

TRAIL HORSE TESTING PROGRAM

OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAIL HORSE TEST PROGRAM

1. Highlight the pleasure of a trained and responsive trail horse.
2. Set non-competitive goals for the horse in an effort to improve both horse and rider.
3. Provide a structured method to judge a trail horse.
4. Recognize the harmony between horse and rider where there is good communication between them.

TEST LEVELS FOR TRAIL HORSES

Junior Trail Horse A Junior Trail Horse is expected to show the disposition and temperament to be a trail horse. The Junior Trail Horse is expected to show reasonable obedience to its rider, to attempt certain tests and to have basic knowledge of normal commands. The Junior Trail Horse is not expected to be a fully trained horse but is a horse that shows willingness to obey the rider and does not endanger the rider.

Senior Trail Horse A Senior Trail Horse is expected to show all the attributes of a Junior Trail Horse plus be willing and consistent when attempting more complicated tests. This horse must be able to complete most tests and obey most commands calmly but with reasonable speed. It is a horse that is comfortable in most situations.

Master Trail Horse A Master Trail Horse is expected to be a finished and experienced trail horse. A Master Trail Horse is expected to show obedience to its rider's commands and should be able to be trusted in any situation. Master horses fluidness in their trail skills sets them apart. This is the horse we would like to own and ride anywhere.

NO AGGRESSIVE OR HARMFUL METHODS OR TACK WILL BE ALLOWED. THE HORSE WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.

If you have questions or comments about this program, please contact Virginia Foster at river_house_farm@yahoo.com

TESTS OF TRAIL HORSES

These tests of the trail horse are intended to emulate the tasks a horse would normally perform before, during and after the trail ride.

The tests are grouped into the following categories:

1. Trailer Loading/Unloading
2. Grooming and Tacking the Horse
3. Performing Ground Work Exercises
4. Performing Exercises under Saddle
5. Performing on the Trail
6. Maneuvering through Trail Obstacles
7. Overall Attitude and Temperament

Each category is broken down into test elements. The test elements are judged on a scale of zero (0) to five (5) where zero (0) is unsuccessful and five (5) is exceptional. A score of a three (3) reflects the horse satisfactorily completed the test element. If a horse refuses the test element twice, it shall receive a zero (0) score for the test element.

The most important category is the overall attitude and temperament of the horse. The judge will evaluate how well suited the horse is to being a great trail horse.

To be awarded the title of **Junior Trail Horse**, a horse must receive an average passing grade of three (3) for each category. The horse must receive a three (3) for its Overall Attitude and Temperament.

To be awarded the title of **Senior Trail Horse**, a horse must receive a minimum score of a three (3) on each of the test elements **and** an overall average score of at least a four (4) for all of the categories. The horse must receive a score of four (4) or above for its Overall Attitude and Temperament before it can awarded a Senior Trail Horse title.

To be awarded the title of **Master Trail Horse**, the horse must be judged by two separate judges and receive a passing score from both judges. In order to receive a passing score, a horse must receive a minimum score of a four (4) on each of the test elements. The horse must receive a score of five (5) for its Overall Attitude and Temperament before it can awarded a Master Trail Horse Title.

Prior to the test, the rider must declare upon which title they will be tested.

