

# Western riding

## Recommended rules by Finnish Hobbyhorse Association

*Executed in the Finnish Championships and recommended for use in other western riding competitions.*

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# 1. TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	2
<b>2. GENERAL</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1 General rules</b> .....	<b>3</b>
2.1.1 Riding arena.....	3
2.1.2 Vocabulary.....	3
2.1.2.1 Gaits.....	3
2.1.2.2 Maneuvers.....	4
2.1.2.3 Other vocabulary .....	5
<b>2.2. Tack and clothing</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.2.1 Tack.....	5
2.2.2 Rein hold.....	5
2.2.3 Clothing.....	5
<b>2.2 Position of horse and rider</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3 Movement and performing the movements</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3. EVENTS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3.1 Western horsemanship</b> .....	<b>6</b>
3.1.1 Class procedures.....	6
3.1.1.1 Levels .....	6
3.1.1.2 Individual pattern .....	7
3.1.1.3 Railwork.....	7
3.1.2 Judging.....	7
3.1.2.1 Scoring .....	7
3.1.2.2 Penalties .....	7
<b>3.2 Western riding</b> .....	<b>8</b>
3.2.1 Judging.....	8
3.2.1.1 Scoring .....	8
3.2.1.2 Penalties .....	8
3.2.2 Levels and patterns.....	9
<b>4. ATTACHMENTS</b> .....	<b>10</b>

## 2. GENERAL

Like any other disciplines, western riding on hobbyhorses is adapted from the real horse world and the hobbyhorse riding rules are based on the international and Finnish rules. If you don't understand the rules, ask the competition organizer or the judge. As an organizer you can ask about the rules from the creator. The assumption is that if something isn't mentioned in these rules, it isn't judged or taken into account in the performance. The competition organizer has a right and freedom to use different rules, but also the responsibility to notify the competitors of which rules are used. Hobbyhorsing is a very free and unrestricted hobby. There isn't one absolute truth how one should ride hobbyhorses, and everyone can ride them however they like. The judge reviews every rider individually and evaluates how well they perform on the required level. There are different visions but these rules have been composed to create a fundament for western riding in hobbyhorsing. Western riding isn't very popular among hobbyhorsers and therefore there have not been agreed norms or ideals before this. These are the western riding rules for hobbyhorses recommended by Finnish Hobbyhorse Association. Changes and additions are made when necessary. The latest and valid rules can be always found from Finnish Hobbyhorse Association's website.

### 2.1 General rules

It is recommended that at least three riders place in a class. This can be changed if there are too much or only a few competitors. The competitor organizer has a right to choose and plan how riders are placed and rewarded. (Kati Pitkälä, The official show jumping rules of Finnish Hobbyhorse Association) Competitors who have the same score, share the same placement. A tie in speed events leads to a rerun.

#### 2.1.1 Riding arena

Recommended size of the riding arena depending on the event is about 7x14 meters. The arena must be big enough especially in classes including trailwork (pleasure, horsemanship), depending on the number of the competitors. The surface needs to be safe and suitable for hobbyhorse riders. Especially in events including fast turns etc. it's not recommended to use slippery surfaces that have for example gravel on top of it. Suggested platforms are sand, grass and sports flooring. On hard surfaces it's recommended to use shoes. Asphalt is not recommended to use in hobbyhorse sports. Outdoor surfaces must be even/flat.

#### 2.1.2 Vocabulary

Same vocabulary is used in both hobbyhorsing and real horses, so you can find the same information from elsewhere, but everything is adapted to suit hobbyhorsing.

##### 2.1.2.1 Gaits

The gaits are not judged based on the expression of breed characteristics.

#### **Walk**

In walk the horse walks forward relaxed, and the steps are forward going. In most western events the ideal is a slow and collected walk.

#### **Jog**

aka slow trot, is slow and soft. There is less impulsion than in (dressage) trot. Steps are short and low. The steps are still clear trot, and not for example fast walk. In extended jog the step stretches longer but the pace remains as normal.

## **Lope**

aka slow canter, is slow and soft. Steps are short and slow. One should ride right lead lope (the right leg leads) when riding clockwise and vice versa, unless requested otherwise.

