. Ignoring safety guidelines will be grounds for dismissal from the testing session. Consider securing an EMT or nurse for onsite first aid or having someone who is first aid and CPR certified.

**Preparation Clinic** – This is not a requirement, however, you may plan a “mock” testing session or prep clinic several weeks in advance of the actual testing session for 4-H members to demonstrate their knowledge and to give them sufficient time to work on any weak skill or knowledge areas. Prep clinics may be subject oriented (ex. bandaging or jumping) or may be run exactly as a real testing session would. Local UME volunteers or horse club leaders may run prep clinics.

**Specific Equipment Required by Tiers** – Knowledge and Handling/Riding Tiers require 4-H members to identify such specific things as horse colors, breeds, conformation faults, pieces of tack, blankets, etc. It is the 4-H member’s responsibility to have all required tack and equipment for testing.

**Candidates with Disabilities or Special Needs** – In the event that a 4-H member has a disability or special needs, parents and approved Examiners must discuss the necessary accommodations for the 4-H member. All attempts to meet the special needs of the candidate should be done in accordance with the University of Maryland Extension policy.

## **XI. Required Apparel (unless otherwise noted)**

1. ASTM-SEI approved riding helmet (English or Western)
2. Rider must come dressed prepared for their discipline
3. Collared sleeved shirt, long sleeve or polo shirt
4. Jodhpurs, breeches, or jeans
5. Chaps
6. Gloves
7. Belt
8. Hard soled, heeled riding boots (Field, dress, paddock, roping, or cowboy)
9. Spurs
10. Hair net, must be kept neat
11. Proof of passing previous Tiers
12. UME Liability Form and Health form

## **XII. Horse Turnout Checklist**

### **All Handling/Riding Tiers Participants Should Have Prepared:**

1. Halter
2. Lead rope or shank
3. Grooming tools and kit (hoof pick, mane and tail comb, curry comb, variety of brushes, wipe cloth)
4. Fly spray or mask when appropriate
5. Saddle
6. Saddle Pad
7. Girth/Cinch

8. Bridle
9. Any other boots, pads, or necessary equipment for safety
10. Proof of a negative Coggins test for all horses being ridden by 4-H member

**In addition to the items listed above, participants of the Tiers (riding only) listed below will also need the additional items listed:**

**Tier 2-**

1. Two (2) Protective Boots (may be splint, ankle, bell, or other)
2. Horse Blanket

**Tier 4-**

1. Stable bandage materials for one bandage (padding, wraps, and fasteners)
2. Lunging Equipment, gloves, and helmet (may include cavesson, lunge line, lunge whip, boots)

**XIII. How Horsemanship Standards Levels Correspond to the New Tiers**

<b>Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards Levels</b>	<b>Maryland 4-H Equine Showmanship and Equitation Standards Tiers</b>
1 and 2	1
3 (English & Western Riding)	2
3 (English Jumping)	3
4	4
5 and 6	No Equivalent