

*Join us!*

**A GUIDE TO USPC MEMBERSHIP**



[www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org)



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## A GUIDE TO USPC MEMBERSHIP

### Instruction

#### The Standards

The USPC Standards of Proficiency provide a core curriculum for individualized instruction. The Standards describe a clear progression of skills in riding and Horse Management. The Standards also provide opportunities for goal setting, as members are encouraged to proceed through those skills at a pace that is comfortable for them.

Clubs use the Standards of Proficiency as a plan for instruction programs. Rating tests are an evaluation of the members' progress through the rating levels and are designed to encourage the candidate to "show and tell" what he or she knows. Riding is a hobby, something to do for fun! Ratings are given in an effort to recognize achievement and encourage members to gain confidence, independence and good safety habits while working with mounts. Goal setting, teaching and testing are good ways to accomplish this purpose.

A USPC member is ready for a rating test if he or she is able to perform the requirements for that level in a supervised teaching situation. After passing one test, a member continues to receive instruction until a greater degree of proficiency is achieved. All USPC members are encouraged to progress at a pace that is comfortable for them.

***Knowledgeable care of horses and ponies, Horse Management, is basic to the well-rounded horseperson.***



#### Horse Management

USPC has three basic goals for members: *riding instruction, development of horse care responsibilities, and participation in various mounted sports.* USPC is unique because its educational programs place equal emphasis on the teaching of riding skills, horse-care fundamentals, and team participation with sportsmanship. From the moment children join USPC until they graduate, they are part of a broad network of activities and educational programs that promote the health and safety of both horse and rider. USPC is dedicated to developing knowledgeable, competent, responsible, and caring horsemen. USPC prepares its members in two ways to take on the responsibilities of horse care.

First, all clubs have a Horse Management program designed to teach skills and provide knowledge as members progress through the ratings in accordance with the USPC Standards of Proficiency. The style of Horse Management instruction varies from region to region and from club to club; however, every program is developed on the basis of the Standards, and the result is a common level of knowledge for youngsters at any given rating level.

Second, USPC prepares members for the responsibilities of horse ownership by judging Horse Management practices at all rallies. The competitors are judged within their respective



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rating levels on their knowledge and application of sound, practical horse care principles acquired through Horse Management instruction and regular practice. The evaluation of competitors' performances at rallies reinforces the information taught at the club level. The emphasis of Horse Management judging is always on the health and safety of both horse and rider.

Horse Management instruction and experience in USPC is designed to encourage inquiry into the nature of horse care and safety, based on logical and practical reasoning as well as common sense. Horse Management training also promotes sportsmanship, and it helps develop the confidence required for sensible decision making.

Members should use the current Standards of Proficiency as a reference for the Horse Management requirements of the various ratings. It is particularly useful to refer to the Study Guides listed on the back of each Standard. However, there is no limit to the useful knowledge of Horse Management. At home and at rallies, situations will often arise that may call for Horse Management techniques beyond those required of a given rating.

The Horse Management program in USPC stresses and teaches safety first. The health of members and their mounts is of primary importance. To this end, the program for all levels stresses preventative techniques, common sense and daily routines within a reasonable framework of expectations. Members must realize that all horse sports require effective care of the horse. Therefore, the instruction program is incorporated into all USPC activities.

*Fun and friendship are part of The United States Pony Clubs, Inc.*

### Safety

A concern for safety is an important part of the foundation of USPC. Ours was the first equine organization to require its members to wear safety helmets. Our guiding beliefs regarding safety reach into every aspect of the organization. Volunteers and staff make safety a priority.



For mounted instructional meetings, USPC safety practices must be followed. Member are required to wear an ASTM/SEI-certified riding helmet with harness chin strap securely in place. While riding, a conventional type of riding footwear with a heel, such as leather or rubber riding boots, jodhpur boots, or the equivalent, is required. "Waffle" type soles are not allowed. When unmounted, acceptable footwear is a shoe that is securely fastened, entirely closed, covers the ankle and is thick-soled and in good condition. Canvas or cloth shoes of any kind are not allowed.