### *2.1.2.2 Maneuvers*

Everyone has their own style in hobbyhorsing. These are the rules on how to perform different maneuvers. The movements will be judged based on these *rules* if the invitation states so.

## **Stop, halt**

In western riding the horse usually backs up a few steps at a stop. *However*, in a competition one should not take steps backwards unless it says so in the pattern. A good halt is performed both feet together with a good posture.

## **Volte**

A volte is a small circle of which diameter is half of the riding arena's width. The size of the volte can be also defined in the pattern. The horse is flexed inwards. There is no bending unless the diameter of the volte requires it.

## **Le yield**

The horse moves both forward and sideways. The horse is slightly flexed away from the movement. The hobbyhorse's front (the head) and back (the stick) should move in the same line: not head or stick first.

## **Side pass**

Side pass is leg yield directly sideways. The horse *does not* move forwards at all, only sideways. The position and flexion are the same as in leg yield.

## **Shoulder-out / haunches-in**

Feet are positioned away from the inside of the riding arena, flexion towards the inside of the arena. (Maikken, The official dressage rules of Finnish Hobbyhorse Association)

## **Turn on the forehand and turn on the haunches**

In turn on the forehand the rider performs a *180-degree* movement with the head of the horse as a pivot point inside the motion. Turning on the haunches is the opposite from turning on the forehand: a *180-degree* movement with the end of the hobbyhorse's stick as a pivot point inside the motion. In both movements the legs move on two rails and the horse is flexed in the direction of the movement slightly. (Maikken, The official dressage rules of Finnish Hobbyhorse Association).

## **Spin**

A spin is a 360 degree turn on the haunches. The rider performs a *180-degree* movement with the end of the hobbyhorse's stick as a pivot point inside the motion. The horse can be slightly flexed in the direction of the movement.

## **Flying/lead change, changing leads**

The rider switches the leading leg of the canter. With snaffle bit rider changes also the leading rein. Unlike in dressage, the steps in a flying change are quite low.

### 2.1.2.3 Other vocabulary

#### **Line up**

All competitors stand in a line in the middle of the riding arena, face towards the same long sideline of the arena. The judge can ask for back up in line.

#### **Railwork**

Group section in western horsemanship, where all riders are at the riding arena at the same time.

## 2.2. Tack and clothing

These rules apply to all western riding events. Event specific rules are followed primarily. Tack rules apply also to warm-up. The judge has a right to inspect the tack.

### 2.2.1 Tack

The horse must always wear western bridle, which means that the bridle cannot have a noseband. Chinstrap is optional, but curb chain or strap is mandatory. The bit must be either a snaffle or a curb bit or a bosal hackamore. Split reins are used with snaffle- and curb bits. Martingales and gadgets are not allowed. Western-styled breast collars are allowed. Boots, bandages, etc. are not allowed (except in reining and speed events: check out event specific rules. A whip is not allowed in western riding events.

### 2.2.2 Rein hold

When riding with a snaffle bit, the split reins should be crossed. When riding with a snaffle and bosal, the reins are to be held English style, with both hands. The outer hand holds the hobbyhorse's stick and outer rein, while the inner hand holds the inner rein. The inner hand should stay on the same level as the outer hand. In trail and ranch trail, the reins can be moved to one hand if necessary for performing the task in trail or ranch trail (i.e. gate). With a curb bit, the index finger should be between the two reins with the rest of the reins running through your palm. Rein hand should be about 10 to 20 cm above the horse, depending on its size. The other (free) hand holds the stick. The excess rein needs to be on the side of the rein hand. Touching reins with the free hand gives penalty points. Changing the rein hand is not allowed unless it's necessary for performing a task in trail or ranch trail (i.e. gate). The one hand hold can be executed by holding the reins and the stick with the same hand and keeping the free hand on the side or as a "shadow hand" next to the rein hand. The details in holding the reins are not judged, the most important thing is to remember to use two hands with a snaffle bit and one hand with a curb bit.

