

ELO & YELO RULES AND REGULATIONS

Updated January 2026





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-Mission Statement-

Equine Liberty Organization:

Let's unite the world around the magic of liberty. Liberty is the foundation to ALL horsemanship, the replacement to none! We are driven by the belief that we can transform the bond between horses and humans. We deliver top-tier events, powerful education, and a caring community—always, always fighting for the horse's best interests.



ELO/YELO Rules and Regulations

YELO Divisions

- Youth age 12 and under (Weanlings)
- Youth age 13-17 (Yearlings)

ELO Divisions

- Adults 18-49 (Colts and Fillies)
- Adults 50 & up (Mares and Geldings)
- Professional Division

★ All divisions are open to **AMATEURS ONLY**, (excluding Professional Division).
Amateurs cannot have accepted more than \$500 in remuneration for teaching lessons, clinics, and/or training horses in the last year.

All Divisions are calculated based on age on January 1st of the competition year.

ELO/YELO Competition Pattern Levels

- **Green** - **Sprouting** (training level patterns)
- **Blue** - **Stretching** (intermediate level patterns)
- **Yellow** - **Shining** (more advanced patterns)

ELO/YELO offers patterns in the following categories:

- Liberty
- Bridleless
- Games
- Freestyle



Check out the full list of patterns here: www.eloliberty.com

****All patterns are done at liberty or bridleless. ELO/YELO does offer a **Training Level for all patterns.** The training level allows you to enter any pattern with a halter and lead line or a bridle. When you register for a show there is a selection for training level on the registration form.

ELO/YELO Competition Levels

- Schooling Level
- Regional Level (State/Provincial, but other regions can compete in your region)
- National Level (Country, but other countries can compete in your nation)
- World Level

ELO/YELO will offer Live & Virtual Shows:

ELO/YELO will hold a **spring and fall virtual show circuit each year.** Each circuit will include a liberty, bridleless, game, and freestyle category. **ELO/YELO will offer live shows at different locations and times of the year.**

Check out our calendar for full competition schedule, class directory and entry details: www.eloliberty.com



Judging

- Performance classes & patterns will be judged on a percentage basis regarding Maneuvers 40% (technical), and Foundational 60% (non-technical which includes relationship & connection, horsemanship skills, cheerfulness, and degree of difficulty). The 40% Maneuver score and the 60% Foundational score for the pattern or freestyle will be combined for a total percentage score.
- Schooling and Regional level live and virtual shows will be judged by ELO/YELO liberty accredited judges.
- National level shows (and if regional level shows choose to) will have the Maneuver (Technical) portion of the scoring done by a specific disciplined based judge- (example; a dressage judge or an ELO/YELO accredited judge with dressage discipline specific knowledge). Then the Foundational (non-technical) portion, judged by an accredited ELO/YELO judge.
- At the National level, the discipline-based judge will judge the Maneuver section of the pattern related to how the organization for that discipline would judge using the ELO/YELO star system for assistance (example dressage would abide by USDEF guidelines on how to judge dressage & the ELO/YELO rubrics).
- At the National level the Foundational portion will be judged by the ELO/YELO accredited judge following the guidelines in the ELO/YELO



rubrics. The 40% Maneuver score and the 60% Foundational score for the pattern or freestyle will be combined for a total percentage score.

40% Maneuvers (Technical)

- ★ each maneuver will be judged on a star system on a **scale of 1-5**
- ★ 1 being the lower score and 5 being the highest
- ★ half stars are allowed
- ★ patterns that are maneuver based will have their star scores converted to a percentage.

■ For Example: If you scored 50 stars out of a total of 70 stars for the maneuvers, you would receive a 71.43% for the maneuvers.

- ★ Any penalty deductions incurred will be posted in the penalties section under maneuvers on the score card
- ★ At a national competition level, this will be judged by a discipline-based judge or a ELO/YELO accredited judge with discipline specific knowledge. (*National level discipline specific classes are: Jumping at Liberty, Reining at Liberty, Dressage at Liberty, Bridleless English Equitation, Bridleless Western Equitation, Bridleless Dressage, Bridleless Reining, Bridleless Jumping.*)

60% Foundational (Non-Technical) broken down as follows:

20% Relationship & Connection

- ★ points scored out of 20

20% Horsemanship Skill

- ★ points scored out of 20

10% Cheerfulness



★ points scored out of 10

10% Degree of Difficulty

★ points scored out of 10

*****Total Percentages for all the Maneuver category and Foundation Categories will be added together for a final pattern percentage score*****

Please See ELO/YELO Judging Rules & Rubrics for more details.

