



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO EQUITATION

Ok- so you are going to be a parent of an American Saddlebred rider. Congratulations and good luck. If you are anything like me you are entering into a strange new world of horses, horse people and a complexly new vocabulary, which of course needs to be learned, so let's start there.

~Words to Know~

American Saddlebred- (This is the type of horse your child will be riding) these horses are the epitome (new word for me) of the show horse. This horse is truly an American horse. It was bred in the 1700's with a combination of the Thoroughbred and the Narragansett Pacer, thus the birth of the American Saddlebred.

Equitation- A rider's equitation is his/her ability to ride correctly with a strong, supple position and the effective use of aids. A good equitation rider is always in balance with the horse.

Saddle Seat Equitation- (This is the discipline your child is in, there are many different disciplines.)The correct position for the rider is to have their shoulder, hip and heel in line. They should also have a straight line from the knee to the toe and from the elbow to wrist to the horse's bit. The rider's back should be straight, yet relaxed and the legs and arms are to remain virtually motionless. See they don't just sit there and look pretty. They are working up there.

ASHA- American Saddlebred Horse Association (sounds like a Garth Brooks song.....(oh no, that was "American Honky Tonk Association"). If your child is going to show, they must be a member to earn points. .



Aids- The means by which the rider controls the action of the horse. At White Star they will use all these aids in the control of the horse.

A. Natural Aids- Hands, Legs, Voice and Body Weight.

B. Artificial Aids- Whip and Spurs

Gaits – You will hear this term often it is in regards to the movement of the horse. For example, if the horse is walking that is a gait, trotting is another gait, cantering still another, slow gait is the fourth and finally there is the rack. You also will hear the term three--gaited horse, or five-gaited horse.

Walk Gait – Some say the hardest to master.



Trot Gait – A two-beat gait, i.e., right front and left hind feet hit the ground at the same time. Then the left front and the right hind leg will hit.

Canter Gait – A three-beat gait, which starts with a hind foot, followed by the simultaneous stride of the other hind feet and its diagonal front foot, and completes on the remaining front foot. (Wow that one sounds pretty confusing to me)

Rack Gait – This is an unnatural gait. This is when the horse at any one time has only one hoof on the ground. It is pretty cool when you see the rider's rack and the crowd goes nuts when they do.

Collection – This is the use of the legs to force the horse's hind quarters forward and the use of the hands to hold the fore (front) quarters back, so the horse keeps in form and balance.



Diagonals - (This is a big, big, big word! Learn it, Live it, Love it). This one word means so much in the show ring and can make or break a rider. The definition of a diagonal is when the rider posts up, (or raising-up off the saddle) when the horse's front leg (closest to the rail) comes up, and then the rider sitting when the horse's shoulder goes down. There are two diagonals, the right and the left. This is very important and can be difficult to master. This sounds very easy doesn't it? Oh contraire, it can be quite a challenge, and may prove to be a rider's hardest lesson to learn.

~Student Attire~

The student's attire should be neat and comfortable fitting. Price range can vary tremendously depending on the quality of the clothing. The following are brief descriptions as to the type of clothing that should be worn.

Jodhpurs- These are very simply the pants to be worn in equitation. What makes these pants "special" is the fact that they have leather pads on the inside of the thigh and have a strap at the bottom to hook under the boot. Many styles are available and can be purchased on-line.

Shirts- For lessons, any type of shirt is ok but it should be tucked in so the instructor can see the exact posture of the torso. The instructor must also be able to see the back and shoulder positions clearly at all times. If it is cold out and your child needs a jacket, it should only come to the waste and be secure around the waste.

Riding Boots – Boots should be black and are usually available in zip-up or laces. If they are properly cared for, they can be used in both practice and at shows. (When showing, they must be spotless).



Helmet – Your child must wear a helmet when riding the horse. The helmet should be completely snug on the head and not able to move very much when fastened.