*Additional safety information is available in USPC Policies, Handbooks and Rulebooks for each discipline, through the Safety Committee and the National Office. Also, please feel free to speak with your District Commissioner and/or Regional Supervisor if you have questions or need additional information.*



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**D Rating:** The D Ratings are an introduction to the fun and challenge of riding, establishing a foundation of safety habits and knowledge of the daily care of a pony and tack. The D-1 through D-3 Pony Club member learns to ride independently and with control, maintaining a reasonably secure position at the walk, trot and canter and over low fences. All D ratings are awarded at the club level.

**C-1 and C-2 Ratings:** The C-1 and C-2 is a Pony Club member learning to become an active horseman, to care independently for pony and tack and to understand the reasons for what he or she is doing. The C-1 and C-2 show development towards a secure, independent seat and increasing control and confidence in all phases of riding. The C-1 and C-2 ratings are awarded at the club level.

**The H-B, C-3, B, H/H-A and A Ratings** are facilitated on a national basis and require a greater depth of knowledge and proficiency than the earlier ratings. Successful candidates are competent, all-around horsemen, active and contributing members of USPC, who participate in a variety of Pony Club activities. They are also thoughtful leaders who set an example for all levels.

**The H-B Rating** covers Horse Management knowledge that demonstrates increasing knowledge and competence in the care and handling of horses.

Pony Club members may choose to follow one or all of three riding tracks. They are: Traditional Eventing, Show Jumping or Dressage.

**The C-3 Rating** reflects a basis of competence in riding and horse care that will make possible a lifetime of pleasure with horses. If the C-3 riding test is passed before the H-B, the member becomes a C+.

**The B Rating** is for the active horseman and Pony Club member who is interested in acquiring further knowledge and proficiency in riding. The B is able to ride experienced mounts with confidence and control. The B should be able to ride and care for another person's experienced mount, maintaining proper mental and physical condition without undoing any of the mount's education. The B understands and is able to explain the reasons for what he or she is doing and to contribute to the education of younger Pony Club members.

**The A Rating**, the highest rating, is divided into two parts: the H/H-A, which covers horse management, teaching and training and the A, which tests the riding phase. The H/HA has the knowledge, experience and maturity to evaluate and care for a mount's needs efficiently and in a variety of circumstances, and to teach riding and horse care to others. The A is able to ride mounts at various levels of schooling with judgement, tact and effectiveness; to train young mounts; and to retrain spoiled mounts.



### Ratings Tests

Each club offers ratings at least twice a year and more often if the number of candidates warrants it. Since a club's instruction program is based on the Standards of Proficiency, a rating test measures a child's progress in that program.

Approximately four weeks prior to the rating, notification about the date, place, time, attire, what to bring, meal arrangements, cost (if any), etc., will be sent. Copies of the particular Standard and Test Sheet are distributed to candidates.

Whenever possible, ratings are completed in one day. At the D1-C2 levels, if it is necessary to conduct a test over several days, all requirements must be completed within a four-week time period.

Oral examinations are used for the Horse Management sections at all levels. Orals are conducted on a one-to-one or small group basis at the D level, and in very small groups of three to four at the C level. Candidates are afforded an opportunity to express what they know. Ratings tests cover the requirements listed on the Standards of Proficiency for that rating level, and candidates can be tested on any prior rating levels.

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A safe and reliable mount is required for ratings tests at all levels. Any candidate's, parent's, or DC's concerns about a given horse or pony should be discussed with the Organizer or the Examiner well before the rating test. The borrowing or sharing of suitable mounts is allowed at the D-1 through D-3 level, but *only* if the rider is familiar with the mount and has ridden it – prior to the testing – on the flat and over fences safely and successfully at the level being tested. At the C-1 and C-2 levels, a mount may not be shared for a full testing by candidates at the same testing. The exchange of mounts for testing purposes is not allowed below the C3 level.

A new USPC member who is young and inexperienced may become a D-1 and then take two to four years to achieve the D-3. An older, more experienced rider may be capable of passing several rating levels at the first testing. However, the D-1 to C-2 Program Committee strongly suggests that a new member be rated no higher than D-3 at a first rating, so that he or she can gain a broad experience of USPC.

In the event a candidate receives permission to try for more than one level at the first rating, both candidate and examiner must have copies of all Standards and Test Sheets up to and including the level desired. Each level of Horse Management will be covered.

