

# GUIDELINES FOR GRADING

**Important Note:** This document is designed to assist District Commissioners and Members in general, to understand the grading process. However, this document is not intended to replace the current rules. Therefore, this document must be read in conjunction with all of the current PCAV Rule books which are available from the PCAV.

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## What is Grading

Grading is based on the ability of the horse and rider as a combination, thereby providing the opportunity for each combination to compete at a standard commensurate with their ability.

The grading is achieved by assessing the capability of the horse and rider as a combination, irrespective of the age of the rider or the size of the horse, or the horse's previous grading or performance. A separate grading is required for each discipline.

A competition is not the place for schooling or instruction.

Grading should only occur when the combination is capable of competing safely, and this applies to all age groups.

Downgrading of combinations is allowed in special cases, and this is at the discretion of the District Commissioner.

The District Commissioner is responsible for all grading, and this decision shall be final. The grading may be achieved by one of the following procedures:

- (i) if sufficiently experienced, the District Commissioner may grade on their own initiative after taking into consideration all relevant information such as competitive ability performances.
- (ii) Alternatively, the District Commissioner may solicit assistance from a Grading Panel consisting of Club Instructors, other knowledgeable persons, the Zone Chief Instructor or their Appointee.

Care should be taken to ensure that parents do not unduly influence the grading of their children.

The combination must have attended two Club Rallies before being graded.

The initial grading must take place at a Rally Day. Re-grading may be done at a time other than on a Rally Day.

All grading's must be recorded on the rider's current Membership Card and signed by the District Commissioner.

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## The Following Must Be Noted When Grading

(a) HORSE TRIALS - Grades range from Grade 1, to Grade 5. Combinations are graded according to their level of safety and competence in dressage, cross country and show jumping.

(b) SHOW JUMPING (other than in Horse Trials) grades are PA, PB, PC, PD and PE. The combination needs to be competent enough to negotiate second and third rounds over obstacles with increased heights and spreads.

NOTE: There that the dimensions for Pony Club Show Jumping differ from those in the Horse Trials Show Jumping phase.

(c) DRESSAGE GRADES (other than for Horse Trials) are known as Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4 and Stage 5.

It is often wrongly assumed that no harm is done if a combination is over-faced (i.e. graded higher than their true competency level) in Dressage. However, it is in the dressage arena that we see riders losing patience and sometimes tempers, with the horses nervously anticipating nothing but trouble when the combination is attempting a Test beyond their capability. Refer to the Dressage rule book for further information.

(d) COMBINED TRAINING GRADES are Grade 1, to Grade 5. Combinations are graded according to their competence and safety in dressage and show jumping.

It should be noted that there is no relationship between the heights and spreads in the Show Jumping phase of Horse Trials and those in Pony Club Graded Show Jumping.

(e) HICKSTEAD Grade 1 to Grade 5.

Hickstead competitions are conducted under Horse Trials rules and therefore that Grading will apply.

Please read the current PCAV Rule Books to note the differences between Show Jumping for Horse Trials and Pony Club Graded Show Jumping.

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### Grading Horse Trials

No horse under four (4) years of age is eligible to compete in a Horse Trials. No horse should be graded until he turns four.

Riders in Horse Trials must be at least eight (8) years of age to be eligible to compete.

The heights and spreads, number of obstacles and speeds which all Pony Clubs must use for cross country jumps and show jumps in Horse Trials can be found in the PCAV rule books.

The following table refers to the heights and spreads for Horse Trials as of September 2004.

#### MAXIMUM HEIGHTS AND SPREADS (Cross Country and Show Jumping)

GRADE	MAX Height	MAX Spread at highest point
Grade 1	1.05m	1.20m
Grade 2	0.90m	0.90m
Grade 3	0.75m	0.65m
Grade 4	0.60m	0.50m
Grade 5	0.45m	0.45m

#### (a) HORSE TRIALS — DRESSAGE PHASE

The Candidate rides a Test at the appropriate standard from "Dressage for the Pony Club", (i.e. Stage 5 for Grade 5) and is marked according to the Scale of Marks in the current edition of "Dressage for the Pony Club". The combination must obtain a score of 50% or more.

