



ELO & YELO

Judging Rubrics & Guidelines

Schooling, Regional, & National Level Competition

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Basic Judging Criteria

Performance classes and patterns will be judged on a percentage basis regarding maneuvers (technical), and foundational (non-technical: relationship & connection, horsemanship skills, cheerfulness, and degree of difficulty).

Schooling level and Regional level live and virtual shows will be judged by ELO/YELO certified judges.

National level live and virtual shows will have the **maneuver** (technical) portion judged by a discipline-based judge or certified ELO/YELO judge with approved discipline-specific expertise. The **foundational** (non-technical) portion will be judged by a certified ELO/YELO judge.

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 or their organization's discipline's score card (ex. dressage will abide by USDF guidelines on how to judge dressage & the ELO/YELO rubrics). **The foundational portion will be judged by the ELO/YELO certified judge following the guidelines in the ELO/YELO rubrics.**

-Please see the information provided under Judges Credentials. The %40 Maneuver score and the %60 Foundational score for the pattern will be combined for a total percentage score.-

40% Maneuvers (Technical)

- Each maneuver judged on a star system, scale of 1-5 (1 being lowest, 5 being highest)
- Half stars are allowed
- Star scores converted to a percentage
- Any penalty deductions posted in the penalties section

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

-At a national competition level, any disciplined based classes (english dressage, western dressage, ranch riding & hunter equitation) will be judged by a discipline-based judge or an ELO/YELO certified judge with approved discipline- specific expertise.

60% Foundational (Non-Technical)

Criteria	Points
Relationship & Connection Points scored out of 20	20%
Horsemanship Skill Points scored out of 20	20%
Cheerfulness Points scored out of 10	10%
Degree of Difficulty Points scored out of 10	10%
Total	60%

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

ELO/YELO Rubrics

All ELO/YELO rubrics look at the "whole picture", meaning that both the handler and the horse are taken into consideration in the judging process.

- Maintaining the spirit of liberty (encouraging freedom) is to be of the utmost importance
- The welfare of the horse is taken into consideration first and foremost
- ELO/YELO is about having **FUN** and learning together with your horse
- Judges will include **at least 3 comments** on each score card, with over **75% of comments to be positive**
- At least 1 comment should be a helpful tip for improvement, presented in a positive, encouraging way
- Scribes are encouraged at live shows to help judges include detailed comments

Star Rating System

(Half stars permitted)

- Each maneuver will start out with 5 Stars and deductions of 1 star or ½ stars will be deducted for maneuver mistakes.
- **Any penalty** incurred will be **posted in the penalties section** under maneuvers on the scorecard.
- At a national competition level, the maneuvers will be judged on discipline-specific guidelines set out by the governing organizations discipline’s score cards, or using the ELO/YELO score cards based on discipline-specific maneuvers.
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Rating	Description
0 Stars	The maneuver in the pattern is missed, or the wrong maneuver was done
1 Star	Developing New at learning the skill, the effort needs some guidance
2 Stars	Potential for Progress Effort displayed, ability to recover from mistakes
3 Stars	Meets Expectations Skill done correctly, horse and handler comfortable with the task
4 Stars	Exceeds Expectations Skill done with great precision & confidence
5 Stars	Super Star Effort Incredible talent, horse and handler move as one

Maneuver Deductions

Each maneuver mistake is worth a 1-star maneuver deduction (½ stars are allowed)

General Maneuver Deductions
At the marked starting or ending point of pattern the horse is distracted, handler is not focused, horse is not halted or straight or is wiggling around, and they are not in the correct position
Break of gait (see gaited horses for deductions related to specific gaits)
Walk does not show 4-beats (jigging or super sluggish)
Trot/jog not showing a 2-beat gait (pacing or partially walking or cantering)
Canter/lope is not 3-beat (too fast or too slow almost breaking gait)
Not showing difference between extended and collected gaits when required
Sluggish transitions
Wrong diagonals in trot while mounted
Diagonal changes not straight
Incorrect leads in the canter
Halt not straight
Halt unbalanced, horse pushes or drifts from handler
Halt sluggish
Halt is past the marker/pylon/cone/starting point/ending point
Horse moves/wiggles out of position asked
Horse drifts from you at the shoulder or in the circle around you
Horse pushes into you at the shoulder
Inconsistent rhythm in gaits asked (speeds up and slows down)