The oral sections of each level will be covered first. If any part is not passed, the candidate will take the riding test at the rating level at which the oral requirements were completed. If successful, the candidate will be awarded that rating; if not, the rating appropriate to the riding standard achieved will be awarded. Once the first rating day has been completed, a USPC member may take only *one rating at a time*, and each rating must be fully completed before the next one is attempted.

### SUBSEQUENT TESTINGS:

Candidates are responsible for, and can be tested on, the requirements of any previous level.

### ORALS:

Oral questioning can take place in a quiet room or under a tree, although many questions will be asked while the horse is present in order to demonstrate skills. Often one examiner will do the actual "hands-on" and riding sections, while someone else does the oral questioning. In a testing that includes several rating levels, one group might ride while another is doing orals, and vice-versa.

Generally speaking, a ratings test schedule is as follows:

- Horse Management (hands on: saddling, grooming, etc.).
- Turnout/Inspection (questions such as parts of the horse, tack, conformation, shoeing, etc., may be asked at this time).
- Flat riding phase
- Riding in the open (D-2 and up)
- Cooling out
- Other Horse Management skills (hands-on)
- Oral questioning phase (parents can be used to watch horses at this time)

*Please refer to the Standards of Proficiency for specific participation requirements and recommended study materials.*





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### Mounted Meetings

The basics are stressed and taught continually, but fun is a part of lessons at all levels. All USPC members are encouraged to progress at a pace that is comfortable for them. Older members or knowledgeable adults will assist members in preparing for the ratings tests.

All clubs try to organize a program that is fun, educational and interesting to younger and older members. Mounted meetings are often structured so that older, upper-level members who are serious about setting and pursuing their goals may practice at their own level of intensity. Younger members are offered lots of fun mixed in with educational opportunities.

Most clubs set up a program in which an older USPC member is assigned to mentor a younger member. The older member may demonstrate proper handling, tying, and grooming. Lessons about tack fit, tacking up, and safety (including the all-important safety check, supervised by an adult) are reviewed before the young child begins the lesson. The older member benefits from the teaching experience and from watching the progress of the younger members.

Mounted meetings differ greatly from club to club, but all instruction should emphasize control, relaxation and the development of fundamentally sound basics.

*USPC is an educational organization which progressively develops the well-rounded horseperson.*

### Unmounted Meetings

Unmounted meetings are often structured around Horse Management instruction. Some examples of lessons, which vary greatly from club to club, include:

- Feed (cost and type)
- Shoeing
- Vet visits and Inoculations
- De-worming and product used
- Temperature, pulse and respiratory rate
- Training schedule
- Experience or ability necessary with a variety of horses
- Different types of tack
- Different breeds of horses or ponies



Specific topics that are required for ratings are listed in the Standards of Proficiency. Others might include the following:

- Setup and safety at competitions
- Grooming, turnout, braiding, formal inspection
- Tack—care, fitting, types, construction, use
- Loading and hauling horses, including long distance travel
- Conformation/Suitability
- First Aid
- Breeding/Foaling
- Horse Handling

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- Stable Manners
- Understanding different horse sports
- Standards and Testing (including reference materials)
- Labeling a horse and identification of equipment
- Practice Quizzes
- Analysis of barns and stables

Horse people generally recognize USPC members by their responsible and complete approach to horse care. Members should be proud of their Horse Management; it sets USPC apart from all other horse/riding organizations. To become an effective and efficient horseman, the USPC member must be a willing and eager student.

### Guidelines for USPC Members to receive the most from their lessons

- Be prompt and dress appropriately: clean, neat, and workmanlike.
- Be an active participant. Ask questions, but follow directions and listen. Be open to new ideas or techniques.
- Come prepared. Be ready to take notes and keep a folder or notebook for reference and review.
- Attend lectures and/or clinics whenever possible.
- Know your Standards and be ready to work hard to achieve the next level.
- Know safety guidelines and the rules of any competitions where participation is likely.
- Do the work in your stable. Know your horse and its equipment well. Do not hesitate to ask someone more experienced than you when you are uncertain about any procedure.
- Read as much as you can of the literature listed in the Standards of Proficiency.

- Keep the “Pony Health and Maintenance Record Book” up to date for your own (or borrowed) horse. Keep an additional record of your training schedule.
- Practice what you learn (bandaging, braiding, horse handling, longeing, loading, etc.).
- Observe. Learn about different types of shoes, breeds, tack, equipment, colors, etc.
- Share what you have learned with others.

