



# PASO FINO HORSE ASSOCIATION (PFHA) TRAIL HORSE TEST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAIL HORSE TEST PROGRAM

The Paso Fino Horse Association introduces the Trail Horse Test program (THT) to provide a way to demonstrate a horse's ability to perform trail riding skills based upon tests that measure the horse's natural ability and training against a standard of performance. This is not a competitive trail riding obstacle course, but a gauge of your horse's abilities to complete the tasks normally performed before, during and after a trail ride.

The Trail Horse Testing Program is designed to highlight the pleasure of riding a trained and responsive trail horse by setting non-competitive goals for the horse and rider. The Trail Horse Testing Program provides a structured method to judge the horse so that both horse and rider are able to improve their skills. The Trail Horse Testing Program recognizes the harmony created between horse and rider when there is clear communication between them.

Refer to the PFHA Trail Horse Test Rules for instructions on how to host and/or participate in a THT. The rules are posted on the PFHA website at <http://www.pfha.org/recreational-rider-program>.

## TEST LEVELS FOR TRAIL HORSES

The judge will evaluate the horse against a standard established for three distinct levels of training, the Junior, the Senior and the Master level.

**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.

## TEST CATEGORIES

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

### TEST ELEMENTS WITHIN THE TEST CATEGORIES

The following describes the elements by which the horse will be tested as well as the description of the expected at the Junior, Senior and Master level.

TRAIL HORSE TEST CATEGORIES/ ELEMENTS	JUNIOR TRAIL HORSE	SENIOR TRAIL HORSE	MASTER TRAIL HORSE
<b>1. TRAILER LOADING/UNLOADING</b>			
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
1.2. Stand in the trailer.	Stands quietly. No pawing or pulling back.	Stands quietly. No pawing or pulling back.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
<b>2. GROOMING AND TACKING THE HORSE</b>			
2.1. Tie the horse.	Does not pull away. May move around.	Does not pull away. Stands quietly.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.

<p>2.5. Saddle the horse. Tack that must be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saddle Pad</li> <li>• Saddle</li> <li>• Headgear</li> </ul> <p>Other tack is optional. All tack shall be well fitted and well maintained. No cruel or harsh tack is allowed.</p>	<p>Stand quietly while tied.</p>	<p>Stand quietly while untied. Rider holds onto the lead.</p>	<p>Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.</p>
<p>2.6. Bridle the horse (Bit is optional)</p>	<p>May move head around but allows handler to slip headgear on. May need to encourage horse to open for the bit.</p>	<p>Horse is not head shy. Allows handler to easily slip headgear on. Accepts the bit easily, if used.</p>	<p>Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.</p>
<p><b>3. GROUND WORK ELEMENTS</b> The handler leads the horse through these elements</p>			
<p>3.1. Lead the horse.</p>	<p>Does not pull away.</p>	<p>Does not crowd. Horse does not invade handler's position. Horse can turn left &amp; right without loss of slack in lead line.</p>	<p>Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.</p>
<p>3.2. Stop and back on the lead. Rider may face the horse when asking to back.</p>	<p>Stops and backs when cued by lead rope with light pressure. May show some hesitation. May use a crop to cue.</p>	<p>Stops and backs when cued by movement and voice of handler with minimum hesitation. May use a crop to cue.</p>	<p>Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.</p>
<p>3.3. Lunge (Lunging Whip or crop is allowed as a cuing aid). Second and third speeds should be done on a larger circle.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>3.4. Turn on the forehand. Move the hips.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

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.
<b>4. EXERCISES UNDER SADDLE</b> (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. Rider hold onto mane or saddle while mounting.	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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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 jiggling. Consistent relaxed manner is maintained over 2 laps.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
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.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
4.5. Speed up and slow down at the walk. (First Speed)	Shows change of speed at the walk.	With minimal cue, changes speed and collection at the walk.	Not required. Was tested at the Senior level.
4.6. Corto/Trot/Jog (Second speed)	Will move out without excessive cues. May slow and speed up.	Will increase speed with minimal cues. Horse remains on the bit. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed. Gaited horses should demonstrate smooth way of going.	Increase speed with no noticeable cues. Horse remains on the bit. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed. Gaited horses should demonstrate smooth way of going.
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. Horse remains on the bit. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed for two laps. Gaited horses should demonstrate smooth way of going.	Increase speed with no noticeable cues. Horse remains on the bit. Will stay consistent in rhythm of steps and speed for 3 laps. Gaited horses should demonstrate smooth way of going.
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. Horse hooves should cross over without shuffling. The horse's front and hind should move laterally at the same rate.	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.
4.14. 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.
4.15. 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.

<b>5. PERFORMANCE ON THE TRAIL</b>			
5.1. Way of going on the trail. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude</li> <li>• Temperament</li> <li>• Positive interaction with other horses</li> </ul>	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.
<b>6. MANUEVERING THROUGH TRAIL OBSTACLES. These obstacles should be encountered on the trail not in an arena.</b>	<b>Junior Horse needs to complete any 4-6 of these obstacles.</b>	<b>Senior Horse needs to complete any 6-8 of these obstacles.</b>	<b>Master Horse must complete 10 or more of these obstacles. Must complete those obstacles labeled as required at Master Level.</b>
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. Horse should remain on the bit with soft neck and poll. Should not step on poles.	Required at Master Level. 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 remain on the bit with soft neck and poll. 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. Rider shall maintain contact with the gate.	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.	Required at Master Level. 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 and 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.	Required at Master Level. 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. Rider should not wrap rope around their hand. Do not wrap rope around the horn.	Horse should remain calm and not spook.	Horse will calmly drag going forward.	Required at Master Level. 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.
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.	Required at Master Level. 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.

6.12. Side pass over a log or other object	Not tested at the junior level	Horse remains quiet and listens to rider's cues. Rider does not lean. Stays vertical and balanced.	Required at Master Level. Horse remains quiet and listens to rider's cues. Rider does not lean. Stays vertical and balanced.
<b>7. OVERALL ATTITUDE AND TEMPERAMENT OF THE HORSE</b>			
7.1. Attitude of the horse when given a command.	Horse may hesitate when commanded 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.