

Ready, Set, Ride!

Finding a lesson program that fits your needs



Resources

Resources are often hard to find if you don't know where to look. These may assist you in finding information to start riding:

- USHJA Instructor Credential Directory
ushja.org/InstructorCredential
- USHJA Recognized Riding Academy Listing
ushja.org/RidingAcademy
- USHJA Affiliate Organizations
ushja.org/Affiliate
- Interscholastic Equestrian Association
rideiea.org
- Intercollegiate Horse Show Association
ihsa.org



About

The sport of riding is a fun and rewarding activity for adults and children alike, and there are many disciplines and capacities with which to become involved with horses. The U.S. Hunter Jumper Association promotes the Hunter/Jumper sport, and offers resources, tools, and programs that introduce and encourage individuals to pursue riding in the Hunter/Jumper discipline.

Finding an appropriate riding program for a beginner can be a daunting process. Use this tool as a guideline to help ask the right questions, determine if a program is suitable for you or your child, and help locate a program in your area.



TERISE COLE/USHJA

What is Hunter/Jumper?

For those interested in equestrian sports, the two apparent main avenues are Western and English riding—each of which have specific disciplines. One form of English riding is Hunter/Jumper, comprised of three disciplines: Hunters, Jumpers and Equitation.

- **Hunters:** Horses compete over fences that mimic those found in a traditional hunt field. Classes are offered on the flat and over fences, where the horses are judged sub-

jectively during each round. Judges look for horses that are well-mannered, keep an appropriate pace and have superior jumping style.

- **Jumpers:** Horses are ridden over a technical course and judging is mathematically based on how many fences are knocked down, if a horse stops at a fence, or does not complete the course under the specified time allowed. The horse with the fewest faults and fastest time wins the class.

- **Equitation:** This combines Hunters and Jumpers and is often considered the foundation of correct riding. Classes are judged on the rider's ability, form and style, but the horse itself is not judged. Riders may compete on the flat or over Hunter or Jumper-type courses, but the judging is subjectively based on the rider's position and ability to allow the horse to perform at its best.

Is Riding for Me?

To know if riding is right for yourself or your child, ask these questions first:

- 1 Am I or my child physically and mentally ready to start riding horses?**
Children should be tall enough, physically fit and mature enough to follow directions from an adult other than a parent. Adult beginners should have a moderate fitness level.
- 2 What are your goals for yourself or your child?**
Do you want to compete, ride for pleasure or only want to know enough for a weekend trail ride? There are many types of lesson programs that can address these different goals.
- 3 Will this be a long-term passion or just a hobby?**
Taking riding lessons is a wonderful way to explore your level of interest. Working with a newfound riding instructor can help you determine your riding goals and level of commitment.

Finding a Reputable Riding Program

With your riding goals established, start your search for the appropriate program at farm or tack stores, online or by asking for a recommendation from someone you know who rides. Be sure to tour any facility you consider and don't be afraid to ask to watch a lesson in progress. This will help you determine if the program, facility and instructor are right for you. No matter the discipline you choose, safety is the highest priority. Some questions to ask facility staff while on your tour include:

What levels of instruction are offered? Are other horsemanship programs offered at the facility?

Good programs help riders learn on the ground and under saddle. Confirm that instructors will be present and assist during all aspects of the lesson and ask if other unmounted lesson opportunities will be available. If interested, inquire about other riding activities such as summer camps, trail rides or competitions to vary your education.

What types of lessons are offered?

There are typically three main lesson types: private, semi-private and group. Private lessons are recommended for beginner riders to ensure safety and one-on-one attention. As you progress, consider semi-private or group lessons to enjoy the sport with friends.

What are the costs of the lessons?

Each lesson program is different, but discounted rates may be available if you purchase a lesson package. Riding programs should require a signed waiver/release before beginning a lesson program, so be sure to ask what paperwork is involved.

What types of certifications and insurance does the riding facility and/or instructor have?

Instructors may have certification from one or more organizations such as the USHJA Instructor Credential. Additionally, instructors might also have medical certifications such as CPR, first aid or emergency training. All reputable stables and instructors will also have liability insurance.

What kind of protective clothing is required?

Riders should always wear appropriate attire including long pants, smooth-soled shoes or boots with a heel, and no tank tops or loose, flapping clothing. Lesson programs should always require the use of ASTM/SEI approved helmets while mounted and some may have helmets to borrow. All equipment should be in good repair and properly fitted.

What type of safety measures are implemented in the program and at the riding facility?

During your tour, keep an eye out for the following:

- Horses should be well-fed and clean.
- The facility and equipment should be clean and in good repair.
- Liability signs and a safety plan for emergencies should be posted throughout the property.

If you have questions about how to find the best riding program for you or your child, email your questions to the USHJA Recognized Riding Academy Committee to help guide your search at education@ushja.org