### Being a Good Horse Person Requires

- That you take responsibility for your horse;
- That you take responsibility for yourself;
- That you are proud of what you learn and share it with friends;
- That you are respectful to your parents, instructors, USPC leaders;
- That you are willing to work hard, to be committed and to use common sense;
- That you prevent problems by practicing sound horse care techniques every day;
- That you take pleasure in a job well done;
- That you enjoy the result of your efforts—a horse that is comfortable, happy and ready to work for you.







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### Events & Activities



### Competitive Rallies

USPC competitive rallies provide an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in an atmosphere of cooperation, fun and teamwork. A competitive rally allows USPC members to test their skills against others. In addition, rallies are educational experiences that expose participants to new ideas and ways of doing things.

Competitive rallies can be unmounted, as in Quiz, where teams of four members compete in a verbal quiz. Other USPC rallies are mounted, involving teams of three, four or five riders and, in most disciplines, an unmounted Horse Manager.

Rallies can be small and informal, such as a rally for D-level members within a single club, or they can be interclub competitions. Or rallies can be larger and more formal, such as regional rallies.

Some regions hold rallies for each discipline (i.e. a Dressage rally in addition to a Eventing rally and a Quiz rally) while others hold one large rally for several disciplines.

USPC competitive rallies teach members about themselves, about support and reliance on others, about sportsmanship, and about personal growth involved in winning and losing.



### Dressage

Dressage is the art of improving your horse, making him more supple in his movements, a joy to ride and beautiful to watch. He must be a willing partner with a good mental attitude, willing to learn and wanting to please.

Competitions are held at many levels, beginning with Walk-Trot and Training Level, and continuing through nine levels to Grand Prix.

For all dressage tests, riders are awarded scores on each required movement. Riding scores are added to those for Horse Management for overall placement of dressage teams.

### Eventing

Eventing is the three-phase riding competitions that originated in the cavalries of Europe. These tests were formalized as competitions for military personnel in France in 1902.

The horses had to be well-trained for ceremonial parades. They also had to be fit enough to carry dispatches for long distances over any sort of terrain as quickly as possible, as demonstrated in the cross-country phase. Stadium jumping competition determined the horses' stamina, resilience and fitness to continue in service after completion of the previous two phases.

Today, Eventing tests a horse's versatility to a greater degree than any other equestrian sport.



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USPC Eventing Rallies are competitions, not lessons. Riders and mounts must come to the rally capable of competition at the level entered.

### Mounted Games

The USPC Games Program is intended to provide reinforcement of riding skills taught in USPC in a more relaxed environment than the formal lesson. As the Games players become more confident, competition becomes a part of the program and adds a new dimension of incentive and excitement. Perhaps the most interesting part of Games instruction lies in the fact that riders seldom realize their riding confidence and skills are improving.

Games are an activity that the newest unrated rider can enjoy, as well as the more capable Ds and Cs.



### Quiz

Quiz competition is an unmounted team “quiz bowl” that tests the USPC member’s knowledge in several rounds of questions. Some questions are individual questions and some require the input of the whole team.

Regional competitions are held every year. Quiz competitors are placed in different divisions according to age and rating. This provides the maximum opportunity for each member to compete on an equal basis.

Some of the areas of knowledge that are tested include Horse Management, health, veterinary care, equitation, hunting, trailering, biting, spectator sports, rally rules, safety, nutrition, and conformation.

While Regional competitions are open to all members in the Region, competitors must be ten years of age or older to qualify for the national Championships.

### Polocrosse

Polocrosse is a game related to polo but played with a racquet similar to that used in Lacrosse. The game was developed in Australia in the late 1930s, where it has been played with great enthusiasm ever since. Polocrosse has been embraced internationally, and through clinics and rallies is growing across the U.S.



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A natural extension of USPC games, Polocrosse offers riders a chance to develop strong self-confidence in their riding ability, especially riding in the open, and to improve their hand-eye coordination. Polocrosse also strengthens the rider's ability to do more than one thing at a time while riding.

Basic Dressage training is important in developing good Polocrosse horses, as they must have good balance and respond well to the aids. Horses quickly catch on, and seem to enjoy the game as much as their riders!