Competition Penalty Deductions

★ All penalties incurred must be explained by the judges in the score card comments so participants know why they received a penalty

Penalty deductions are posted in the maneuver section of the scoring under penalties.

- **Horse Leaves Handler:**

- o In the event a horse leaves their handler during the pattern, there will be a full 1 Star deduction. **A 1 Star deduction will be added for each time the horse leaves.** These deductions will be added to the penalty section, under maneuvers on the score card. **If the horse comes back and completes the maneuver, they will still be scored on that maneuver with the 1 Star deduction for leaving being added to the penalty section of the score cards.**
 - o **Description of when a horse leaves:** When the horse physically and mentally commits to leaving the handler by running away, completely leaving the area where the pattern is to be done in, and/or going straight to the gate or wall of the arena without looking at the handler. If a horse

drifts from the handler within the guidelines of the pattern, and is still paying attention to the handler, it is not considered a horse leaving.

1st Time horse leaves=1 Star Deduction

2nd Time horse leaves=2 Star Deduction

3rd Time horse leaves =3 Star Deduction

- **Going Over Time Allotted for Patterns & Freestyle:**

- **Going over the allotted time for a freestyle=10 Star Deduction (see ELO/YELO rules under time allotted for freestyles-5 minute)**
 - **Going over the allotted time for a pattern=10 Star Deduction (see ELO/YELO rules time allotted rules-5 Minutes or as stated on more advanced patterns).**

- **Improper Attire:**

- **There will be a 4 Star deduction if there is not the proper attire worn for performances classes and patterns.** Star deductions will be added to the penalty section, under maneuvers on the score card. This will not be enforced for freestyle performances unless a judge feels it is unsafe (the judge's discretion is final). *Please refer to the ELO/YELO rules and regulations for proper attire for the classes and level you are showing at.*

- **Improper Equipment:**

- **There will be a 4 Star deduction for any equipment that does not follow the standard equipment requirements for performance classes and patterns.** Star deductions will be added to the penalty section, under maneuvers on the score card. This will not be enforced for freestyle performances unless a judge feels it is unsafe (the judge's discretion is

final). Please refer to the ELO rules and regulations for equipment requirements for the classes and level you are showing in. Bareback pads of any kind can be used in any mounted classes and are not discipline specific.

- Calling out a pattern incorrect or coaching from the sidelines during a class= **10**
Star Deduction. Competitors are allowed to have someone call out the pattern for them. Callers must only call the pattern as written and are not allowed to give coaching advice.

PENALTY DEDUCTIONS

Cause	Deduction
Improper attire	-4 stars
Incorrect pattern calling/coaching during class	-10 stars
Improper equipment	-4 stars
Over allotted time in a freestyle (5min)	-10 stars
Over allotted time in a pattern (5min unless otherwise stated)	-10 stars
Horse leaves handler	-1 star (each separate time the horse leaves)

Disqualification and NO SCORE

★ Any inhumane treatment of the horse, excessive use of whips, spurs or other training aids, and lameness will result in disqualification.

- The judge also reserves the right to disqualify and give a total score of 0 for any bridleless entry where the rider has lost control or is exhibiting unsafe behavior
- Any youth not wearing a helmet in any mounted classes, or adults not wearing a helmet in the mounted jumping classes will result in a disqualification.
- Unplanned dismounts result in a score of 0. (Discretion of the judge).
- Any videos that are edited will result in a score of 0.
- Any videos that are not uploaded as a link on YouTube or Vimeo will result in a score of 0.
- Videos not uploaded with the setting Unlisted or Public will result in a no score or will be contacted by the show committee to help you. Be aware of Copy Rights with music.
- It is at the judge's final discretion whether they choose to disqualify a horse that appears to be lame.
- A participant that is not following the member code of conduct.

****If you see something that you think qualifies as abuse, please report it to a show official. Any abuse spotted will be asked to leave or result in disqualification.****



Attire and Equipment at Schooling/Regional Level

- Competitors must wear clean jeans or breeches and a clean polo, short or long sleeved T-Shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve with a collar.
- All competitors must wear equine appropriate footwear.
- Helmets are required for all youth in mounted classes.
- Helmets will follow discipline guidelines for adult classes:
 - ★ **Required in jumping.**
 - ★ **Highly recommended in dressage, and English equitation but not mandatory.**
 - ★ **Helmet or hat highly recommended for reining, trail, and western horsemanship and games classes but not mandatory.**

Equipment is expected to follow the standard tack requirements for the discipline you're competing in.

