

# PONY CLUB



# Spurs

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**‘The Pony Club takes the health & welfare of horses and ponies extremely seriously. We focus on the highest standards of equine welfare and veterinary care’.**

The policy regarding the use of spurs has been updated:

Members wishing to use spurs to enhance the leg aid must be able to ride with a still and stable lower leg, coupled with a thorough understanding of spurs and how to use them correctly.

From 1 January 2025 members wishing to wear spurs must have successfully completed the C+ Riding Test or the Spurs Test 2024



# The Spur Test (2024)

**To understand the welfare issues that might occur with spurs. To know that any use of spurs which compromises the well-being of the horse will never be tolerated in The Pony Club. Spurs must only be used to give a more precise leg aid and to facilitate better communication from rider to horse. They are not to make the horse go faster.**

**This Test may only be examined by a C+ Test assessor or above.**

All those involved with this Test should be aware that it involves an important practical ridden element.

Candidates should be aware of the full welfare implications associated with the use of spurs and be able to demonstrate how to ride correctly whilst wearing them.

**The new Spur Test 2024 syllabus can be found on the Pony Club Website**

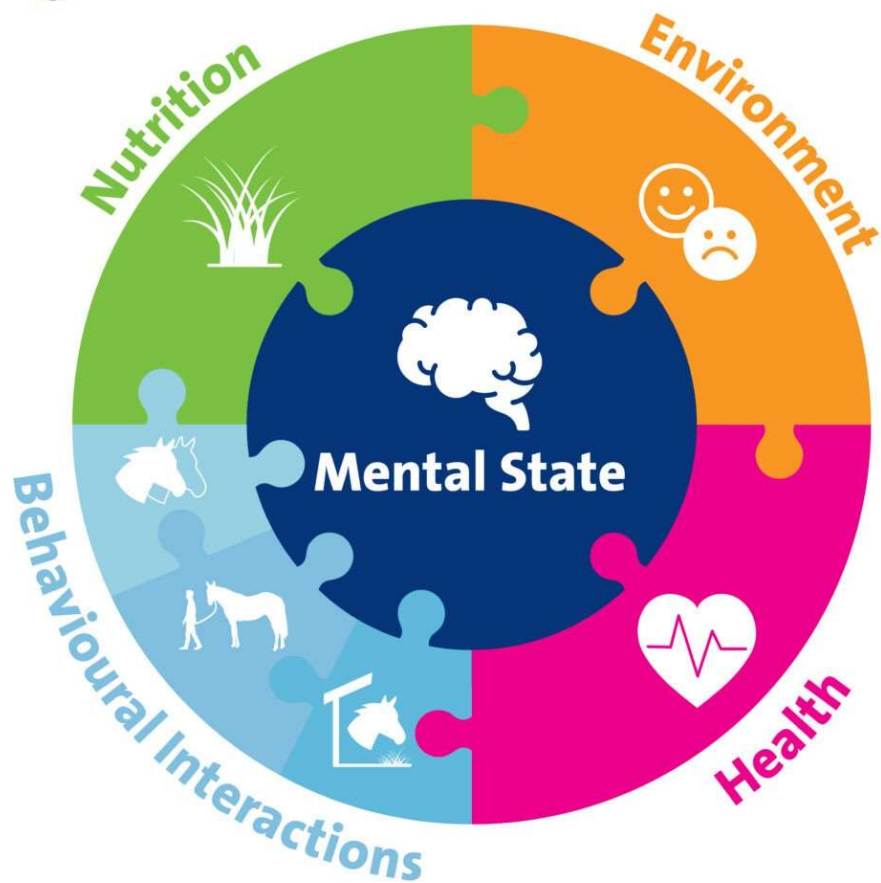
<https://resources.pcuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Spurs-Test-Syllabus-v21.5.1.pdf>

## Objective

**To be aware of the full welfare implications associated with the use of spurs, and how to ride correctly whilst wearing them.**

- Understand the welfare issues related to the wearing of spurs.
- To know that any use of spurs which compromises the well-being of the horse will never be tolerated in The Pony Club.
- Spurs must only be used to give a more precise leg aids and allow for better communication from rider to horse. They are not simply to make the horse go faster.





## Reminder of the five domains

The animal welfare act 2006 states that the duty of a person responsible for an animal is to ensure its welfare.

Opposite shows the 5 areas of the animal's needs.

The misuse of spurs would contravene two of these . **Mental state**. Causing stress distress and confusion

**Health**. Cause pain and injury



## To understand that not all horses or ponies will be comfortable being ridden in spurs.

Some horses and ponies are much more sensitive than others.

Bruising can be caused by the use of spurs which we are unable to see.