Gloves – Your child should wear gloves when riding. They will have to wear them in the show, so they should practice in them so they get comfortable feeling the reins through gloves instead of bare hands. The glove style should be black leather.

~The Show Ring~

In this sport of Kings, there are many levels in which to compete, your child's age and ability level will determine where he/she will make their *début* in the show ring.

Academy- Your child will start out competing in academy. The purpose of academy competition is to expose beginner riders to the joys of showing at an affordable cost, to increase new interest in the show horse industry, and to encourage the student to improve his/her riding ability. Horses in the Academy classes must be lesson horses used regularly in a professionally operated lesson program. All academy classes are to be judged on the ability of the rider to control their horse to the best of their ability. Academy equitation classes are judged on basic equitation skills, using diagonals and leads. A rider who has shown in a regular division or in a full suit is prohibited from future participation in the academy division, with the exception of the driving classes. Once a rider has shown in Walk/Trot/Canter classes, a return to Walt/Trot class is prohibited. Academy riders may not show in any other division at the same show with the exception of the driving classes.



Types of Classes...

Lead-line Walk (Beginner) - The rider will be led in at a walk and will work their way around half of the ring, and past the judge.

Lead-line Walk/Trot (Beginner) – The rider will be led in at a walk and work each way of the ring (again utilizing only half of the ring). The rider will be individually trotted past the judge. Riders are expected to post, and be on the correct diagonal.

Walk/Trot Class (Intermediate) – Correct diagonals are required.

Walk/Trot/Canter (Advanced) Correct diagonals and leads are required.

Academy Driving Classes – Drivers may have competed in any riding classification, but can not have showed in Open Driving class. Horses are not judged. Drivers are judged on their ability to drive and control the buggies.

The riders are judged first on their equitation (if you can't remember what equitation means look back to page 1 for help, I know I had to).

The secondly the rider is judged on showmanship. This is the way (insert definition here).

You may ask yourself, “At what age group does my child ride in if he/she turns seven in June?” The age of the rider is determined by the rider's age as of December 1st and will remain the same for the entire show year.

I could go on from here but it gets much more confusing and we have other much more important things to concentrate on like the essential gear for the show.



~The Show Gear~

Wow going to your first show, how scary, exciting, and nerve racking all at the same time. How about we begin with the clothes? First, you will need to have an outfit made for your rider. Academy riders wear jodhpurs, long sleeve shirts, a tie, vest, boots, riding gloves and show helmet. Paul and Matthew will help with the making of the rider's new show outfit. Give yourself a good month to have it made and fitted (and have Paul meet you at the tailor). If he shows.....love yah Paul!) Again, the price can vary immensely depending on your budget.

Below I will list the basic items you will need to bring with you to a show:

1. A case to hold belongings.
2. Brush, comb, sandwich bags to hold: bobby pins, safety pins, cufflinks, tie bar.
3. Thin hair nets (which need to be the same shade as your child's hair) you can purchase these at Target or Wal-Mart.
4. Hair Spray
5. MUDD for the hair to make it more manageable when putting it up in the bun.
6. Electrical tape- use this to wrap your child's gloves so they do not pop out of their shirt.
7. Lipstick or lip-gloss.

So now you got their case filled up, please put their name on it and phone number. You'd be surprised at how many get mixed up.





~The Hair~

Mom's I know everyone thinks just 'cause were moms we should be able to do hair, well it's hard work. We need to practice on our daughter's head as many times as needed to get that show bun Matthew desires. I am on oh time 1,000 and still torturing my daughter. I'm just kidding if you practice you will get it down in no time.

1. First start with a medium low pony tail.
2. Next, put some MUDD on it so it holds together more easily.
3. Then, divide the hair into three sections.
4. Roll each section up individually with the middle section being rolled last.
5. Matthew likes to see the loops in the bun on the sides.
6. Next, get out the hair net and fit it over the bun and wrap it so it is tight on the bun and secure it with bobby pins.
7. Finally, try on your child's helmet to see if in fact the bun is in the correct position and the helmet is still comfortable for the child.