The owner must ride the horse

TRAIL HORSE TEST ELEMENTS

TRAIL HORSE TEST CATEGORIES AND ELEMENTS	JUNIOR TRAIL HORSE	SENIOR TRAIL HORSE	MASTER TRAIL HORSE
1. TRAILER LOADING/UNLOADING			
1.1. Load (The trailer could be a step-up or have a ramp. The trailer could be a slant load or straight load.)	Approaches trailer with caution. Handler leads horse into trailer. May use treats to encourage horse to load. The horse may require considerable guidance but no harsh handling is permitted.	Handler leads horse into trailer. Horse may hesitate but then loads freely.	Handler leads horse into trailer. Horse does not hesitate.
1.2. Stand in the trailer.	Stands quietly. No pawing or pulling back.	Stands quietly. No pawing or pulling back.	Stands quietly. No pawing or pulling back.
1.3. Unload – The horse is asked to come out of the trailer.	May use an assistant to handle lead rope or butt bar and/or help guide the horse off the trailer. The horse may require considerable guidance but no harsh handling is permitted	Cannot use an assistant. Nothing will prohibit the handler from using an assistant for the sake of safety but the horse will not receive a passing score for this element. Horse requires limited guidance/urging by the handler.	Cannot use an assistant. Horse must come off in a smooth unhurried manner without even a hint of lack of control.
2. GROOMING AND TACKING THE HORSE			
2.1. Tie the horse.	Does not pull away. May move around.	Does not pull away. Stands quietly.	Does not pull away. Stands quietly.
2.2. Brush the horse.	Stands quietly and does not flinch while being groomed head to heel.	Stands quietly and does not flinch while being groomed head to heel.	Stands quietly and does not flinch while being groomed head to heel.
2.3. Pick out the horse's hooves.	Does not kick out. Horse lifts the foot when handler shifts the horse's weight and lifts the hoof. Does not pull hoof away.	Horse lifts the foot when handler shifts the horse's weight and lifts the hoof. Does not pull hoof away.	Horse lifts the foot when handler touches the leg. Does not pull hoof away.
2.4. Fly spray the horse. Do not spray horse's face. Use rag to apply spray to face.	Stands quietly. May shy when spraying near neck or head.	Stands quietly.	Stands quietly. Does not shy at all.

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2.5. Saddle the horse. Tack that could be used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saddle • Bare back pad • Saddle bags • Breast Collar • Crupper • Water Bottles • Ear Muffs • Horse Hair Fly Swatters • Cooler Blanket 	Stand quietly while tied.	Stand quietly while untied. Rider holds onto the lead.	Stand quietly while untied. Rider holds onto the lead.
2.6. Bridle the horse (Bit is optional)	May need to encourage horse to open for the bit.	Accepts the bit easily.	Accepts the bit easily.
3. GROUND WORK EXERCISES			
3.1. Lead the horse.	Does not pull away.	Does not crowd. Horse does not invade handler's position. Horse can turn left & right without loss of slack in lead line.	Remains same distance from handler at all times. Handler can walk horse out of stall or gate, turn to close it and horse positions himself (herself) so it never loses slack in lead and doesn't interfere with handle.
3.2. Stop and back on the lead. Rider may face the horse when asking to back.	Stops and backs when cued by lead rope with light pressure. May show some hesitation. May use a crop to cue.	Stops and backs when cued by movement and voice of handler with minimum hesitation. May use a crop to cue.	Stops and backs when cued by movement of handler. No hesitation. May not use a crop to cue.
3.3. Lunge (Lunging Whip or crop is allowed as a cuing aid). Second and third speeds should be done on a larger circle.	Circles 2 times at a walk. Reverses and continues in opposite direction. At the reverse, the horse may stop before reversing. Does not run mindlessly. Respects the handler. Circles do not need to be perfectly round.	Circles at a walk and at second speed. Reverses and continues in opposite direction. Reverses without hesitation. Demonstrates speed changes. Head is lowered and horse is relaxed.	Circles at a walk, at second speed and at third speed. Reverses and continues in opposite direction. Head is lowered and horse is relaxed. Demonstrates fluid speed changes and size of circles. Fully obeys the handler.
3.4. Turn on the forehand. Move the hips.	Takes 1 to 2 steps in each direction, Hind legs should cross over but may take steps with hind without cross over. Front legs may move. Demonstrates knowledge of concept. May use a crop to cue.	Yields 180 degrees, in both directions, crossing the hind legs with minimal hesitation. Performs turns well but not perfect. Front legs remains relatively still. May use a crop to cue.	Yields 360 degrees, in both directions, crossing the hind leg with no hesitation. Very responsive and fluid. Front legs remains relatively still. May not use a crop.