- Bareback pads are allowed. Bareback pads with stirrups will count as a saddle in the degree of difficulty category.
- Competitors in bridleless classes are allowed to ride with aids (including neck rope, dressage whip or stick, spurs). All aids must be used appropriately and humanely. Treats are allowed but excess use causing the horse to be overly distracted will result in deductions.

All classes allow hoof boots (any hoof boot like Cavallo boots or scoot boots) if needed. Polo wraps or support boots are allowed. **Making your horse comfortable and protected is paramount.**



Attire and Equipment at the National Level

ELO/YELO Liberty & Bridleless Nationals Competition Specific Attire & Equipment

Rules

ELO National Level Competitions require more discipline specific attire & equipment. See below for attire & equipment rules as per classes at a national level competition. For the main rules for all competitions including the National level competitions please refer to the ELO Rules and Regulations.

- ★ **All classes allow hoof boots** (any hoof boot like Cavallo boots or scoot boots) if needed.
- ★ **Polo wraps or support boots are allowed.** Making your horse comfortable and protected is paramount.
- ★ **Whips of any length and style can be used.** Any overuse of the whips to cause undue harm will result in disqualification (*see ELO rules*) and excess use of whips will result in deductions (*see judging rubrics*).
- ★ **Spurs.** If spurs are used, they require the **shank to be a maximum of 2 inches long** (the length is measured from the boot to the tip of spur, not the base of the shank) and **spurs must be smooth and blunt, with rowels (if used) being smooth and round.** **Spurs must not be capable of wounding a horse, and they must point down if the shank is curved.** Any overuse of the spurs to cause harm will result in disqualification and excess use of spurs will result in deductions (*see judging rubrics*).



★ **Any style of neck rope is allowed** but may not have any obtrusive objects or material that could potentially injure or cause pain to the horse.

★ **Treats are allowed**, but excess use of treats, and or the treats distracting the horse will result in deductions.

Liberty (Nationals)

Round Pen Classes

★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear.

Arena Pattern Classes

★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear.

Obstacles/Trail

★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear.

Handling & Conditioning

★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear.

Jumping at Liberty

★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear.

Reining at Liberty

★ Clean jeans, western style button down shirt or western show shirt/vest with appropriate western style boots. Cowboy hat recommended but not required.

Dressage at Liberty

- ★ Breeches of any colour with paddock boots, half chaps or tall boots. Polo shirt, english style long sleeve shirt with collar, long or short sleeved show shirts. English style vests and competition jackets allowed. Helmet recommended but not required.

Bridleless (Nationals)

All Bridleless classes (appropriate saddle to discipline as stated), bareback pad, or no saddle (bareback) are allowed.

Round Pen Classes

- ★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear. Any discipline saddle or bareback pad. Coloured saddle pads or neck ropes allowed.

English Equitation

- ★ Breeches or jodhpurs of any colour with paddock boots, half chaps or tall boots. Polo shirt, english style long sleeve shirt with collar, long or short sleeved show shirts. English style vests and competition jackets allowed. Helmet or derby hat required for adults and helmets required for youth. Any English style saddle allowed with coordinating discipline appropriate attire. Bareback pads allowed. Coloured saddle pads and neck ropes allowed.

Western Equitation

- ★ Clean jeans, western style button down shirt or western show shirt/vest with appropriate western style boots. Western style hats or a helmet are recommended but not required. Helmets are required for youth. Any western style saddles allowed with coordinating discipline appropriate attire. Bareback pads allowed. Coloured saddle pads and neck ropes allowed.

Dressage

- ★ Breeches of any colour with paddock boots with half chaps or tall boots. Polo shirt, english style long sleeve shirt with collar, long or short sleeved show shirts. English style vests and competition jackets allowed. Helmet required. Dressage saddle or All-Purpose English saddle required, or Bareback pads allowed. Coloured saddle pads and neck ropes allowed.

Reining

- ★ Clean jeans, western style button down shirt or western show shirt/vest with appropriate western style boots. Cowboy hat recommended but not required. Helmets for adults recommended but not required. Helmets are required for youth. Any western style saddles allowed with coordinating discipline appropriate attire. Bareback pads allowed. Coloured saddle pads and neck ropes allowed.

