



# The Alaska State 4-H Horse Advancement Levels Program

## Progressing Through the Levels

Progress through the levels of the program will depend on each individual's maturity, interest and capabilities. The capabilities of the horse the member rides should also be considered. Patience is paramount, and progress is made only when the skills required for each level are mastered. There is no specific time period for progression through the levels. However, suggested maximum progression is one level per year (could take longer). To help youth develop further, parents, club leaders and instructors should be supportive and encourage those members who have mastered one level to move up to the next.

Caution should be exercised in advancing youth through the first two levels. Although the requirements appear simple, they constitute the basis for good habits of riding and working around horses with safety and confidence. The degree to which the skills of the lower levels have been mastered will be reflected in the more advanced levels.

Leaders, agents and parents should recognize that not every youth will desire to master all levels. By completing the first two levels, however, youth gain skills to ride and handle horses safely for general pleasure and lower-level show ring performance. For these reasons, all members enrolled in the horse program are strongly encouraged to complete the first two levels.

In Levels III and IV, training and using horses for skills that are beyond their capabilities of physical growth and maturity is discouraged. Therefore, 4-H requires a minimum age of four years for animals used in Advancement Levels III and IV.

## Project Horses Used in the Advancement Level Program

In keeping with the requirements of the rest of the 4-H horse program, a member who wishes to advance through the levels must do so on his/her project horse. If the member wishes to ride different horses for the different disciplines (e.g., one horse for Western or dressage and a different horse for over fences work), all horses must be signed up as project horses for that member, with an Annual 4-H Horse Certification (AKH-00004) on file with the 4-H office.

Project horses must be either owned by or leased by the member or the member's family. (See [4-H Project Horse Policy](#), AKH-00002.) A member who signs up multiple horses as project horses must keep a record book for each horse. If the horse is leased, a properly signed copy of the lease must be kept with the member's [4-H Project Horse Policy](#), AKH-00008.

## Discipline Divisions of the Advancement Level Program

When progressing through the levels, a 4-H member may choose to pursue English, Western or both. Members may not skip levels or start the program with any level other than Level I. The Western levels consist of tests for Levels I through IV.

The English levels are slightly different. At Levels I, II and III, there are both "flat" tests (not requiring jumping) and over fences tests. If a member wishes to complete the over fences tests, he/she must pass the flat test for each level before attempting the over fences test for that level.

At Level III, the English tests branch out into three different areas: hunt seat flat/over fences, dressage and saddle seat. The member may choose to pursue one or all three disciplines.

Members completing a level in one division (English or Western), may decide to gain skills in a different division. However, members may not move laterally from one division to another or skip any tests. For example, if a member completes Level III Western, and then decides to train in dressage, he/she must begin with Level I English and proceed through the English levels to the dressage subsection.

Each riding test (except the over fences tests) has two sections: "Ground Handling" and "Under Saddle." In the last half of this guide, the elements of each section of each test are listed and guidelines are provided to help in understanding the expectations and requirements of the tests.

## Advancement Level Program Divisions and Subsections

## Administering the Advancement Level Tests

### Western Levels

- I Beginner Stock Seat Equitation
- II Intermediate Stock Seat Equitation
- III Advanced Stock Seat Equitation
- IV Horsemaster Stock Seat Equitation

### English Levels

- I Beginner Hunt Seat Equitation — Flat
- I Beginner Hunt Seat Equitation — Over Fences
- II Intermediate Hunt Seat Equitation — Flat
- II Intermediate Hunt Seat Equitation — Over Fences

### Dressage

- III Advanced
- IV Horsemaster

### Hunt Seat Equitation Flat/Over Fences

- III Advanced Hunt Seat Equitation — Flat
- III Advanced Hunt Seat Equitation — Over Fences
- IV Horsemaster Hunt Seat Equitation

### Saddle Seat Equitation

- III Advanced
- IV Horsemaster

### Written Tests



Test examiners should note on the tests their reasons for giving the various marks. Their comments should be constructive and helpful, with a view to assisting the member to progress in his/her riding skills.

### Tack, Attire and Attitude

Whether the member is riding Western or English, the correct tack and attire is expected. All tack used should be clean, in good, safe condition, and fit the horse properly. The horse should be properly groomed. The member should dress appropriately for the discipline, in clean, neat attire, as if going into a class at a horse show.

Tack and Attire: Please see the [4-H Handbook](#), AKH-00002. All rules regarding tack and attire as outlined in the rule book apply to the advancement level tests. Questions should be directed to your 4-H club leader or the test examiner before beginning the test.

Attitude: The 4-H member should display good sportsmanship and be courteous and respectful to the test examiner according to the highest ideals of the 4-H program. The member should be careful of his/her speech and actions and never be abusive to the animal. The member or the member's family, leader or instructor may not argue with the test examiner or in any other way demonstrate a lack of respect. If participants and/or parents or leaders confront the examiner without following accepted procedures, the participant will be removed from any future testing. Subsequent behavior

## Level II

Each member must know the following points to pass the Level II written test:

### **1. Equipment**

- a. Types and uses of bits
- b. Uses of different pieces of equipment (both English and Western)

### **2. Judging**

- a. Major horse and pony breeds
- b. Basic color and marking descriptions
- c. Commonly used conformation terms
- d. Unsoundnesses and blemishes
- e. Gaits

### **3. Feeding**

- a. Common feeds found in the local area
- b. Common hays, grains and supplements
- c. Basic feeding guidelines

### **4. Other**

- a. Alaska 4-H Horse Show rules
- b. Definitions of common horse-related terms

### **4. Other**

- a. Typical characteristics of several different breeds of horses
  - b. Showmanship and equitation terms and rules
  - c. Definitions of many commonly used terms
  - d. Common conformation faults
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## Level III

Each member must know the following points to pass the Level III written test:

### **1. Feeding**

- a. Protein content of common horse concentrates and roughages
- b. Energy, protein, calcium and phosphorus sources and amounts required by the horse
- c. Vitamin and mineral requirements of the horse

### **2. Equine teeth**

- a. Number of teeth in a horse's mouth and at which ages they appear
- b. How to tell the age of a horse by its teeth

### **3. Diseases and parasites**

- a. Common parasites by their scientific and common names
- b. Common diseases by their scientific and common names
- c. Answers to questions regarding parasite and disease prevention and control



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Ground Handling	Test Guidelines
1. Lead horse around horse.	D Q D G I H N W R Z I O R H G V H L Z K K L O H W R D N D Q W L P H V and skill
2. Fitting and turnout of horse must be show ring grooming and equipment.	Horse, tack and 4-H member should be immaculate. Grooming horse should demonstrate knowledge of show grooming techniques. V S H F L J F E U H H G R U W \ S H
3. Perform showmanship maneuvers with skill, grace and smoothness.	Perform showmanship maneuvers effortlessly, with crispness and grace. Horse should respond to handler's subtle cues.
Under Saddles	
1. From a normal walk, demonstrate an extended normal walk.	walk, back to a W R L O A X H O F H O H Q J W K R I K movement on the part of the rider. Show actual change in length of stride, not only increase in speed. Maintain seat and hand position.
2. Demonstrate a jog, to an extended jog and back to a jog.	Sto a jog. W \ W R L O A X H O F H O H Q J W K R I K movement on the part of the rider. Show actual change in length of stride, not only increase in speed. Maintain seat and hand position.
3. Demonstrate a slow lope to a lope with speed.	Sto a slow W R L O A X H O F H O H Q J W K R I K movement on the part of the rider. Show actual change in length of stride, not only increase in speed. Maintain seat and hand position.
4. Demonstrate a prompt, balanced halt from all directions, away from the rail.	Ability to halt horse in balance from all gaits without excessive use on reins; demonstrate proper use of seat and back in halt and keep horse straight
5. Two-track to the right and left at the walk and jog, maintain	

Ground Handling	Test Guidelines
1. Fitting and turnout of horse must be show ring quality.	Horse, tack and 4-H member should be immaculate. Grounding of horse should demonstrate knowledge of show ground.
2. Fitting and turnout of horse must be show ring quality.	Horse, tack and 4-H member should be immaculate. Grounding of horse should demonstrate knowledge of show ground.
3. Horse and handler must demonstrate excellent performance and a polished showmanship performance.	Performs showmanship maneuvers effortlessly, with crisp balance and grace. Horse should respond to handler's cues.
Under Saddles	

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Test Requirements	Test Guidelines
1. Shorten and lengthen reins at walk and posting trot while	

Ground Handling	Test Guidelines
1. Properly halter, lead and tie horse, using appropriate safety around the horse	Safety at all times around the horse; ability to control a horse; ability to tie quick-release knot at proper height and length
2. Fitting and grooming, clipping, correct use of tail, body, legs and feet	Demonstrate safe position while grooming and handling horse. * URR P L Q J RI KRUVH VKRXOG UHÄH techniques and show grooming.
3. Bridling, saddling, proper adjustment of equipment	Ability to safely bridle and saddle horse; knowledge of horse equipment should be adjusted for safety and comfort of horse
4. Intermediate showmanship skills: walk, trot, stop, backing horse on haunches), back and set up horse for movement and effort	Ability to safely guide and control horse through maneuvers with minimum effort; knowledge of quartering system as described in the Alaska 4-H Horse Rules Book; proper, safe position in relation to horse both when standing still and moving
Under Saddle	
1. Mount, dismount, mount	Safety when mounting and dismounting; correct use of equipment; ability to mount with ease, without unbalancing horse, pulling saddle off to side, or disturbing horse (toe in animal's side)
2. Demonstrate correct aids for the following transitions: 1) walk to trot (posting and sitting); 2) trot to canter (posting and sitting); 3) canter to trot (posting and sitting); 4) walk to canter (on correct lead, two to three trot strides allowed between walk and canter).	Ability to perform transitions with minimal effort and/or correct hand position (no loss of position); ability to get correct hand position posting and sitting
3. Demonstrate a correct change of diagonal.	Ability to perform transitions with minimal effort and/or correct hand position (no loss of position); ability to get correct hand position posting and sitting
4. Demonstrate a correct change of lead on a straightaway, away from the rail. Show a minimum of two changes (one right, one left). Begin from a halt (two to three walk/trot strides allowed between halt and canter).	Ability to perform transitions with minimal effort and/or correct hand position (no loss of position); ability to get correct hand position posting and sitting
5. Demonstrate a simple change of lead on a straightaway, away from the rail. Show a minimum of two changes (one right, one left). Begin from a halt (two to three walk/trot strides allowed between halt and canter).	Ability to perform transitions with minimal effort and/or correct hand position (no loss of position); ability to get correct hand position posting and sitting

Test Requirements	Test Guidelines
1. Shorten and lengthen reins at posting trot and riding three-loop serpentines across width and changing diagonals and leads correctly when appropriate (simple change).	Ability to handle reins without unduly disturbing horse, maintaining balance and seat, changing diagonals and leads appropriately (5 strides allowed when changing leads). Serpentines should be ridden as half circles connected by straight lines.
2. Shorten and lengthen reins at posting trot and riding three-loop serpentines across width and changing diagonals and leads correctly when appropriate (simple change).	Ability to maintain balanced seat position and maintain appropriate stirrups; ability to guide horse through appropriate changes.
3. Maintain jump position (two-point) at trot and riding three-loop serpentines across width and changing leads correctly when appropriate (simple change).	Ability to maintain balanced two point without using reins effectively. Demonstrate use of long and short reins when changing leads.
4. Demonstrate increase and decrease of speed at trot and canter.	Ability to regulate horse's speed (rate horse) without loss of rider position or control.
5. Demonstrate lengthening of stride at posting trot and canter.	Ability to lengthen stride without loss of rider position or control. Only an increase in speed.
6. Ride a series of three or more ground rails followed by cross rails 18 to 20 inches high (one stride apart), demonstrating use of long and short reins and release. Halt on a straight line after last cross rail.	Ability to maintain balanced seat through poles and cross rails, demonstrating use of long and short reins and release. Demonstrate use of long and short reins on horse's crest on each side of mane (hands on each side of mane just in front of saddle, may be used to hold mane) over cross rails and ability to halt horse in straight line after last cross rail.
7. Ride a simple course of six to eight fences including two feet with one two-stride combination and a change of direction. Course must be ridden at the canter.	Ability to guide horse through course, maintaining balanced seat and demonstrating correct approach to jumps (in the center, with correct rhythm and impulsion and changing direction smoothly).
8. Demonstrate control with safe, balanced position through a test.	Ability to demonstrate overall control of horse, maintaining position and balance, with emphasis on safety and secure seat.
9. Proper tack, attire and attitude	



# English Advanced Hunt Seat Equitation Over Fences Level III

## Riding Test Guidelines

Test Requirements	Test Guidelines
1. Demonstrate lengthening of stride at posting and correct position of seat, legs and hands.	Effort or movement on the part of the rider. Show actual increase in length of stride, not only increase in speed. Maintain correct position of seat, legs and hand positions.
2. From working canter, demonstrate hand gallop position and return to working canter, maintaining position of seat, legs and hands.	Effort or movement on the part of the rider. Show actual increase in length of stride, not only increase in speed. Maintain correct position of seat, legs and hand positions.
3. Ride a large circle and then jump two fences (two jumps, maximum 20 inches, two strides apart) without stirrups, showing proper position and not using reins for balance.	Ability to maintain balance and correct position (two-position) without stirrups jumps without stirrups, showing proper position and not using reins for balance.
4. Ride a grid consisting of three or more ground rails set by three cross rails 18 to 20 inches high with one stride between (bounces), maintaining jump position and crest release. Halt on a straight line after last cross rail.	Ability to maintain impulsion through grid. Demonstrate correct releases and ability to halt straight after last jump. Crest release used is left up to the rider, but must be declared to test examiner and remain consistent throughout.
5. Explain the use and execution of an automatic release.	Know what, when, where and why to use an automatic release. If member's skill level allows, he/she may demonstrate a correct automatic release.
6. Ride a stadium course of six to eight fences, including two feet six inches; include at least one change of direction, one two-stride combination and one one-stride combination. Course must be ridden at the canter.	Ability to guide horse through course with steadiness, demonstrating ability to achieve correct striding between fences, maintain balance and correct position, and approach jumps correctly. Demonstrate correct releases, maintaining rhythm and impulsion and changing direction smoothly.
6 KRZ 2UP EDODQFHG SRV throughout test.	Ability to guide horse, maintaining position and balance, with emphasis on safety.
8. Proper tack, attire, and attitude	7 DFN DQG DW WLUH PTH Horse Rules Book for hunt seat equitation. See also Page 5 of this booklet.



# English Horsemaster Hunt Seat Equitation Level IV

## Riding Test Guidelines

Ground Handling	Test Guidelines
1. Lead horse around horse.	Knowledge and skill.
2. Fitting and turnout of horse must be show quality.	Horse and 4-H member should be immaculate. Grooming horse should demonstrate knowledge of show grooming techniques.
3. Horse and handler must demonstrate excellent showmanship maneuvers effortlessly, with crispness and a polished showmanship performance.	Perform showmanship maneuvers effortlessly, with crispness, balance and grace. Horse should respond to handler's subtle cues.
Under Saddle	
1. On the quarterline of the arena, demonstrate right and left, at walk and sitting trot.	Control use of rider's aids in performing maneuver. Maintain impulsion, rhythm, balance and correct bend.
2. Perform a 15-meter circle at all gaits, both directions.	Control use of rider's aids in performing maneuver. Maintain impulsion, rhythm and correct bend.
3. Demonstrate a correct, balanced halt from a hand gallop.	Correct rider body position through halt, with no resistance from horse (gaping mouth, hollow back); horse to be kept straight through halt.
4. Perform Number 3 above without irons.	Correct rider body position and balance through halt, with no resistance from horse (gaping mouth, hollow back); horse to be kept straight through halt.
5. Demonstrate a correct, balanced halt from a hand gallop of 8 after second change.	Ability to correctly position horse for changes (horse to be kept straight through changes); proper use of aids to avoid over-angling of front and rear to change at the same time. Horse should not be angled one way or the other to get the changes. Horse should be straight and balanced with no gaping of horse's mouth.
6. Demonstrate two simple changes of lead through a straightaway, away from the rail. Begin from a halt.	Ability to ask horse for gait changes and new leads, correct horse's body position to strike off on new lead. Horse should not be overly angled one way or the other when asking for new lead. Horse should show no resistance (e.g., gaping mouth, tossing head).
7. Perform a three-loop serpentine at the canter, length of arena, with no change of lead, both directions.	Maintain quality of canter, with correct bend, balance, impulsion and rhythm. Circles connected by straight lines.
8. Demonstrate a correct, balanced halt from a hand gallop straight.	Ability to properly use aids to change horse's body position, maintaining forward impulsion and consistent forward movement.
9. Jump a course of at least six fences (two of which must be six inches) that will include at least one change of direction and at least two of the following: one combination and out, one over, and one triple combination.	Ability to guide horse through course with steadiness, demonstrating ability to achieve correct striding between fences. Maintain balance and position, approaching jumps correctly. Demonstrate correct releases, maintaining rhythm and impulsion, changing direction smoothly.
10. Proper tack, attire and attitude	See <i>The American Ph Horse Rules Book</i> for hunt seat equitation. See also Page 5 of this booklet.

Ground Handling	Test Guidelines
1. LVSOD\ FRQ ; GHQFH VDIHW around horse.	6 D QHWNQR B QH G UR XZK LDOM ZRUDN LVC edge, and skill
2. Fitting and turnout of horse must be show including grooming and equipment.	Horse quality, and 4-H member should be immacui. LO /TTO 1



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## When I Compete

I have a performance goal...never a “to only beat some one else” goal.

I respect and learn from other competitors more skilled than myself.

I don't criticize other competitors, officials, or judges.

I do my best today.

I have fun.

I stay home if I can't follow the above rules.



## 4-H Pledge

I pledge my head to clearer thinking,

My heart to greater loyalty,

My hands to larger service,

And my health to better living,

For my club, my community, my country, and my world.

## 4-H Motto

To Make the Best Better

## 4-H Slogan

Learn by Doing

[www.uaf.edu/ces](http://www.uaf.edu/ces) or 1-877-520-5211

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