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3.5. Turn on the haunches. Move the shoulders.	Takes 1 to 2 steps in each direction, crossing the front legs. Hind legs may move.	Yields 180 degrees, in both directions, crossing the front legs with minimal hesitation. Hind legs remain relatively still.	Drops the haunches. Takes weight back to turn on the haunches. Yields 360 degrees, in both directions, crossing the front legs with no hesitation. Hind legs remain relatively still.
4. EXERCISES UNDER SADDLE (These should be done on the trail.)			
4.1. Mount with a mounting block (or any other stable, safe object). Assistant may be used at all levels to hold the saddle from slipping. Safety is most important.	Horse may move as rider approaches but remains still as rider mounts. An assistant may hold the horse while the rider mounts.	Horse remains still as rider approaches and mounts. May not use an assistant to hold the horse from moving but can use an assistant to hold the saddle from slipping.	Horse remains still as rider approaches and mounts. May not use an assistant to hold the horse from moving but can use an assistant to hold the saddle from slipping.
4.2. Walk (First speed) Four beat gait.	Horse demonstrates a relaxed four beat walk. May hesitate or speed up but responds to rider's cues to relax.	Horse demonstrates a relaxed, free flowing, unhurried four beat walk. No prancing or jigging. Consistent relaxed manner is maintained over 2 laps.	Horse demonstrates a relaxed, free flowing, unhurried four beat walk. No prancing or jigging. Consistent relaxed manner is maintained over 3 laps.
4.3. Stop/Halt (Can use verbal cues at all levels)	Stops with seat and rein cues. Horse may take one step before stop. Horse may not stop square.	Stops with seat cue. Minimum rein cue. Horse's weight is shifted to hindquarters. Horse immediately stops. Horse stops square.	Stops with seat cue. No noticeable rein cue. Horse's weight is shifted to hindquarters. Horse immediately stops. Horse stops square.
4.4. Back	Steps back four steps. May show resistance but does yield to rider's cue.	Steps back six steps without raising head, opening mouth, or resisting. Horse remains on the bit.	Steps back eight steps without raising head, opening mouth, or resisting. Noticeably lifts back and lowers haunches. Front feet nearly step on the hind feet while backing from roundness. Horse follows rider's seat, very little or no rein contact. Horse stops square.
4.5. Check and release at the walk. (First Speed)	Shows change of speed at the walk.	With minimal cue, changes speed and collection at the walk.	Very fluid in the change of speed and collection at the walk. Shows clear self-carriage.

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4.6. Corto/Trot/Jog (Second speed)	Will move out without excessive cues. May slow and speed up.	Will increase speed with minimal cues. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed. Horse remains on the bit.	Increase speed with no noticeable cues. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed. Horse remains on the bit.
4.7. Transition to a walk (first speed) from a Corto/Trot/Jog (Second speed)	Shows change of speed. May jig some but does walk.	With minimal cue, changes speed. Proceeds at a walk.	Very fluid in the change of speed. Proceeds at a fluent walk.
4.8. Largo (Third speed)	Will move out without excessive cues. May slow and speed up.	Will increase speed with minimal cues. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed for two laps. Horse remains on the bit.	Increase speed with no noticeable cues. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed for 3 laps. Horse remains on the bit.
4.9. Transition to a walk from a Third speed.	May take several steps to come down to a walk.	With minimal cue, changes speed. Proceeds at a walk.	Very fluid in the change of speed. Proceeds at a walk immediately.
4.10. Canter/Lope (Gaited horses are not required to canter/lope)	Canter/Lope not required at Junior Level.	Not required for gaited horses. Other breed of horses will increase speed with minimal cues. Will stay consistent at the speed for two laps.	Not required for gaited horses. Other breed of horses will take canter depart from halt or walk with no gait or trot steps. Should take up the correct lead. There should be no appearance of rushing. Will stay consistent at the speed for three laps.
4.11. Transition to a walk from a canter/lope. (Gaited horses are not required to complete this)	Not required at the Junior Level.	With minimal cue, changes speed. Proceeds at a walk.	Very fluid in the change of speed. Proceeds at a walk immediately.
4.12. Leg yield	Not required at the Junior Level.	Horse will take 3 or 4 steps sideways with forward movement without loss of impulsion or rhythm. Legs cross over. Rider does not lean to push horse. Rider stays upright and balanced.	Horse will take 4 or 5 steps sideways with forward movement without loss of impulsion or rhythm. Legs cross over. Rider does not lean to push horse. Rider stays upright and balanced. Horse's body remains straight without leading with shoulders.
4.13. Side pass	Not required at the Junior Level.	Horse will take 3 or 4 steps sideways in both directions. Rider does not lean. Stays vertical and balanced.	Horse will take 4 or 5 steps sideways in both directions. Horse may hesitate briefly before changing directions. Rider does not lean. Stays vertical and balanced.