Change of direction choppy, not straight
Symmetry of circles not consistent
Horse backs up slowly &/or needs lots of cueing
Horse backs up crooked
Horse backs up with incorrect number of steps required
Horse side passes crooked
Horse side passes with both hind and fronts not in sync
Horse side passed incorrect number of steps required
In the side pass, the horse steps forward or backwards
Spin not pivoting on hind feet, moves forward or back
Turn on the forehand not keeping front feet still, loss of rhythm
Turning, the horse drifts, gets pushy, is rigid
Knocks any ground poles, cones, logs, or jumps with hooves
Refusal of jump, ground poles or obstacle
Moves around or shies away from fly spray, syringe, mounting block, grooming tools
Moves away while picking feet or has resistance to lifting & holding feet
Hunter Equitation Deductions
The rider's position is unbalanced going over the jump
The rider fails to find the correct distance between and/or before the jump
The rider gets the incorrect lead going into or after the jump
Refusal of a jump

Rider struggles to guide and prepare the horse in the turns before and after the jump

The horse lacks a round frame and/or good form going over the jump

The horse knocks a rail down

Gaited Horses Deductions

Gaited horses breaking into the trot/walk/canter from gait chosen in BRIDLELESS CLASSES ONLY: In bridleless classes, gaited horses are allowed to choose their gait preference over the trot, but it is ideal that if a gait is chosen over the trot, that the gait be maintained over the duration. Or if the trot is chosen they should remain in the trot for the duration.

In LIBERTY CLASSES there will be NO deductions for a gaited horse breaking gait within the breed gait & trot, showing in their naturally occurring gaits, and transitioning between the gait and the trot at liberty. They will be deducted if they break into the canter or walk when the trot or gait is requested in the maneuver.

Gaited horses displaying asymmetry in movement (rolling or unevenness in gait, imbalanced, lack of cadence in gait). Explanation of rolling within a gait: Rolling refers to when the horse is asymmetrical in the hind end, pushing more with one leg than the other, and begins to develop a roll into either left lead or right lead canter blended with the gait.

Liberty Teams/Liberty Off a Ridden Horse Deductions

Horses drift apart or drift away from the handler/ridden horse, but are still connected, and not committed to leaving

Horses change the formation that they were chosen to be in without a handler asking them to make the change

Horses are biting or excessively cranky with each other

In the liberty heels, the halted horse moves around too much

In the liberty heels, the horse heeling drifts and/or does not return promptly

Training Division Specific Deductions

Bridleless training division with a bridle on: each time the rein is touched is a 1 or ½ star deduction

Lead line division with halter and lead line on or just halter on: excess tightening of the lead line or touching the halter is a 1 or ½ star deduction

Competition Penalties

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

In the event a horse leaves their handler during the pattern, there will be a full 1 Star deduction. A 1 Star penalty 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 penalty deduction for leaving being added to the penalty section of the score cards.**

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.

In **liberty team classes & liberty off a ridden horse**, competitors are judged as a collective unit rather than as individual horses. Regardless of the number of horses in the team, the presentation is evaluated as though it were a single horse. The judge's focus is on the overall picture created by the team, including harmony, cohesion, and the combined expression of liberty. How well the horses work together and maintain the integrity of the team is a key element of the judging criteria. If a horse leaves the team during the performance, the team will be judged based on that departure. When one horse leaves the team, a one-star deduction will be applied. If both horses leave the team, the deduction remains one star and does not increase. Penalties for horses leaving the team follow the same guidelines previously outlined for liberty classes with an individual horse, ensuring consistency across all liberty divisions.

1st Time horse leaves = 1 Star Penalty Deduction
2nd Time horse leaves = 2 Star Penalty Deduction
3rd Time horse leaves = 3 Star Penalty Deduction
And so on...