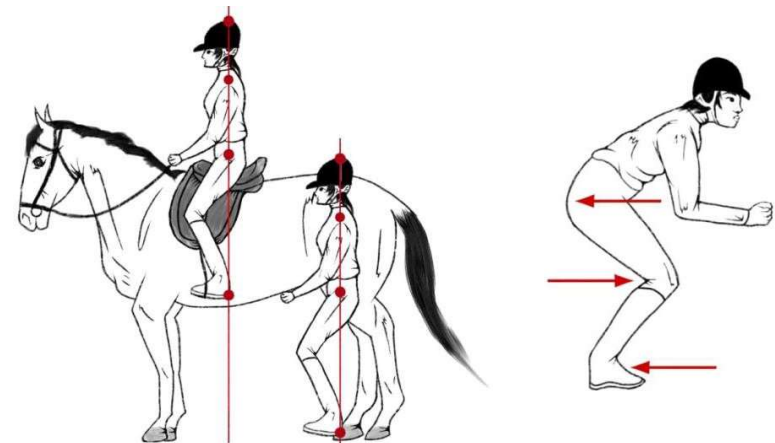
Visible injuries could be:

- Loss of hair
- Rubbed patches
- Grazes
- Open wounds

Consider how horses and ponies may react if they dislike being ridden in spurs.



**To understand the reasons why a balanced independent position is required and be able to demonstrate that position with a still and stable lower leg.**



When riding on the flat the rider should sit in the deepest part of the saddle with a longer stirrup. There should be a line from ear, shoulder hip to heel.

When show jumping the rider needs to shorten the stirrups about 2 holes to change the centre of gravity so they can remain in balance in light seat and over the fences.

**To know how to ride with spurs in an educated and empathetic way.**

If your seat is only stable due to gripping with your lower legs knee or thighs, or you are keeping balance with the reins, you are not ready to wear spurs.

If you have an unstable leg and the foot is at an incorrect angle, it will result in the constant use of your spur. Causing confusion, be unjust and possible injury to your horse or pony.

Spurs are used to encourage a quicker reaction to your leg aid and help you to refined them.

When correctly used spurs can help the horse or pony react with more precision without increased leg pressure.

It is important that your horse or pony is ready to be ridden in spurs. They should be comfortable with the rider's legs and move forward when asked.

## Diagram of + & - Reinforcement and Punishment used in the training of horses and ponies

### The Four Quadrants of Operative Conditioning



**Positive Reinforcement**  
Asked to pick up leg,  
treat given on response  
Give a Reward



**Positive Punishment**  
Does not move forward  
from leg, whip used to  
encourage a reaction



**Negative Reinforcement**  
Apply pressure to move  
forward loosen when  
they respond Pressure  
and release



**Negative Punishment**  
Horse that is mugging  
you for treats Turn away  
Remove what they want

If you ride with an unsteady lower leg and wear spurs it will mean the aids will be:

- ❖ Unpleasant.
- ❖ Haphazard.
- ❖ Poorly timed.
- ❖ Inappropriate.
- ❖ Constantly jabbing.

Regardless of whether the horse or pony is obedient or not.

This would result in good behaviour being punished which is unfair, cruel and not good training.

You would be using constant Positive punishment.

Constantly trying to correct your lower leg can also be tiring for a rider.



# The correct way to use spurs

Secure Lower leg & seat.

Horse or pony is ready to work in spurs. Calf flat against the horse's side with toe pointing forwards.

Enables movement of the leg to gently nudge the heel to use the spur.

Even in trot and canter the leg must be level against the horse's side so you can use it when required and to prevent constant use of the spur.

Remember the reasons for using spurs e.g. Better precision of the aids particularly for more advanced dressage movements.