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4.14. Turn on the haunches. Move the shoulders	Takes 1 to 2 steps in each direction, crossing the front legs. Hind legs may move.	Yields 180 degrees, in both directions, crossing the front legs with minimal hesitation. Hind legs remain relatively still.	Drops the haunches. Takes weight back to turn on the haunches. Yields 360 degrees, in both directions, crossing the front legs with no hesitation. Hind legs remain relatively still.
4.15. Turn on the forehand. Move the hips	Takes 1 to 2 steps in each direction, Hind legs cross over. Front legs may move. Demonstrates knowledge of concept.	Yields 180 degrees, in both directions, crossing the hind legs with minimal hesitation. Performs turns well but not perfect. Front legs remains relatively still.	Yields 360 degrees, in both directions, crossing the hind leg with no hesitation. Very responsive and fluid. Front legs remains relatively still.
5. PERFORMANCE ON THE TRAIL			
5.1. Way of going on the trail. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude • Temperament • Positive interaction with other horses 	Quiet. Attentive to surroundings. Responsive to rider. May react by stopping when approaching an obstacle. Not aggressive, does not kick or bite other horses.	Quiet. Attentive to surroundings. Responsive to rider. Shows little reaction when approaching an obstacle. No jiggling. Not aggressive, does not kick or bite other horses.	Quiet. Attentive to surroundings. Responsive to rider. Shows no reaction when approaching an obstacle. Not aggressive, does not kick or bite other horses. Does not react to other horses.
5.2. Position in the line of horses (Leap frog)	Follows other horses. Keeps safe distance between horses.	Leads or follows. Willingly stays a horse length behind the horse in front without crowding.	No hesitation to move out in any position in the line. Willingly stays a horse length behind the horse in front without crowding.
5.3. Pass other horses on the trail	Quietly passes.	Quietly passes.	Quietly passes.
5.4. Leaves the group of horses on the trail. Horse stops as the other horses continue on the trail.	May be nervous as group of horses continue without him/her. May jig and prance.	Quietly stands as group of horses continue without him/her.	Quietly stands as group of horses continue without him/her.
6. MANUEVERING THROUGH TRAIL OBSTACLES. These obstacles should be encountered on the trail not in an arena.	Junior Horse only needs to complete any 4-6 of these obstacles.	Senior Horse only needs to complete any 6-8 of these obstacles.	Master Horse must complete all of these obstacles (10 or more)