Other Penalties

Going Over Time Allotted:

- Going over allotted time for a freestyle (5 minutes) = 10 Star Penalty Deduction
(see ELO/YELO rules under time allotted for freestyles-5 minute)
- Going over allotted time for a pattern (5 minutes or as stated on more advanced patterns per ELO Rules) = 10 Star Penalty Deduction

Improper Attire = 4 Star Penalty Deduction

There will be a 4 Star penalty deduction if there is not the proper attire worn 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/YELO rules and regulations for proper attire for the classes and level you are showing at.*

Improper Equipment = 4 Star Penalty Deduction

There will be a 4 Star penalty 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.

Pattern Calling & Coaching = 10 Star Penalty Deduction

Calling out a pattern incorrectly or coaching from the sidelines during a class will be a 10 Star Penalty 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.

Overuse of Spurs, Whips, Training Aids, or Treats (that do not cause harm) = 10 Star Penalty

Unplanned Dismount = 5 Star Penalty Deduction

In the event that a rider has an unplanned dismount, it will result in a 5 Star Penalty Deduction. If the rider can remount, they can finish the pattern and continue to get scored in the allotted time for the pattern.

Penalty Star Deductions

Penalty star deductions posted in the penalty section under maneuvers on score card

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)
Over use of Spurs, Whips, Other Training Aids, & Treats that do not cause harm to the horse	-10 stars
Unplanned dismount	-5 stars

Disqualification and No Score

Any inhumane treatment of the horse, excessive use of whips to cause harm (welts or breaking of the skin), excess use of spurs (welts or breaking of the skin) or other training aids that causes harm, prohibited tools found or used, neck ropes with obtrusive objects or material will result in disqualification of all classes at a show and you will be asked to leave.

- Judge reserves the right to give no score for any bridleless entry where 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 mounted jumping classes will result in no score
- Any videos that are edited will result in no score
- Any videos not uploaded as a link on YouTube or Vimeo (or another similar software) will result in no score
- Videos not uploaded with setting Unlisted or Public will result in no score (be aware of copyright with music)
- At judge's discretion, they may disqualify a horse that appears to be lame
- Participant not following member code of conduct will be disqualified from classes and asked to leave

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

List of Basic Maneuvers

Judges Guidelines: Training Division

- **Bridleless Training Division:** Judge looks for minimal rein use. It is recommended to safely tie up the reins or attach to the saddle and only use them when necessary.
- **Leadline Division:** Judge looks for as loose of a lead line as possible (a nice U shape in the line) at all times.

Basic Maneuvers & Judging Criteria

Maneuver	Judging Criteria
Starting Point	Horse and Handler are relaxed and confident, starting in the correct position, horse is still yet attentive
Stop & Smile	Horse and handler are having fun! Stop is straight, prompt and balanced at the point asked to stop
Walk	Displays a 4-beat rhythm, relaxed, forward and confident with cadence

Jog/Trot	Displays a 2-beat rhythm, with cadence that is appropriate for the discipline showing & breed
Rising Trot	Correct diagonals
Canter/Lope	Displays a 3-beat rhythm, with cadence that is appropriate for discipline (not a gallop) & breed
Extended Gaits	Horse takes longer relaxed strides that cover more ground without excess speed or choppiness
Collected Gaits	Horse takes shorter relaxed strides that cover less ground with impulsion
Centerline & Salute	Displaying straightness on centerline, halt square and straight, appropriate salute & horse stands still in salute
Serpentines	Quality of the figure looks symmetrical, with bend & balance
Turns & Bends	Bending with balance, horses core engaged and softness in the ribcage
Leg Yields	Balance & straightness in leg yield, displays good cadence and good tracking up of hind legs
Back Up	Straight with impulsion, balanced, soft cues, even steps & correct number of steps
Stop	Stops promptly, balanced, straight and square, remains still
Change Leads	Fluidity, horse relaxed and comfortable, changes at point in pattern asked
Handler Switches Sides of Horse	Horse remains calm and patient while handler gets to the other side
Horse Switches Sides	Horse remains in gait with impulsion, moves back to handler's shoulder promptly