### Show Jumping

Show Jumping is an exciting sport which originated in the late 18th century as a part of Foxhunting. Show Jumping competitions take place both in indoor and outdoor arenas.



Show Jumping utilizes physical skills to negotiate a series of obstacles and mental skills to plan the proper approaches to allow the horse to jump the obstacles. Riders must have the ability to ride the course according to plan and, at the national level, the stamina to ride on consecutive days.

USPC members may learn the principles and techniques of designing, building, walking, assessing and riding Show Jumping courses. An excellent source of information for beginning Show Jumping riders is *The Usborne Riding School Jumping* book, available through the USPC Bookstore at [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org).



### Tetrathlon

Tetrathlon events include swimming, Show Jumping, running, and shooting. Each activity is performed at different levels of difficulty based on age. The Tetrathlon program provides a challenging competition requiring sound, practical horsemanship and general athletic ability of USPC members. Its objective is to encourage USPC members to broaden their interest in riding and the horse, and to become multi-sport athletes.

The development of Tetrathlon within the USPC has been sought by organizers of the U.S. Modern Pentathlon and U.S. Olympic Commit-



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tees as a means of developing multi-talented athletes for international competitions. They offer guidance and training programs for outstanding athletes who meet their requirements for skill and endurance.

### Championships

Each year, clubs may participate in regional rallies in Eventing, Dressage, Show Jumping, Quiz, Games, Polocrosse and Tetrathlon. The culmination of these rallies is a USPC National Championship competition.

Championships are held each year. In Festival year, Championships are held in Kentucky. In other years, Championships may be held in the East and/or West. Team competitions in each of the disciplines take place over a period of several days. Championships attract regional teams from all over the country!

### Festival

The week-long USPC Festival is held every three years generally in Lexington, Kentucky, at the Kentucky Horse Park. Championships are held the first three days, followed by four days of clinics and workshops. Festival is open to all members of USPC families. Activities are planned for everyone, with parents encouraged to participate. Festival is great for a family vacation.

Unmounted sessions take place in a number of areas, including stalls, farrier pavilions, the Covered Arena, tents and even shady, grassy areas. Unmounted campers get to participate in the Specialty Barn, Introduction to Horse Sports and Barn Fair and go on Kentucky Thoroughbred Horse Farm Tours.

Mounted classes vary with each Festival, but in the past have included training sessions on each of the disciplines, Centered Riding, and Natural Horsemanship

### Other Club Activities

Clubs offer a variety of activities, including camps, Foxhunting, unmounted rallies, and more. Check with your DC about what your club, and other clubs in your area, have to offer.

### Foxhunting

USPC was founded by a group of enthusiastic Foxhunters who were familiar with the Pony Club in Britain. Many clubs today are still affiliated with a local hunt and are invited to participate in their hunts at no charge.

Other clubs may expose their members to the sport of Foxhunting by holding Mock Foxhunts. Hunter paces and hunter trials are also ways to introduce USPC members to the sport.

### Pony Club Camps

USPC camps come in many forms. Not all clubs offer camps. One thing that all USPC camps have in common is that they all provide fun, practice in horse care (with supervision), a relaxed atmosphere and a chance to be with friends.

There are several different types of camps. The type offered will depend on the area in which you live, the weather and the volunteers available to assist in the organization of the camp.

*Not all clubs offer all activities.  
Please check with your DC to  
find out more about activities in  
your local club.*





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### Mission Statement

*The mission of the United States Pony Clubs, Inc., is to provide a program for youth that teaches riding, mounted sports, and the care of horses and ponies, thereby developing responsibility, moral judgment, leadership and self-confidence.*



### Guiding Beliefs

USPC is an educational organization which progressively develops the well-rounded horseperson. The well-rounded horseperson is capable of riding safely and tactfully on the flat, over fences, and in the open.

Knowledgeable care of horses and ponies (Horse Management) is basic to the well-rounded horseperson.

USPC is committed to the well-being of the horse.

Fair and friendly competitions develop teamwork and sportsmanship.

Fun and friendship are part of The United States Pony Clubs, Inc.

USPC requires parental and volunteer involvement and support.

The USPC is committed to safety.

The local club is the core of USPC.



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