#### (b) HORSE TRIALS — CROSS COUNTRY PHASE

Where possible a cross country course, set at the height and spread suitable for the grade, should be used. Where a cross country course is not available, the use of show jumps built at some distance from each other and resembling as much as possible cross country fences, should be used. The course need not be full length, but should have at least eight (8) obstacles. Start and finish markers should be in place. See PCAV Horse Trials Rules for information on Water Jumps.

The course should be measured, and the Time Allowed established according to the speed for each grade as shown in "Horse Trials Rules, Combined Training Rules, Guidelines for Show Jumping Judges and Course Builders".

After walking the course, the candidate then rides it, at the prescribed speed; and should be judged and scored as per the Cross Country rules as set down in "Horse Trials Rules".

If the combination of horse and rider incurs three (2) disobediences, not only at one obstacle, but anywhere within the course, then that combination will not be graded, or upgraded. This means that, for example, if the combination has one disobedience at obstacle 1, another at obstacle 3, and a further disobedience at obstacle 7, OR all two disobediences at any one obstacle, then that combination will not be considered suitable for grading, or up-grading.

To be considered for grading, or up-grading, the combination must be able to complete the course with control, and without difficulty.

#### (c) HORSE TRIALS — SHOW JUMPING PHASE

A course should be built according to the specifications for the appropriate grade as shown in "PCAV Horse Trials Rules" i.e. most obstacles at maximum height and spread. The course need not be full length, but should contain at least six (6) obstacles. Start and finish markers should be in place; and the course should be measured, and the Time Allowed established.

The candidate then rides the course at the prescribed speed, and is judged and scored as

per the Horse Trials Show Jumping rules as set down in "Horse Trials Rules".

If the combination of horse and rider incurs three (2) disobediences, not only at one obstacle, but anywhere within the course, then that combination will not be graded, or upgraded. NB there are no increases in the dimensions on the height of the obstacles as only one round is jumped.

Horse Trials grading **MUST** be recorded on the rider's current Membership card.

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### **Grading Combined Training**

(a) **DRESSAGE** — The Candidate rides a Test at the appropriate standard from "Dressage for the Pony Club", (e.g. Stage 5 for Grade 5) and is marked according to the Scale of Marks in the current edition of "Dressage for the Pony Club". The combination must obtain a score of 50% or more.

(b) **SHOW JUMPING** — A course should be built according to the specifications for the appropriate grade as stated in the current edition of "Horse Trials Rules, Combined Training Rules, Guidelines for Show Jumping Judges and Course Builders", page 21. Most of the obstacles should be at maximum height and spread. The course need not be full length, but it should contain at least six (6) obstacles.

Start and finish markers should be in place; the course should be measured and the Time Allowed established.

The Candidate then rides the course at the prescribed speed, and is judged and scored as set down in the current edition of the PCAV "Horse Trials Rules", Penalties for Show Jumping.

If the combination of horse and rider incurs three (2) disobediences, not only at one obstacle, but anywhere within the course, then that combination will not be graded or upgraded.

The grading for Combined Training **MUST** be recorded on the rider's current Membership Card.

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### **Guidelines For Pony Club Graded Show Jumping**

The heights and spreads which all Pony Clubs must use for Show Jumping competitions are

set down in the current edition of the PCAV publications.

Refer to the current rules for Show Jumping dimensions and the maximum heights and spreads to be used in the **FIRST ROUND** of the first event on a day of competition.