Change Direction/Change Rein	Shows a moment of straightness within the change, remains in the gait asked, good cadence
Spin/Turn/Pivot	In the spin the horse remains pivoting on their hind feet while the outside front foot crosses the inside front foot with rhythm (not stepping forward or backwards or swinging their hind end out), correct number of degrees of the turn completed as asked for. Handler does a U-Turn with the horse staying with the handler without being pushy or drifting away. The horse can pivot on the hind end or pivot on the forehand where the horse keeps their front feet still and the inside hind leg crosses in front of the outside hind leg as it moves around the stationary front feet (horse should not move forward or backwards)
Recall	Horse remains quiet and still in the position asked to halt in until cue given to be called, speed and promptness coming directly to handler's shoulder with as little cueing as possible
Ground Halt	Horse is square and balanced, remains in position as handler goes around, can handler have a good distance away and increase their speed
Drawback to Shoulder	Horse draws to the handler's shoulder with rhythm in the gait required, eagerness to return, came promptly
Circles Ridden	Roundness of circle, circles are symmetrical, can tell a difference between large and small circles, start and end of the circle is apparent
Circles Around You (any Gait, Large or Small)	Horse remains connected with impulsion in the gait asked, circles are symmetrical and round, can tell a difference between large and small circles, start and end of circle is apparent
At the Shoulder Leading Position (any Gait)	Horse remains in the gait asked with cadence, handler remains relaxed and in between the horse's nose and shoulder, horse is eager to stay with handler not being

	pushy or drifting away, handler is confident looking forward, circles are symmetrical and start and end of circle apparent
Jumps (Vertical/Cross Rails)	Horse is confident and displays appropriate form over the jump, good rhythm through and between jumps. Displays excellent equitation, position & presentation, meets all jumps squarely and with proper striding. At liberty the handler can send horse over jump if possible and the horse displays confidence heading to the jump and looking for guidance from handler, with control after the jump
Over Ground Poles	Good forward cadence through poles with nice impulsion to avoid hitting poles, center of poles, stays in the requested gait throughout
Weave Cones	Horse weaves with ease in the gait asked, good cadence, increased degree of difficulty if handler sends horse through the cones
Over an Obstacle	Horse displays confidence, handler can send the horse over on its own for increase to degree of difficulty, horse seeks handler to return to them and for guidance, remains connected and eager to do the next obstacle
Side Pass Over a Pole	Horse doesn't touch pole, both front and back end synchronized, doesn't take steps back or forward, soft cueing
Back Up Through L	Horse doesn't touch poles, handler uses soft cues, fluid with no stops, if possible, stays centered in the L
Fly Spray Horse	Horse remains relaxed & halted, accepts the spray calmly on all areas
Brush Horse	Horse remains relaxed & halted, accepts the brushing on all main body parts
Picking Up Feet	Horse remains relaxed and halted while picking feet and has no resistance to lifting & holding each foot

Syringe in Horse's Mouth	Horse allows syringe to enter their mouth without resistance and remains relaxed and still
Horse Inspected by Judge	Horse remains quiet, relaxed and halted while judge walks around them
Dismount/Remount	Horse stands relaxed and halted and comfortable when rider mounts and dismounts

Games

Included Games

Barrels, Pole Bending, Figure 8 Race, Ride a Buck, Egg & Spoon, Command Class, Cup of Water Race, Dizzy Bat, Roping, Ribbon Tie Race, Ribbon Race, Costume Class, Line Dancing Free Style, Bobbing For Apples, Mystery Classes. Other games may be added during the year.

Judging Guidelines

- Games are judged the same as other patterns with Maneuvers being 40% (example: a barrel in a barrel pattern is a maneuver and speed is considered a maneuver) and Foundational scores being worth 60%.
- The patterns are as stated, and the HORSE(s) needs to complete the pattern fully, but the handler/rider has flexibility to move at liberty and take different approaches to the pattern.
- Games can be either done at liberty or bridleless
- You are allowed Liberty Teams in the games classes where appropriate
- Speed is scored as one of the maneuvers
- The horse and handler display enthusiasm, they are engaged and playful with focused energy from both

Creativity in the Games

- Sending the horse to do elements of the pattern/game with the handler at a distance
- Transitioning from the horse at your shoulder to away and around vs versa fluidly, with cadence and speed
- Incorporating different maneuvers to get the pattern done efficiently
- Efficiency/smoothness - horse and handler are flowing through the pattern
- Softness with the horse listening to cues asked

Liberty Teams/Liberty Off a Ridden Horse

Purpose

To showcase the ability of a handler on the ground, or a person riding a horse, to guide other horses to do maneuvers with them in different formations asked of by the handler/rider.