### 2.2.3 Clothing

There are no requirements on the rider's attire. The competition host can demand that the competitors wear shoes. The recommended clothing is a long-sleeved collared shirt. In many events, the rider's overall look affects the score, so a neat outfit and proper tack is recommended. Stetsons/cowboy hats are allowed. Safety equipment used in horse riding, for example a riding helmet or a safety vest, are not recommended, because it is of no use in hobbyhorse riding.

## 2.2 Position of horse and rider

While doing movements and moving forward, the head of a hobbyhorse should be in a proper position which is lower than in English style: the stick is approximately in horizontal position but the right position depends also on the structure of the horse. The horse shouldn't be above nor behind the bit. This definition of the proper position applies in every all around events and reining unless stated otherwise in the event specific rules. The posture and position are not judged in speed events. The rider must have a good posture and should not lean especially forwards. The rider's back is relaxed and flexible and their legs work on their own. The upper body is kept straight and calm, and the hands steady while remaining relaxed.

## 2.3 Movement and performing the movements

Definitions of gaits and movements are explained in 2.1.2 Vocabulary. When riding on a curved line or a circle, the horse's head must be flexed in the direction of the movement (inwards). Circles should be round and performed at the appropriate speed, size and location as requested in the pattern. The counter-canter should be performed with no change in pace or stride. (AQHA; SRL 2020) The horse's head/neck must be straight when stopping (no flexion or bending).

# 3. EVENTS

The events of western riding are reining, all around events and speed events. The most common all around events are trail, western riding, western horsemanship and western pleasure. Pole bending and barrel racing are speed events.

## 3.1 Western horsemanship

In this event, the rider and the horse's ability to perform different movements smoothly is judged according to the course prepared by the judge. The horse is presented with loose reins.

### 3.1.1 Class procedures

The competitors perform in two phases: first the individual pattern and then railwork. The individual performance includes a short pattern which consists of performing different gaits, stops, turns, flying changes or other movements. Railwork is like a short western pleasure class: all competitors ride on the rail together in designated gait.

#### 3.1.1.1 Levels

To make it easier to host western riding competitions, there are three difficulty levels of horsemanship classes. In the lower difficulty classes the required movements are easier and there are less of them. In the higher difficulty classes, there are more difficult changes between gaits, more difficult movements, and the pattern is usually also longer. The judge decides what they want to see in the railwork section. Every railwork must include all gaits (walk, jog and lope), at least in one direction of the arena. If the individual pattern doesn't include a stop, it must be included in the railwork. A back-up can be included into the individual pattern, railwork or it can be asked to be performed at the line-up. The pattern can include level

defined movements or movements of the same difficulty, but not movements of higher level. The pattern doesn't have to include all level defined movements.

### **Level 1**

Walk, jog and lope at least in one direction, circles, figure eights, other curved lines, stop, back-up in a straight line, max. 180 degree turn on the haunches/forehand, easy transitions, simple change of lead (through jog)

### **Level 2**

Level 1 movements, extended jog, max. 360 degree turn on the haunches/forehand, mediocre transitions, one flying change, back-up in a curved line, leg yield

### **Level 3**

Level 1 & 2 movements, extended lope, max. 900 degree (2,5 rounds) turn on the haunches/forehand, challenging transitions, several flying changes (but not in a row), two-track (haunches or shoulder in), sidepass

#### *3.1.1.2 Individual pattern*

The rider must perform the pattern accurately, precisely, smoothly, and with a reasonable pace (AQHA; SRL 2020). Before starting the individual pattern, the rider must greet the judge with a nod. The judge will grant permission to start the performance by nodding back. For clarity, a spoken permission can be used. The movements are performed according to the markers at the arena. In a good performance the rider maintains the same distance (i.e. 1 meter) from the markers during the whole performance. Varying distance lowers the score.

#### *3.1.1.3 Railwork*

In the railwork all riders work at the same time in the arena. The judge determines the riding direction and the gait and judges all the competitors. The judge is not greeted in the railwork. The judge can ask for walk, jog, lope, stop, back-up and to change the riding direction. If someone in front of you moves slower than you, you must pass them from the inside: crossing the arena or riding circles isn't allowed. After the railwork all competitors are asked to fall into a line-up. The judge can ask a competitor to show the horse's bit or to back up a couple of steps.