~The Show List~

I believe here is a good time to discuss the show list, which should be checked off not as you are exiting your home like most people would think, but when it hits the car (Big Big Difference). Believe me, I checked off my daughter's jodhpurs in the house and they didn't make it to the car and therefore didn't make it to the show. So check them off in the car.

1. Show Case – with all essentials inside.
2. Show Boots- which need to be cleaned and shinned. We do this the night before.
3. A towel to wipe down the boots when the rider gets on the horse (you'd be surprised how dusty they get).
4. Show Clothes – Vest, Shirt, Jodhpurs, and Tie.
5. Riding Gloves.
6. Show Helmet.
7. Bottled Water – While White Star always has stuff to drink when you're nervous, you're thirsty, have plenty of water on hand.



~Show Duties~

Well with all this in the car we're off to the show. When you arrive at the show simply find White Star and hang your child's clothes up in the dressing room and begin your next round of duties.

1. Getting dressed. Ok, this is pretty simple just get your show clothes on and snap your child's jodhpurs on the bottoms so they do not drag. Button the sleeves and put on the cufflinks. However do not button the vest, as you still need to attach the number. This brings me to the next activity.

2. Get your child's number and attach it to their vest. Usually numbers are in a central location in the front of the barn area. Your child's name will be on the back of the number. Now you can either pin the number on the vest or use Maggie's which you can purchase from Natalie. You want to place the number in the upper-middle of the back. Actually the middle of the number should be even with the shoulder blades. Now, use common sense if it looks to be too high or too low it probably is. So just re-pin it until it is correct. If it is not in the correct location it is distracting and hinders the overall look of the competitor.





3. Now find Paul...yes Paul, he is the tie master and must check your tie before you leave the barn area. Once your tie is in place, put on the tie bar.

1. The last item is the gloves. When close enough to the class help your child put on the gloves, and once in the proper position tape them with electrical tape and tuck the gloves in the sleeves of the shirt. The reason you do this is so the gloves don't pop out of the sleeves and looks untidy.



Now it's the waiting game. Check our child's class number and be sure to be down in the warm up area in plenty of time, about two classes ahead of your child's. When you reach the warm up area, put your child's helmet on and wait for the queue for him/her to mount the horse. Once your child is on the horse your job is complete and you need to rush into the stands to watch them do what they have worked so hard for.





You made it through your first show. How exciting and how proud you must be, I bet they looked magnificent. Just like every great event hours to prepare and in minutes it's over. So we begin the process of putting everything away. This is much easier and only takes a few minutes if done correctly and in an organized fashion. Simply untie the tie. Do not leave it tied on the hanger (*this is Paul's pet peeve*). Then hang everything back up and zip it in your bag. This will prevent your child's clothing getting mixed up with another's in the dressing room. Store the helmet away, and put the cufflinks and tie bar back in the baggies in the case which holds all your essentials.

At this time I would suggest putting everything back into the car. Again, do your check:

1. Vest, Shirt, Jodhpurs and Tie
2. Riding Boots
3. Case with cufflinks and tie bar
4. Show Helmet

Once you have checked that everything made it back to the car, you are done, yes done. Now you can go back to the show and cheer on the rest of the barn. You did a great job and congratulations on making it through the first show of many.





Not only will your children learn to ride, and follow their passion for horses, but they will create a bond with each other and come together as a team even though they may compete against one another in the same class. These children are fun loving, genuine, energetic, hard working, spirited kids who at the end of the day are simply a joy to be around.

I can only believe it is the excellent instruction they receive in the ring and out of the ring that Matthew, Paul, Marcia, Jolene and Natalie have given our children. These good hearted, hard working individuals are also outstanding competitors who maintain the highest of standards for both their horses and their students.

In closing, as the American Saddlebred horse is the epitome of the show horse, so too is White Star the epitome of the American Saddlebred stable.

White Star Stables

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Days of Operations:

Monday –through- Saturday