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6.1. Back through a pattern, for example, an L shaped pattern.	Rider may ride horse forward through the pattern before backing the horse. Horse should show minimum resistance to cues. Horse may step on/over poles.	Rider may ride horse forward through the pattern but must ride forward past the opening of the pattern Horse should show no resistance. Should not step on poles.	Rider may not ride the horse forward through the pattern. Rider must perform a 180 turn at opening of the pattern before backing. Horse should show no resistance. Horse should be quiet and careful. Should not step on poles. Should not be able to see rider's cues.
6.2. Open and close gate. Rider may open the gate toward or away from the horse.	Horse should approach gate quietly, respond to cues. Rider may have to dismount to go through gate.	Horse responds quietly to cues. Rider does not let go of the gate.	Horse performs task with minimal cues. Rider does not let go of the gate.
6.3. Walk through vines/branches/ribbons (or any other obstacles that requires horse to walk through something that obstructs his view)	Horse may hesitate but will willingly walk through. Horse may be backed through the obstacle.	Horse should approach quietly and willingly walk through. May not back through.	Horse walks through with soft cues and slack in reins. May not back through. Rider should be able to cue horse to lower lead to look at where to put his feet.
6.4. Water Crossing, Brush/Tree/Logs Crossing, Rough Terrain, Tarp (or any other obstacle that requires horse to walk on/over area with different footing or appearance.)	Horse may hesitate at rider's cue, but will cross. Horse may lower head to investigate. Does not jump over but walks over quietly.	Horse will approach quietly and will cross with minimal cues. Horse may lower head to investigate. Does not jump over but walks over quietly. May not back through.	Horse walks through with soft cues and slack in reins. Horse may lower head to investigate. Does not jump over obstacle. Horse quietly stands on tarp (or in water) when asked. Rider should be able to cue horse to lower lead to look at where to put his feet.
6.5. Rider puts on and takes off a jacket	Rider must stay in control of the horse and never drop the reins. Horse should stand quietly. Rider may throw jacket over shoulder rather put it on.	Rider must stay in control of the horse and never drop the reins. Horse should stand quietly.	Rider must stay in control of the horse and never drop the reins. Horse should stand quietly.
6.6. Drag tree limbs	Horse should remain calm and not spook.	Horse will calmly drag going forward.	Horse can calmly drag going forward or pull going backward.
6.7. Meet walkers/bicycles on the trail (or any obstacles that is not easily identified to the horse, i.e. partially obstructed object or object that makes noise.)	Horse stays calm and listens to rider. May turn and face the obstacle. Obstacle remains stationary.	Horse stays calm and listens to rider. Calmly walks past the obstacle. Obstacle remains stationary.	Horse stays calm and responds to cue to move its hind quarters away from the obstacle. Obstacle will move toward the horse.

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6.8. Bridge or Road Crossing (Or any obstacle where the footing is different)	Horse may hesitate at rider's cue, but will cross.	Horse will approach quietly and will cross with minimal cues.	Horse will cross without hesitation and with minimal cues.
6.9. Hill Work –up and down hills. Up Hill - Rider should lighten his/her seat by leaning forward and standing or taking weight off horses back. Down Hill – Rider should take heels back, lean back slight so body is perpendicular to gravity with heels under shoulders.	Horse will not bolt or charge up the hill. Will walk up and down quietly.	Horse remains balanced and willing walks up and down. Up Hill - Horse lengthens top line by telescoping neck, lifting withers and using hind legs to push equally. Down Hill – Horse should shorten frame, rotate pelvis and use hind legs for brakes.	Horse remains balanced and willing walks up and down. Up Hill - Horse lengthens top line by telescoping neck, lifting withers and using hind legs to push equally. Down Hill – Horse should shorten frame, rotate pelvis and use hind legs for brakes.
6.10. Encounter dogs or other animals	Horse may stop but will not bolt.	Horse remains quiet and listens to rider's cues.	Horse remains quiet and listens to rider's cues.
6.11. Pony a horse	Not tested at the junior level	Horse remains quiet and listens to rider's cues. Does not kick or bite at the ponied horse.	Horse remains quiet and listens to rider's cues. Does not pin ears, kick or bite the ponied horse. Can pony horse on the forehand or on the haunches as well as lead at all gaits.
7. OVERALL ATTITUDE AND TEMPERAMENT OF THE HORSE			
7.1. Attitude toward obeying rider's commands	Horse may hesitate but does not display blatant disobedience.	Horse is calm and attentive. Horse willingly obeys rider's commands.	Horse has a calm and confident demeanor. Horse willingly obeys commands with light contact on the bit and shows no resistance. Horse and rider appear as one. Is attentive to the rider and appears to enjoy his/her job.
7.2. Temperament of the horse	Horse is not nervous and overly reactionary. If startled, remains under control. Does not bolt, rear, or display other belligerent behavior.	Horse is not nervous and overly reactionary. If startled, remains under control. Does not bolt, rear, or display other belligerent behavior.	Horse is not nervous and overly reactionary. If startled, remains under control. Does not bolt, rear, or display other belligerent behavior.