## Various insecure leg positions and the effect if wearing spurs



Heel too far forward



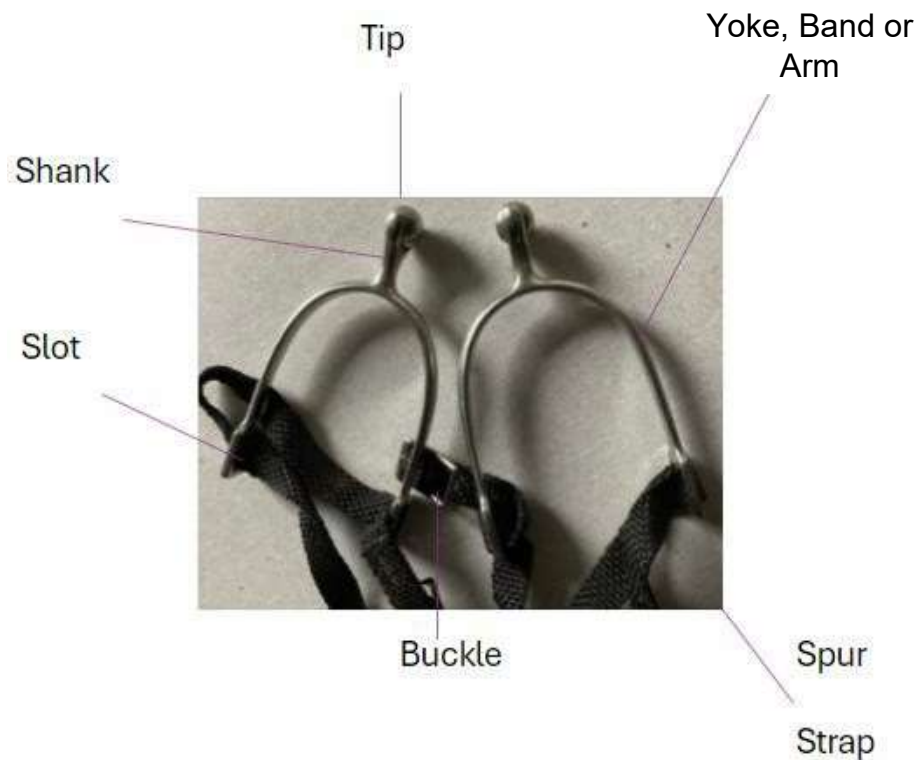
Toe turned out



Leg too far back



Heel up



**The Yoke, Band or Arm** is the part of the spur that wraps around the heel of the boot.

**The Shank** extends from the back of the yoke to the Tip which is the part that touches the horse.

**The Shank** is measured from the back of the boot to the end of the Tip.

**The Rowel:** a rotating disc or wheel – illegal.

**The Ball** – a smooth rotating ball, sometimes attached to the shank depending on the design.

**Spur straps** go through the slot to hold the spur in place.



# To know how to fit spurs correctly and care for them, removing them when not riding.

## Fitting a spur

- The band should rest so that the shank is horizontal to the ground with the tip pointing downwards.
- Have the buckle done up on the outside with the loose end of the strap pointing downwards.
- They should sit just at the top of your heel.
- Be secure and tight enough so they don't move or slip down. Rubber bands around the band can help.
- Spurs should not be worn when dismounted, they can cause a trip hazard and are especially dangerous when using a lunge line or loading. They also cause rub marks on boots.

## Care of spurs

- It is important to clean your spurs regularly.
- Wipe them with a damp cloth each time you use them.
- Thoroughly clean once a week, take them apart use warm soapy water and rinse on the metal or synthetic straps.
- The leather straps can be cleaned like any other piece of leather.
- Always check for any damage.
- When not using keep them somewhere safe.

# Putting Spurs on correctly

Wrong way around



Upside down



Too High



Too low



Sitting correctly on the boots spur guard



Buckle on the inside



# Know the rules regarding spurs in all main Pony Club activities

Each Pony Club sports activity has its own Rule Book.

These can be found on the Pony Club website. Please check these before participating in any activity, so that you are wearing the correct dress.

<https://pcuk.org/pony-club-rule-books/>

**Spurs** – If you have achieved either your C+ test riding or the Spurs test you may wear spurs at Rallies and other events that permit them in their rule book.

Any misuse of spurs will be reported to the DC/Centre Proprietor, Area Representative and Training Chairman; any reported riders will be recorded and monitored.

Sharp spurs are not permitted. Only blunt spurs, without rowels or sharp edges, and spurs that have a smooth rotating ball on the shank may be worn.

**To understand and acknowledge that The Spurs Test does not grant the permanent or irrevocable right to wear spurs.**

**If they are used inappropriately, incorrectly or over-zealously, coaches and officials can remove them and withdraw The Test.**

**Why have you chosen to wear spurs?**

# Questions these can be found on the Spurs Test Syllabus

<https://resources.pcuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Spurs-Test-Syllabus-v21.5.1.pdf>

1. What welfare issues might be caused by using spurs?
2. Why should a rider have a balanced position before using spurs?
3. How might horses or ponies behave if they dislike a rider using spurs?
4. Describe a set of spurs that are suitable/ unsuitable to be used at Pony Club activities and explain why they're either suitable or unsuitable
5. Name the different parts of a spur
6. Show how to fit a spur correctly
7. Why should you remove your spurs when not riding?
8. How should you care for your spurs?

# Answers

1. The horse/pony could be uncomfortable or in pain from subcutaneous bruising, rubs, swellings, or even cuts. Failing to keep the pony 'Free from Pain'.
2. To prevent spurs being used in error, even when the pony is being obedient.
3. They might become upset, tense and anxious: head in the air, quarters swinging. Occasionally they refuse to go forwards or they might start rushing, bucking or kicking out at the pressure from the spur.
4. The spurs will be plain, the length of the shank in accordance with the Pony Club rules, no sharp edges. (Check current rule books)
5. Shank, yoke and rowel/ball.
6. Spur to lie horizontally with the shank pointing downwards. Strap adjusted so buckle lies on the outside of the foot with the strap pointing down.
7. They may become a trip hazard.
8. Polish straps with boot polish or saddle soap. Wash metal in warm water then buff with cloth.