The following table refers to the heights as of September 2004

#### **MAXIMUM STARTING HEIGHTS AND SPREADS**

GRADE	MAX. Height	MAX. Spread
A grade	1.15m	1.50m
B Grade	1.00m	1.20m
C Grade	0.85m	0.90m
D Grade	0.70m	0.60m
E Grade	0.53m	0.53m

**PA GRADE** — to consist of top combinations who are competing favorably in PB Grade events.

**PB GRADE** — to consist of combinations showing potential to go to the top, but the horse and/or the rider are lacking in the necessary experience ;or PA Grade events.

**PC GRADE** — to consist of combinations with less ability and experience, but too advanced for PD Grade.

**PD GRADE** — to consist of combinations just beginning to compete in jumping competitions.

**PE GRADE** — for the genuine beginner on a small pony.

It must be remembered that the heights and spreads specified for each Grade, are the heights for the first round of the first event on the day of a competition. After two or three rounds (PB, PC, PD, PE) the combination will be negotiating jumps 0.15m (6") to 0.23m (9") in excess of the maximum starting height. This factor must be considered when deciding the grading for each combination. If any combination in any grade consider they would be over-faced in a jump off (i.e. the second and third rounds) they need not continue.

N.B.: there is no restriction on the finishing height for PA events.

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## **Suggestions For Grading A Group Of Riders For Show Jumping.**

A Show Jumping course should be built at the maximum starting height for PE Grade. Start and finish markers should be in place; the course should be measured and the Time Allowed established.

Combination obstacles are not recommended for PE Grade. Treble obstacles are permitted in PA, PB and PC grades only.

All riders wishing to be graded at PE standard must complete the course with control and without difficulty. The course is then raised 7.5 cm (3") for the second round, and then raised a further 7.5 cm (3") for the third round.

Only those combinations of horse and rider who complete the second and third rounds in a manner considered satisfactory will be graded PE. Any combination considered NOT satisfactory will not be given a grading.

Any combination of horse and rider which appears capable of progressing to the next grade, will be permitted to make the attempt.

The course is then set at the maximum starting height for PD grade, and all riders wishing to be graded, or upgraded, to PD standard must complete the course with control, and without difficulty. The course is then raised 7.5 cm (3") for the second round; then raised a further 7.5 cm (3") for the third round.

Only those combinations completing the second and third rounds in a manner considered satisfactory will be graded PD. Any Combination aspiring for grading, or upgrading, to that standard, who appear to be over-faced in the jump-off (second or third rounds) need not continue, and will remain at the lower grade.

Any combination of horse and rider which appears capable of progressing to the next grade will be permitted to make the attempt.

The same procedure is followed for all other grades, with any combination of horse and rider which has been previously graded, starting at the standard at which they are already graded (not above it), and working up if it is considered they are capable of doing so.

In all cases the need to "hasten slowly" should be strongly advocated. Grading was instigated to encourage riders and horses to keep jumping, and every effort should be made to encourage and assist competitors, but it must be understood that organized competitions are not the time or place for schooling or for instruction, and that a properly graded combination will always give a good performance.

The grading for Show Jumping MUST be recorded on the rider's current Membership Card.

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## **Re-Grading**

Those responsible for grading must be aware of the dangers involved in upgrading, especially from PB to PA grade, before the combination is ready.

It must be remembered that there is no height limit to the finish of PA grade therefore the combination must be confident of coping with the required standard.

If it is considered that a combination AT ANY STANDARD, is having difficulty with its present grading then that combination may be reviewed by the District Commissioner. This may result in re-grading the combination to a lower grade.

The re-grading for Show Jumping must be recorded on the rider's current Membership Card.

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## **Guidelines For Grading Dressage**

This procedure is for dressage only, and need not be used for Horse Trials Dressage.

It is suggested that conditions for a dressage grading day should, as nearly as possible, resemble those at a competition day, so the grading can be based on a true assessment of the combinations.

Suggested Standards that should be expected at the various stages

Stage 5 – For the youngest groups, say 8, 9 and 10 years. Also for those riders under 15 who are riding their first test.

Stage 4 – For beginners 15 years and over and for more experienced juniors.

