Introduction:

The trail horse is required to work through or over a series of obstacles that test the technical, and confidence coordination or sensitivity skills of the horse. Technical obstacles allow the horse to demonstrate its athletic skills and concentration ability. Confidence obstacles tell us something about the personality and temperament of the horse. Coordination or sensitivity obstacles help demonstrate the awareness of the horse to its surroundings by the manner in which it moves and by foot placement. Horses are not usually worked on the rail. However, the trail course must be designed to show the horse at all three gaits (walk, jog, lope) somewhere between the obstacles as part of its work on the trail course. Gaits and movement are scored as a maneuver. A horse that deviates from the posted course or pattern shall not be placed above any horse that completes the course as written.

Trail Course Design:

Trail course and obstacles should be designed with safety in mind so as to prevent accidents and possible injury to horse or rider. Spacing between obstacles should allow a horse to jog at least 30 feet and lope at least 50 feet. The course must be made up of at least six obstacles. 3 must be from the indicated mandatory list and 3 from the optional list. All obstacles should be safe and in good condition.

Mandatory Obstacles:

1. Open, pass through, and close gate that is safe for horse and rider
2. Ride over at least four (4) logs or poles. May be in a straight line, zigzag, curved, or raised

   Spacing between logs or poles:
   Walkovers: 15-24"
Optional Obstacles:

The following is a list of optional trail obstacles. Others may be developed or used provided they are not dangerous to horse or rider.

- Water (ditch or pond) - No metal or slick bottom boxes.
- Serpentine obstacles at walk or jog. Spacing must be at least 6 feet for a jog.
- Carry a reasonable object that may be carried on a trail ride from one site on the course to another.
- Walk over wooden bridge: must be at least 36" wide and of safe condition and construction.
- Put on/remove a slicker.
- Side pass a pole: may be elevated to 12" maximum.

Prohibited Obstacles:

- Animals
- Dismounting
- Elevated poles or logs that roll
- Flames, noise, dry ice, fire extinguisher
- Ground tying
- Hides
- Jumps
- PVC pipe
- Rocking/moving bridges
- Tires
- Water box with moving or floating object

Judging The Trail Horse Class:

This class is judged on the performance of the horse, manners and attitude, and response to the rider. Credit is given to horses that:

- Work obstacles with appropriate speed, style, and caution
- Have the ability to work their way through the course
- Are responsive to rider’s cues on difficult obstacles

Horses Are Penalized For The Following:

- Unnecessary delay in approaching and negotiating obstacle
- Artificial appearance over obstacles

The following will result in a no score on an obstacle but does not result in disqualification:
• Working an obstacle different than as on the pattern
• Missing or not attempting an obstacle
• Not completing an obstacle
• Not in the posted gait or correct lead

The following will be cause for disqualification from class:

• Not working obstacles in posted order
• Illegal equipment Abuse of horse
• More than one finger between reins, except when changing hands to work an obstacle.
• Obvious cueing horse on neck to lower head.
• Major disobedience - rearing, schooling
• Touching in front of cinch

Scoring The Trail Class:

The format of a suggested scorecard for a trail class and hypothetical score for a class of four horses is shown below. Each obstacle in the course is given a value of 0 to 10 points. "0" is a perfect score where as a "10" indicates the horse did poorly on the obstacle. Scores are based upon the severity of the mistakes made. Major faults are assessed more points than minor faults.

Minor Faults

• Ticks/rubs on obstacle
• Chewing on bit
• Tail wringing
• Too fast/slow

Major Faults

• Falling/stepping of bridge
• Knocking over markers
• Losing the gate
• Breaking gait
• Refusal
• Stepping outside markers during turns, side passes or backing

Disqualification (no score)

• Failure to work obstacles as diagrammed Fall of horse or rider
• Illegal equipment Abuse of horse
• Cueing on neck to lower head
• Rearing or schooling on course
• More than I finger between reins except when changing hands to work obstacle

Should a tie occur after all contestants have performed, two methods may be used to break the tie.

I. An over-all attitude, manners, and style score may be used as a tie-breaker. Although these characteristics are considered in scoring individual obstacles, an overall
score maybe used in placing ties. This score ranges between 0 and 100, with 70 being average.

2. In addition to the obstacle scoring, scored gaits can also be useful in placing a class. The walk, jog and lope gaits in a pattern are evaluated and given a score between 0 and 10. A perfect way of moving would be 0 and a 10 would be highly undesirable.

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<th>Gate</th>
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References:

United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) - Formerly: American Horse Show Association

American Paint Horse Association


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