



A STANDARD

The A Test is the highest award of The Pony Club and provides a comprehensive assessment of the rider's horsemanship and their training of a range of horses from the ground, on the flat, and over fences.

Candidates must have passed The Pony Club Tests B+, Lungeing and AH. These Tests will have provided a staircase of knowledge and progression to underpin the work and riding that will be observed.

This progression will have been supported by further training and practice with different coaches and with varied horses, as well as undertaking a wide range of reading, to give the breadth of knowledge required for this Test.

OBJECTIVES

The candidates should be able to:

- Show a secure, correct, balanced seat on the flat and over fences.
- Improve all horses they work, both on the flat and over fences, including young and uncooperative horses.
- Be able to support the practical work shown with logical theory relevant to each individual horse.
- Give the assessors confidence that a horse left with the candidate would improve in its way of going.
- Show a clear understanding of sympathetic modern training methods based on learning theory.
- Have an awareness of factors (including those relating to pain, training, and management) that may contribute to various unwanted behaviours).
- Be able to ride an unfamiliar horse in a variety of surroundings, being mindful for the care and welfare of all interested parties.
- Demonstrate and evaluate training methods that are appropriate for most situations, with a diverse range of horses, including different tack options. Welfare must be at the forefront of all approaches.
- Discuss the safety of helpers when starting young horses.

DRESSAGE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Show correct classical position showing poise and harmony, using either a snaffle or a double bridle.
2. Show a secure, balanced, soft seat and leg position.
3. Demonstrate unobtrusive but effective aids.
4. Maintain a consistent, correct contact with all types of bit used.
5. Ride horses forward in balance.
6. Ride school figures accurately, appropriate to each horse's balance & level of work.
7. Show logical progressive work programmes based on the Scale of Training and backed up by a clear understanding of learning theory.
8. Accurately assess each horse's way of going.
9. Present suitable specific programmes of improvement for the horses ridden.
10. Have a clear knowledge of the aids for all movements required in the Test (see below).
 - a) Appropriate progressive and direct transitions
 - b) Turn on or about the forehand
 - c) Leg yield
 - d) Travers
 - e) Shoulder-in
 - f) Counter canter

- g) Simple change
 - h) Rein back
 - i) Walk pirouette
 - j) Variations within the pace appropriate to the horse's level of training.
11. Show a clear understanding of the preparation needed for all movements required in the Test (as above).
 12. Be able to ride all the movements required in the Test (as above) and know when to use them to develop and enhance the horse's way of going.
 13. Show an improvement in the way of going of the horses ridden
 14. Suggest a future training plan, including possible competitions, for the horses assessed.

JUMP RIDING: SHOW JUMPING, CROSS COUNTRY, AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

May be partly on an arena and partly on grass

15. Show a correct, balanced, independent and secure position.
16. Choose a suitable length of stirrups for riding outdoors over a variety of terrain.
17. Show effective, co-ordinated aids.
18. Show consistent and allowing rein aids.
19. Work in a horse showing a logical and progressive plan. Assess individual horses accurately.
20. Offer individual and appropriate further work programmes for all types of horses and relevant competitions.

Riding over fences

21. Set stirrups at a suitable length for jumping.
22. Show a correct, balanced position over the horse's centre of gravity, in approach, over a fence and on landing.
23. Show a secure lower leg position.
24. Show a hand/arm position which allows the horse natural stretch over the fence.
25. Adopt a forward rhythmical pace throughout.
26. Maintain rhythm to and away from fences.
27. Present a horse to the fence in a way that allows him to jump easily.
28. Ride a smooth track between fences.
29. Ride with ease and competence allowing for bold riding around the course.
30. Accurately assess the horse's way of going on the flat and over fences.
31. Be able to justify the use of artificial aids, if required, with reference to welfare and learning theory
32. Offer a specific training plan to improve the horse's jumping.
33. Show a clear knowledge of distances between related fences, doubles and grids. This must relate to the horse ridden, and be given in feet, yards or metres.
34. Comment on the value of grid work, both theoretically and in relation to the horses ridden.
35. Demonstrate effective, logical use of fences in assessment of the horse and in developing the jumping.
36. Suggest a future plan, including possible competitions up to 1.10 m, to develop the training of the horse assessed.

Riding cross country

37. Adopt a correct, balanced position appropriate for undulating ground.
38. Maintain a secure lower leg position.
39. Demonstrate effective aids, coupled with a bold attitude.
40. Maintain a rhythmical balanced pace, both between and on the approach to fences.
41. Ride at a speed suitable for the ground and the horse's level of training.
42. Approach fences in a way that gives the horse the best opportunity to jump well.
43. Be able to justify the use of artificial aids with reference to welfare and learning theory.
44. Give a clear assessment of the jumping round ridden.

45. Understand how to ride a horse to specific types of fence (e.g., rail & ditch, combination, skinny, water, corner, bounce, etc.).
46. Outline a plan to improve the cross country performance of the horse in order to compete in Pony Club 1.10 m competitions.

LUNGEING

47. Ensure the working area and equipment are safe and used appropriately.
48. Handle the lunge line and whip safely and effectively.
49. Show suitable use of side reins.
50. Adjust equipment to best suit the horse, ensuring safety.
51. Understand how inappropriate or poor use of equipment can create welfare concerns.
52. Work the horse forward and in balance.
53. Show logical progressive work based on the Scale of Training.
54. Work in all paces, as appropriate.
55. Work the horse on suitably sized circles.
56. Use poles appropriately, if required.
57. Accurately assess the horse's way of going.
58. Work the horse to show improvement.
59. Discuss the work carried out competently and confidently.
60. Discuss training aids which may be useful for the horse worked.
61. Suggest appropriate ongoing training.

TRAINING THE YOUNG HORSE

62. Show a sensible knowledge of handling young stock.
63. Know the importance of developing the correct muscles to carry riders with ease.
64. Present a safe and logical approach to lungeing and long reining.
65. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of long reining.
66. Acknowledge the advantages of working horses on a variety of surfaces and going.
67. Discuss the appropriate tack for the purpose for which it is going to be used.
68. Suggest a safe and practical 'starting' routine.
69. