

How to Avoid Elimination at Our Horse Trials

Not a favorite topic and believe us, we don't want it to happen to you! Some kinds of elimination are avoidable by knowing the rules. Others are just a factor of you and your horse's experience and how your ride was on any particular day. Here are some general pointers to help you out:

EQUIPMENT

Be sure you know what equipment is acceptable for you and your horse for each phase. We follow USEA (United States Eventing Association) rules, so check it out at USEA and click on [Rules for Eventing, Rulebook PDF](#), or borrow a copy of the rule book. All riders new to eventing are encouraged to get to know the USEA rules. For example, correct biting for the dressage phase is a common snafu, so check it all out.

SOUNDNESS

Your horse must be sound to compete. Judges and Technical Delegates must act on unsoundnesses (lamenesses) that they see that day and eliminate you. If your horse has come up lame prior to the event, please call and scratch. We can often give you a refund or a credit towards another event and you can come and play in the future when your horse is 100%.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

This means no one else can ride your horse in a warm-up, your friends cannot point the way for you on the cross-country course, nor can your trainer whisper suggestions as you do your dressage test. This is your day...show us what YOU can do! Remember to remind your family, friends and trainer before you ride NOT to talk to you when you are being judged. Don't let them disqualify you!

ABUSE

While there is a certain amount of subjectivity to this topic, be smart and thoughtful, and don't go anywhere near it. Improper or excessive use of the whip, the spurs or the reins will rightly get you eliminated, so take a deep breath and handle a disobedience calmly. There is always another day.

The improper use of the crop/whip while jumping is the most common problem, so here are the rules, straight from the USEA

Rulebook:

Reason for Use: The whip must only be used either as an aid to encourage the horse forward, or as a reprimand. It must never be used to vent a rider's temper. Such use is always excessive.

Time of Use:

As an aid, the only appropriate time is when a horse is reluctant to go forward under normal aids of the seat and legs. As a reprimand, the only appropriate time is immediately after a horse has been disobedient, e.g. napping or refusing. The whip should not be used after elimination. The whip should not be used after a horse has jumped the last fence on a course.

Place to Use:

As an aid to go forward, the whip may be used down the shoulder or behind the rider's leg. As a reprimand, it must only be used behind the rider's leg. It must never be used overhand, e.g. a whip in the right hand being used on the left flank. The use of a whip on a horse's head, neck, etc., is always excessive use.

Severity:

As a reprimand only, a horse may be hit firmly. However, it should never be hit more than three times for any one incident. If a horse is marked by the whip, e.g. the skin is broken, its use is excessive.

SAFETY

Properly fitting ASTM-approved helmets with harnesses are required in all phases and by everyone riding anywhere on the grounds. Protective vests are required for the cross-country phase and are allowed in the stadium phase as well. We also require the use of the identification armbands sold by the USEA and we want you to have your identification and any medical information on you at all times.

Here are some common reasons for elimination in each of the phases:

DRESSAGE

- All four feet stepping out of the chain ring.
- Having your test called. Be sure to memorize the correct test thoroughly.
- Horse wearing illegal items such as leg wraps of any kind or martingales.

CROSS-COUNTRY

- Jumping a warm-up fence (or any fence) in the wrong direction. Remember, keep the red marker to the right for everyone's safety! This also applies to stadium.
- Not wearing your armband. Riders may NOT jump unless they are wearing an armband on their arm (not on rider's leg, saddle, etc.). This applies to warm-up too.
- Jumping the wrong fence or the wrong part of a fence, jumping the fences in the wrong order or jumping a fence twice. These are the most common reasons for unnecessary elimination. If there is a difference between the course map and how the fences are flagged, be sure to know what is correct (generally, it is the way it is flagged). In the excitement of the day, riders have been known to jump the wrong side of our multi-height fences and not even know it!
- Three refusals at any one fence or four refusals on the whole course.
- If in the first fall of competitor, he/she lands on their feet and remains standing, the rider must get the approval of the Technical Delegate to remount and if so, may continue with a penalty of 65 points. This is similar to the rule that the USEA has instituted and we have decided to add the approval of the TD for remounting for safety reasons at this level.
- Excessive use of the whip (see information above under Abuse).
- Not crossing the finish line. You've done great, so be sure to go between those last markers!
- Lack of good manners, such as not allowing another horse to pass, failure to stop when signaled, or cutting through the course before starting or after finishing.

STADIUM JUMPING

- Beginning before the starting signal is given. Listen for that whistle!
- Three disobediences in the whole test. You may be allowed to take ONE courtesy fence ONLY with permission of the judge after being eliminated.
- Fall of rider. NO courtesy fence is allowed and rider must walk off course, whether on foot or re-mounted.
- Jumping an obstacle in the wrong order or direction, or missing a jump. Be sure to know your course solidly and ask if you have any questions.
- Failure to retake an entire combination (fences listed as A and B of the same number) if you have a refusal at one part of it.
- Not crossing the start and finish lines.

Now, don't be overwhelmed, you can avoid many of these problems just by being prepared and calm. Remember, you are competing for the fun and pleasure of time with your horse, and to test your skills as a team on any given day. Should the unfortunate "E" word enter into your day, we will allow you to continue in the other phases (other than for soundness, safety or abuse reasons) for the experience. So, head on out there and have a great time!