Judging Criteria

- Horses stay close to each other in the formation asked
- Horses do not change formation until the handler asks
- Horses are relaxed, calm and accepting of each other
- Horses are respectful of each other's, and the handler's space
- Each individual horse is connected to the handler/rider
- Liberty heels are done smoothly, with the halted horse(s) remaining still and the heel horse(s) returning promptly to their positions without drifting

English Dressage Collective Marks & Maneuvers

- Paces (freedom & regularity)
- Impulsion (desire to move forward, elasticity of the steps, suppleness of the back and engagement of hind quarters)
- Submission (attention, confidence, ease of movements, acceptance of the cues used, lightness of the forehand)

Maneuvers: Specific English Dressage Maneuvers refer to The FEI (Federation Equestrian International) Dressage judging manual and rules book inside.fei.org or USDEF usdf.org with an understanding that maneuvers explaining “contact on the bit” are obsolete in bridleless riding within the ELO/YELO judging.

Tests: USDF(United States Dressage Federation) usdf.org English Dressage Tests are permitted to be used in ELO/YELO shows with an understanding that ELO/YELO shows are not sanctioned USDF shows

All English Dressage USDF Tests being judged through ELO/YELO cannot be used for USDF points or awards.

Western Dressage Collective Marks & Maneuvers

- **Gaits:** freedom & regularity
- **Impulsion:** desire to move forward with suppleness of the back and steady tempo
- **Riders position seat and hands:** well-balanced elastic seat demonstrating vertical, centered alignment, light contact with hands if neck rope is used
- **Riders correct & effective use of the aids:** evidenced by the horses responsiveness; steady elastic connection cultivating athletic expression.
- **Accuracy:** precise placement of the figures and transitions , the effectiveness of the rider's aids determines the accurate fulfillment of the required movements of the tests.
- **Harmony:** The horse accepts the aids and influence of the rider with attention, relaxation and confidence; willing partnership between horse and rider resulting in a free-flowing performance

Mauevers: Specific Western Dressage Maneuvers & Tests refer to WDAA (Western Dressage Association of America) westerndressageassociation.org with an understanding that maneuvers explaining “contact on the bit” are obsolete in bridleless riding within the ELO/YELO judging.

Tests: WDAA westerndressageassociation.org Western Dressage Tests are permitted to be used in ELO/YELO shows with an understanding that ELO/YELO shows are not sanctioned WDAA shows.

All Western Dressage WDAA Patterns being judged through ELO/YELO cannot be used for WDAA points or awards-

Western Dressage Collective Marks & Maneuvers

- **Purpose:** To showcase a horse as a reliable, pleasant-to-ride working ranch horse. The horse is shown individually in pattern work and is judged on the precision of the pattern maneuvers and the horse's movements.
- **Gaits:** Includes the walk, jog, lope, and extended versions of these gaits.
- **Maneuvers:** Patterns can feature transitions between gaits, lead changes, side passes, and riding over logs.
- **Judges Criteria:** Focused on a horse’s natural, relaxed movement, strong impulsion at a working speed with fluid transitions.

Maneuvers specific for Ranch riding and Patterns refer to aqha.com (American Quarter Horse Association) with the understanding that maneuvers explaining the use of the reins and contact on the bit are obsolete in bridleless riding with the ELO/YELO judging.

Patterns: Ranch Riding Patterns from the AQHA.com are permitted to be used in ELO/YELO shows with an understanding that ELO/YELO shows are not sanctioned AQHA shows.