Stage 3 – For older beginners, more experienced juniors and senior riders on young horses.

Stage 2 – For more experienced riders capable of riding the horse with more accuracy and correct bend

Stage 1 – For the more advanced rider capable of riding the horse with correct rhythm and bend.

Well before a grading day the following should apply :-

- a) Announce well in advance the date of the grading day.
- b) Advise which Tests must be learned from the current PCAV Dressage Rules book.
- c) Invite prior applications for grading.
- d) It is advisable but not compulsory, that there be two (2) judges for each test so there can be no recriminations. (Club Instructors may be used as Judges, or outside Judges may be asked to officiate). Judges should be asked to make as many constructive comments as possible.
- e) Prepare sufficient scoring sheets for all tests.
- f) Appoint a penciller for each judge.
- g) A dressage arena of the appropriate size, squared and with the correct markers in place, must be used.

Each combination of horse and rider will receive an official grading only after the District Commissioner and the Judges have conferred at the end of the day. If these conditions are clearly understood by both the Members and Parents then the possibility of discord should be avoided.

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## **Suggested Methods for Dressage Assessment**

**(A)** When the combination of horse and rider has not been previously graded for Dressage.

### **ROUND 1**

The candidate will ride Test "A" from the Stage in the book Dressage rule book, at which the Club D.C. and the Club instructor/s consider the combination will be capable. (It is preferable to err on the conservative side by starting too low, rather than too high). Read the rule book about dressage grades.

After the completion of the test the judges confer, then both score sheets are handed to the rider, who must be given plenty of time to study the comments, and note the marks awarded for each movement.

If a satisfactory score (60% or more) has been achieved, the combination will proceed to Round 2.

If the score is NOT satisfactory (under 60%) the combination will ride the same Test "A" again, and if improved, and the judge's comments have been acted upon, the combination may be considered good enough, and be permitted to go on to Round 2.

### **ROUND 2**

The candidate will ride the last test from the same Stage as Test "A" in the first Round (see the Stages in the Dressage rule book), after which the judges will confer again, and both score sheets will be handed to the rider to study the comments.

If a satisfactory score is again achieved the combination will be permitted to go on to Round 3.

If the score in Round 2 is NOT satisfactory the combination will ride the test again, and if improved, may be permitted to go on to Round 3.

If the score is NOT improved at the second attempt, it may be safely assumed that the combination should remain graded at that Stage.

If the combination performed two unsatisfactory tests in Round 1 and in Round 2, it should be considered allowing the combination to perform at a lower Stage.

### **ROUND 3**

The candidate will ride Test "A" from the next Stage up, after which the judges confer, then hand the score sheets to the rider.

If a reasonable score has been achieved the combination may safely be graded at that Stage.

If the score achieved is not satisfactory, the candidate may be permitted to ride the same test again, and if improved, and the judge's comments acted upon, the combination may be graded at that Stage, but if there is no

improvement that combination should remain graded at a lower Stage.

**(B)** When the combination of horse and rider has been previously graded for Dressage, and wishes to be upgraded.

The candidate should begin in Round 2, and ride the last test in the Stage at which he was previously graded, after which the judges confer, then hand the score sheets to the rider.

If the score is satisfactory the combination will go on to Round 3.

If the score is not satisfactory, the combination will ride the same test again, and if improved, and the judge's comments acted upon, the combination may be permitted to go on to Round 3.

If the score is not improved at the second attempt, it may be safely assumed that the combination should remain graded at that Stage.

#### **ROUND 4**

The candidate will ride Test "A" from the next Stage up, after which the judges confer, then hand the score sheets to the rider.

If a reasonable score has been achieved the combination may be graded at that Stage, but if the score is not satisfactory, the combination may ride the same test again. If there is improvement the combination' **MAY** be upgraded, but if there is no improvement that combination should remain graded at the lower Stage.

Dressage grading's and re-grading's must be recorded on the rider's current Membership Card.