### 3.1.2 Judging

#### *3.1.2.1 Scoring*

Exhibitors will be scored on a basis of 0-100 with 70 denoting an average performance. Points will be added or subtracted from the maneuvers on the following bases, ranging from plus 1,5 to minus 1,5:

- 1,5 extremely poor,
- 1 very poor,
- 0,5 poor,
- 0 average,
- +0,5 good,
- +1 very good,
- +1,5 excellent

#### *3.1.2.2 Penalties*

Errors are divided into offences and faults based on how serious they are. The judge evaluates it based on how serious and continuing the error is:

**Offence: 1-2 penalty points**

break of gait up to two strides, touching the log, poor rider or horse position, early or late lead change, incorrect way to lope over a log (the leading leg steps over first)

**Fault: 3-5 penalty points**

wrong gait, lead change through jog, touching the horse, touching the reins with the stick hand, touching the markers

**Disqualification**

wrong course, knocking over marker or passing it on the wrong side, completely missing a log, falling off/down (knee or hand touches the ground or the stick doesn't stay between legs), wrong rein hold (wrong rein hold for the used bit, smaller faults aren't punished), starting the performance without the judge's consent, disturbing others' performances, a visible or serious injury, illegal equipment (applied from the rules by AQHA and SRL 2020).

## 3.2 Western riding

### 3.2.1 Judging

Gaits and lead changes are judged in this event. Emphasis on the judging is placed on smoothness and even pace of gaits and precision and lightness of lead changes. The horse is presented with light contact or on a reasonably loose rein. Patterns are presented in these rules (attachment 3). The judge will select one of them and all competitors perform it. (SRL 2020.)

#### 3.2.1.1 Scoring

Exhibitors will be scored on a basis of 0-100 with 70 denoting an average performance. Points will be added or subtracted from the maneuvers on the following bases, ranging from plus 1,5 to minus 1,5:

- 1,5 extremely poor,
- 1 very poor,
- 0,5 poor,
- 0 average,
- +0,5 good,
- +1 very good,
- +1,5 excellent

#### 3.2.1.2 Penalties

Errors are divided into offences and faults based on how serious they are. The judge evaluates it based on how serious and continuing the error is:

**Offence: 1-2 penalty points**

break of gait up to two strides, touching the log, poor rider or horse position, early or late lead change, incorrect way to lope over a log (the leading leg steps over first)

**Fault: 3-5 penalty points**

wrong gait, lead change through jog, touching the horse, touching the reins with the stick hand, touching the markers



**Disqualification**

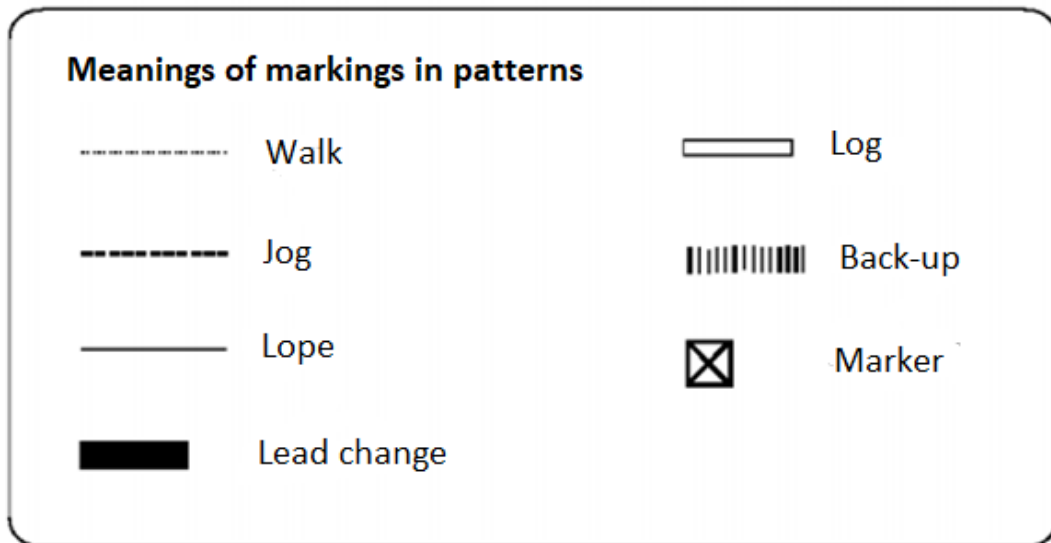
wrong course, knocking over marker or passing it on the wrong side, completely missing a log, falling off/down (knee or hand touches the ground or the stick doesn't stay between legs), wrong rein hold (wrong rein hold for the used bit, smaller faults aren't punished), starting the performance without the judge's consent, disturbing others' performances, a visible or serious injury, illegal equipment (applied from the rules by AQHA and SRL 2020).