-All Ranch Riding Patterns being judged through ELO/YELO cannot be used for AQHA points or awards.-

Hunter Equitation Collective Marks & Maneuvers

- **Purpose:** Competitors guide horses over courses of jumps aiming for a clear round with minimal faults (knock downs or refusals), as well as, being judged on the rider's posture, subtle aids, and overall harmony with the horse. The horse's movement and jumping technique are also assessed for smoothness and correct form, with an emphasis on the rider's ability to produce it. The courses are designed to test the riders skill, precision, and ability to guide the horse efficiently.
- **Rider Position:** Proper, secure, and balanced position over fences (heels down, eyes up, solid base)
- **Effectiveness:** Ability to guide the horse, prepare for turns, and find correct distances. The horse and rider give an overall impression of effortless athleticism and partnership.
- **Course Accuracy:** Consistent pace, finding the correct track, correct leads, and smooth execution of technical elements (lines, combinations).
- **Horse's Form:** The horse has good form in take off and while over the jump, has a nice round frame, ears forward and horse displays a forward willingness to jump.

For more information on Hunter Equitation visit The United States Hunter Jumper Association USHJA.org.

Show Jumping (currently only offered at Nationals)

- **Purpose:** Riders guide horses over a course of jumps that are designed to fall down when knocked. Faults are incurred for knocking down or refusing a jump, and

exceeding the allotted time allowed. The fastest time with the least amount of faults determines the winner.

- **Effectiveness:** The rider uses the best strategy for their horse to complete the course to achieve the fastest time with as much accuracy as possible.
- **Course Accuracy:** The course tests a horse's athleticism, agility and tractability while simultaneously testing a rider's precision, accuracy and responsiveness. Faults are given for knocking down or refusing to jump, and exceeding the allotted time allowed.

Gaited Horses

In all liberty and bridleless classes, gaited horses may show their naturally occurring gait in place of the trot. **This gait may include any ambling gait such as a slow gait, rack, running walk, tolte, paso largo/ quarto, stepping pace, fox trot, or any other breed specific ambling gait.** In both liberty and bridleless classes, symmetry of movement, balance and cadence in the gait chosen is rewarded. In the liberty classes, gaited horses may transition between the trot and their gait without suffering deductions. **In bridleless classes, it is ideal that if a gait is chosen over the trot, that the gait be maintained for the duration.**

Freestyles

Maneuvers 40%

All freestyles are judged the same as patterns with a combined Maneuvers score 40% with the Foundational score 60%.

Freestyle Categories

There are 3 categories for freestyles: Liberty only, Bridleless only, and Combined Liberty & Bridleless

Multiple horses may be used in all freestyle divisions, including Liberty, Bridleless, and Combined.

- **Liberty Division:** All horses must be worked exclusively from the ground for the entire duration of the freestyle. No mounted work is permitted.

- **Bridleless Division:** The competitor must remain mounted on a horse for the entire duration of the freestyle. No groundwork is permitted.
- **Combined Division:** Competitors may work one or more horses from the ground and/or mounted, in any order they choose, throughout the freestyle.

Purpose

To be able to perform and showcase, through freedom of expression and through the cheerful enjoyment of being together, a horse's and person's connection and abilities with each other at liberty and/or riding bridleless. The freestyle should be a reflection of a deep trusting relationship where the horses perform willingly out of a desire to interact in a naturally expressive way with the handler/rider. Participants are encouraged to develop a theme, tell a story, use props, music, and costumes to show their abilities and maneuvers they have created with each other. Judging is based on the connection and harmony between the horses and the handler/rider. This includes: the flow of the routine, their talents, creativity, abilities and maneuvers added to create the freestyle. Judging always rewards the partnership, where the horse is a willing participant, and the handler/rider demonstrates exceptional communication skills.

Creativity in a Freestyle (5 stars)

- Costumes/props/maneuvers used are incorporated creatively to go with the theme or idea
- Exhibits the talents of the horse and handler and shows that they are having FUN!
- When safe, you can incorporate other animals, people or other horses
- Creatively combining abilities, talents, tricks and maneuvers
- The horse(s) are able to have freedom of their own expression, adding their own creative flair!

Approval from the show manager is needed for use of: any sort of motor vehicle, open flame, firearms, fireworks/pyrotechnics.