Show Jumping

- ★ Breeches or jodhpurs of any colour with paddock boots, half chaps or tall boots. Polo shirt, english style long sleeve shirt with collar, long or short sleeved show shirts. English style vests and competition jackets allowed. Helmet required for adults and helmets required for youth. Any jumping or all-purpose English style saddle allowed with coordinating discipline appropriate attire. Bareback pads allowed. Coloured saddle pads and neck ropes allowed.

Trail Classes

- ★ Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear. Any discipline saddle or bareback pad. Coloured saddle pads or neck ropes allowed.

Freestyles

- ★ Anything goes if it is safe for both horse and rider

Games

- ★ All classes: Clean jeans or breeches. Polo shirt, button down shirt, or long sleeve shirt with collar. Equine appropriate footwear. Any discipline saddle or bareback pad. Coloured saddle pads or neck ropes allowed.

Warm-up guidelines

- **Please do not let your horse loose at liberty in common shared spaces:**
(shared warm up ring and trailer or stable areas) A Liberty warm-up area will be provided at all in-person competitions and participants can register for time slots if needed, depending on the facility.
- You may ride bridleless in shared warm up area as long as your horse remains safe and under control.

1-Minute Warmup: It is at the discretion of the show committee to allow a 1-minute warm up time before each patterned class in the main show arena just before a participant is ready to start their pattern. **The 1-minute warmup allotted time starts once the participant enters the arena, and they must be at the starting point of their pattern by the end of the 1-minute.** Once the participant is at the starting point of their pattern, the time will start for their allotted time for that pattern (*see allotted time for patterns*). This 1-minute warmup time allowance must be announced to participants at least 1 week prior to the show and again at the show. This rule will be helpful for facilities that do not have separate private pens for liberty warm up times. **Freestyle classes allow the participant to warm up in the main show arena area if needed within their 2-minute prop set up time.**



Time Allotted for Patterns & Freestyles

Pattern Time Allotted (5 min): Competitors will have **5 minutes** to complete each pattern. If a participant goes over the allotted time for a pattern they will receive a 10 Star Penalty deduction in the penalty section under maneuvers on the score card. Higher advanced patterns that take more than 5 minutes to complete (example: some advanced dressage patterns) will have the time allotted stated on the pattern, and any time going over the specific patterns allotted time will result in a 10 Star Penalty deduction. .

*****All patterns that do not have an allotted time written on the pattern will allow 5 minutes for the pattern to be completed. Once the participant is at the starting point of their pattern, the time will start for their allotted time for that pattern (see allotted time for patterns). As soon as the pattern finishes at the end of the last maneuver the time stops. Participants will be notified when the allotted time of the pattern is up if they have not finished.**

Freestyle Time Allotted (5 min): Competitors will have a **maximum of 5 minutes** allotted for freestyle performances. **Time starts as soon as the music starts, and time ends once the music stops. 2 minutes will be allotted for prop set up time before the freestyle, and 2 minutes take down time after the freestyle. Introductions and biographies can be announced in the 2-minute set up time.** The following freestyle participants' 2 minutes set up time can be happening in conjunction with the previous freestyle participants' 2-minute tear down time. If a participant goes over the allotted time for a freestyle they will receive a 10 Star Penalty deduction in the penalty section under maneuvers on the score card.

*****The 5-minute allotted time for completing a freestyle is mandatory at all live and virtual shows. The time allotted for set up and tear down can be changed as**

per show management's discretion but **MUST** be announced to their participants at least 1 week prior to the show.

Guidelines to Film Your Virtual pattern

- See each pattern for specific arena set up guidelines. Most patterns are filmed from the judges positions as per shown on the pattern.
- Horse and competitor must be completely visible in the frame for the entirety of the pattern.
- Video must be straight and in focus for the entire pattern.
- Video must be free of any edits or alterations.
- Videos that are edited or have the horse leaving the frame will result in no score.
- Videos must be uploaded as a link on YouTube or Vimeo and set to public or unlisted. Any videos with the wrong privacy settings will result in no score.

Member Code of Conduct

1. **All members are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes a positive and respectful atmosphere toward horses, staff, other members, and the integrity of the ELO/YELO community.**
2. Members must act honestly, in good faith, and always maintain the highest ethical standards.
3. Members must treat others and the horses with courtesy and respect, fostering a positive and professional environment.
4. Members must abide by the ELO/YELO Rules and Regulations



5. Becoming a member gives ELO/YELO the consent to the public use of pictures and videos within the organization for media purposes in a respectful way. Contact ELO/YELO directly if you would not want pictures or videos used for media purposes.



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