**3.2.2 Levels and patterns**

Three different level patterns have been selected for hobbyhorses from the patterns of Equestrian Federation of Finland (SRL) and American Quarterhorse Association (AQHA). The competition invitation must state which level pattern is used in the competition. Patterns and their markings can be found from the attachments (attachments 1 & 3).

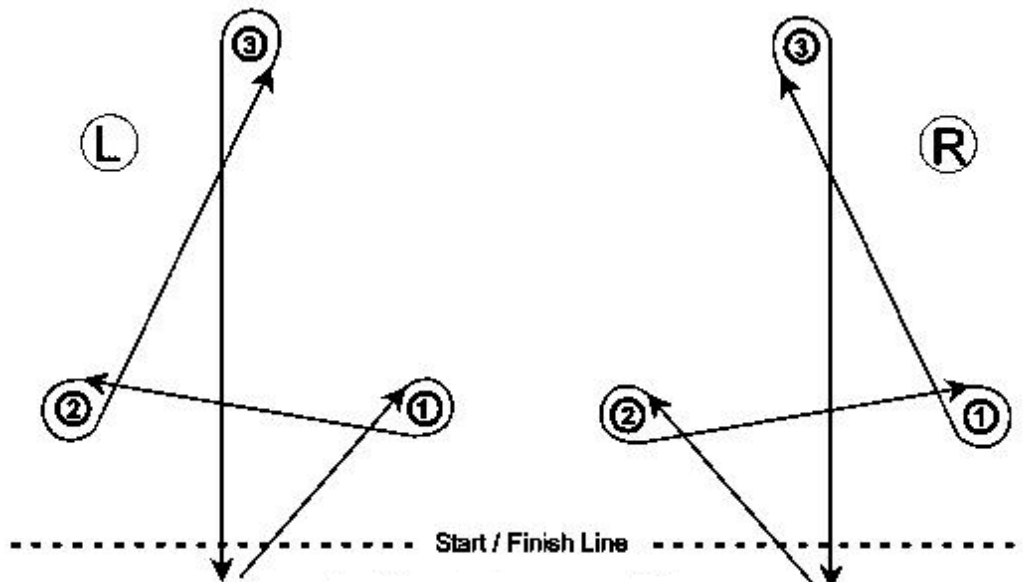
## 4. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1. Meanings of markings in patterns



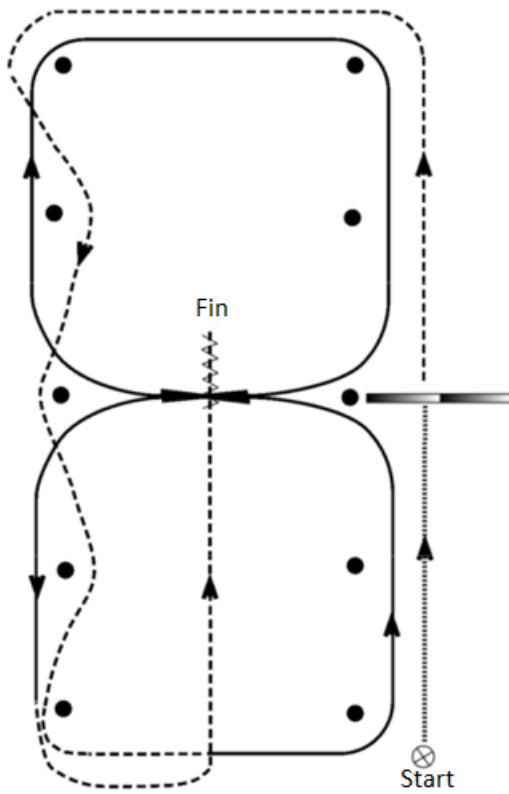
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Attachment 2. Barrel racing pattern. Contestants may choose to run pattern starting from the left (barrel 1) or right (barrel 2).