Choreography in a Freestyle (5 stars)

- Good flow between the maneuvers, tricks and talents, with good use of the space

- Maneuvers, tricks, and talents go with the music (you could showcase high energy parts with intense or exuberant movements, or low energy parts showcase connection and softness etc....)
- Quality and good choice of maneuvers added, with overall good connection with handler throughout the choreography

Entertainment in a Freestyle (5 Stars)

- An idea or theme is easy to identify and is presented with cohesive costumes or attire, with the music
- Audience response (stirs emotions, is it memorable, does it invoke inspiration?)
- The horse(s) and handler/rider perform effortlessly together with the energy and confidence required to keep the audience engaged

Technicality & Refinement of Maneuvers (5 Stars)

Incorporation of maneuvers: Be creative and showcase what your horse knows. These maneuvers can include, but are not limited to:

- Stop
 - Back up (at least 6 steps)
 - Side pass (at least 4 steps)
 - Circles
 - Changes of direction
 - Turn on the forehand or haunches
 - Leg yields
 - Jumping
 - Collected gaits
 - Extended gaits
 - Simple lead change
 - Flying lead change
 - Transitions (i.e. walk to canter)
 - Obstacles
- Throughout transitions, and within changes between the maneuvers, they should have a cadence that is smooth, balanced and shows a willingness from the horse

- Perform at different gaits showing purity, quality, elasticity & regularity of tempo & rhythm
- Add technical elements that show advanced body control, but it is not required

Foundational (Non-Technical) 60%

Based on 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest score for Cheerfulness & Degree of Difficulty, and 20 being the highest for Relationship & Connection, and Horsemanship Skill.

This 60% score is made up of the following:

Relationship & Connection 20%

Points are scored out of 20 (half points being allowed)

- Nice flowing energy and looks united
- Handler puts the horses needs first
- Lightness and softness
- Willingness of the horse
- Teamwork apparent
- Relaxation of both horse and handler

Horsemanship Skill 20%

Points are scored out of 20 (half points allowed)

- Timing & feel
- Maintain good rhythm
- Response when there is a mistake
- Subtle cues
- Remaining in gaits asked for
- Fluidity & flow
- Correct leads & diagonals
- Symmetry and consistency within the patterns

- Handler has good emotional control over themselves
- Handler tolerates the horse making mistakes and leaving them, with grace, empathy and positivity

Cheerfulness 10%

Points are scored out of 10 (half points allowed)

- Confidence from both horse and handler
- Want to be there & genuinely having fun
- Positive reinforcement (voice, touch)
- Playful attitude, enjoyment

Degree of Difficulty 10%

Points are scored out of 10 (half points allowed)

- Can you cue as little as possible
- Larger arena size, working on grass, working in an area with no fence
- Whether riding bareback or with a bareback pad (no stirrups) increases the degree of difficulty score is at the judge's discretion, based on the overall performance of the horse and rider. Note: While riding bareback or with a bareback pad may increase the degree of difficulty at the judge's discretion, it may also decrease overall scores if the rider's position, balance, effectiveness of aids, or the horse's way of going is negatively affected.
- Maneuvers done with precision (symmetry, promptness)
- Autonomy (can you work with your horse at a distance?)
- Creativity added
- Promptness in transitions
- The horse offering a relaxed yet lively posture showing healthy biomechanics
- The horse being in a willing state of readiness to be adjustable to cues

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

Pattern Example

Name:	
Horse Name:	
Show:	
Class:	Liberty Arena Pattern 1
Division:	
Judge:	

Maneuvers (Technical) 40%

1. Walk from cone A to B with horse on your right shoulder /5 stars
2. At B Trot 1.5 circles to the left, with horse on your right shoulder /5 stars
3. Continue onto cone C at the trot /5 stars
4. At cone C, Stop. Switch horse from right shoulder to left shoulder /5 stars
5. Turn 180degrees to the right to face B. Walk to cone B with horse at left shoulder /5 stars
6. At B Trot 1.5 circles to the right, with horse on your left shoulder /5 stars
7. Continue to cone A /5 stars
8. Stop & Smile /5 stars

Penalties: (__) stars deducted

Total Maneuvers score(40%): ____

Foundational Liberty (Non-Technical) 60%

Category	Score
1. Relationship & Connection	/20
2. Horsemanship Skill	/20
3. Cheerfulness	/10

4. Degree of Difficulty

/10

Total Foundational Score (Non-Technical) 60%: /60

Final Combined Total Score: _____%

Judge Classifications & Permissions

1. ELO/YELO Certified Judges

Judges who have received official ELO/YELO judges' certification.

Judging Permissions:

- Schooling & Regional Shows: May judge all classes
- National Level Shows: May judge Foundational portion of Discipline-Based classes and both foundational and maneuvers sections of all non-discipline-based classes

2. ELO/YELO Certified Discipline-Based Judges

Judges who are ELO/YELO certified and approved by the ELO/YELO Judging Committee for demonstrated expertise in a specific discipline.

Judging Permissions:

- All Show Levels: May judge all non-discipline-based classes and all portions of approved discipline-based classes

3. Discipline-Based Judges (Non-ELO/YELO Certified)

Judges with discipline-specific expertise who are not ELO/YELO certified but are approved by the ELO/YELO Judging Committee for specific disciplines.

Judging Permissions & Requirements:

- May judge only the Maneuvers portion of discipline-based ELO/YELO classes
- Foundational portion must be judged by an ELO/YELO Certified Judge

- May use the discipline organization's scorecard or the ELO scorecard for the Maneuvers portion

Scoring Breakdown:

- Maneuvers Portion: 40%
- Foundational Portion: 60%
- Final score is the combined total of both portions

Judge Type	ELO/YELO Certified	Discipline Approved	Schooling/Regional Shows	National Shows
ELO/YELO Certified Judge	Yes	No	All classes	Foundational only for discipline-based; all non-discipline
ELO/YELO Certified Discipline-Based Judge	Yes	Yes (specific discipline(s))	All portions of approved disciplines	All portions of approved disciplines
Discipline-Based Judge (Non-Certified)	No	Yes	Maneuver portions of approved disciplines	Maneuver portions of approved disciplines

Judges Certification Criteria for 2026

1. ELO/YELO Judges Certification requirements:

- Must be an approved ELO Academy Manager & ELO Member
- Must be 18 years of age as of Jan 1st
- Must pass the ELO Judges Certification Test on the rules and rubrics by 80%
- Must complete the ELO Judges Certification sample pattern testing

2. ELO/YELO Certified Discipline-Based Judge requirements:

Discipline based classes are English Dressage, Western Dressage, Jumping Equitation, Ranch Riding

- Must be an approved ELO Academy Manager & ELO member
- Must be 18 years of age as of Jan 1st
- Must pass the ELO Judges Certification Test on the rules and rubrics by 80%
- Must complete the ELO Judges Certification sample pattern testing
- Must have at least one or more of the following requirements in the discipline you choose to judge in:
 - Provide proof of either live or virtual showing in at least 5 classes of your disciplines patterns or tests (copies of score cards or video links)
 - Provide any judging accreditation received under the organization's discipline (examples: WDAA, USDF, AQUA, USHJA)
 - Provide proof of shadow judging for at least 8 or more classes in your discipline (shadow judging reports/forms)

3. Disciplined-Based Judges Requirements (non ELO/YELO certified):

- Must have at least one or more of the following requirements in the discipline you choose to judge in:
 - Provide proof of either live or virtual showing in at least 5 classes of your discipline's patterns or tests (copies of score cards or video links)



- Provide any judging accreditation received under the organization's discipline (examples: WDAA, USDF, AQUA, USHJA)
- Provide proof of shadow judging for at least 8 or more classes (shadow judging reports/forms)

ELO/YELO Judges Certification in 2027

In 2027 ELO will be opening its Judging Academy and will have judging certification available to all its members! Stay tuned for more information coming your way on the criteria needed to become a judge in 2027 and how to get started in the ELO Judging Academy to become a judge!

Quick Reference Summary

Judge Type	Key Requirements
ELO/YELO Certified Judge	ELO Academy Manager & Member, 18+ years old, pass test at 80%, complete sample pattern testing
ELO/YELO Certified Discipline-Based Judge	All ELO/YELO requirements PLUS proof of discipline expertise (5+ classes shown, judging accreditation, or 8+ shadow judging sessions)
Discipline-Based Judge (Non-Certified)	Proof of discipline expertise only (5+ classes shown, judging accreditation, or 8+ shadow judging sessions)



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