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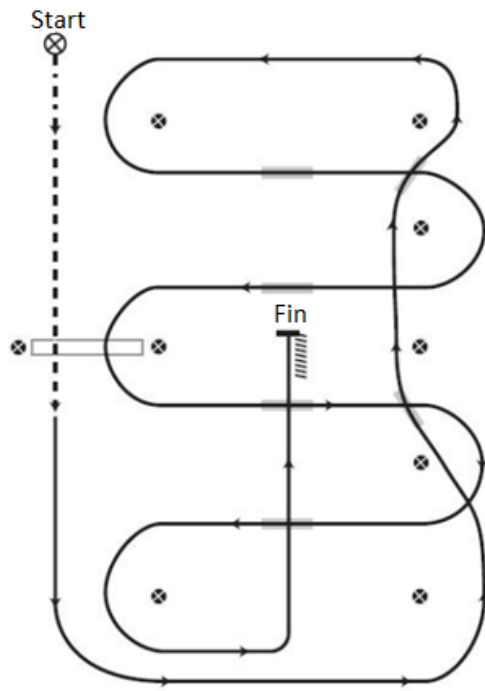
Attachment 3. Western riding patterns



**Level 1**

1. Walk over log
2. Transition to jog immediately after crossing the log
3. Serpentine in jog
4. Transition to left lead
5. First crossing change to right lead
6. Second crossing change to left lead
7. Transition to jog at the last marker
8. Jog up the center, pass the center marker, stop & back four (4) steps.

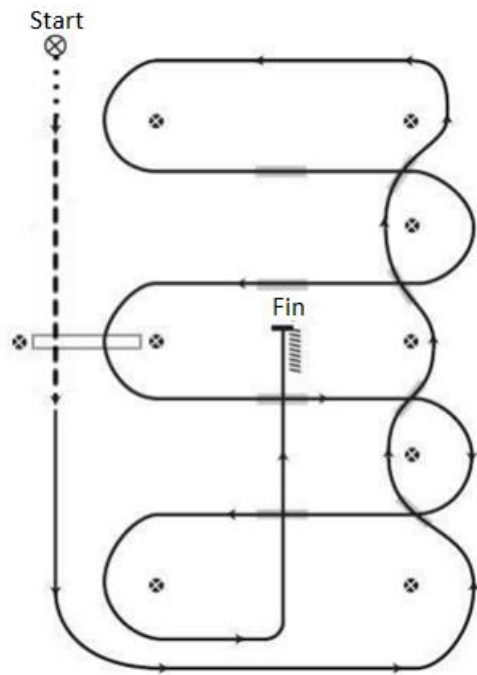
© SRL 2020



## Level 2

1. Walk 2–3 meters and jog over log
2. Transition to left lead after crossing the log, lope around the short side
3. First line change
4. Second line change, lope around the short side
5. First crossing change
6. Second crossing change
7. Lope over log
8. Third crossing change
9. Fourth crossing change
10. Lope up the center, stop & back four (4) steps

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**Level 3**

1. Walk 2–3 meters and jog over log
2. Transition to left lead after crossing the log, lope around the short side
3. First line change
4. Second line change
5. Third line change
6. Fourth line change, lope around the short side
7. First crossing change
8. Second crossing change
9. Lope over log
10. Third crossing change
11. Fourth crossing change
12. Lope up the center, stop & back four (4) steps

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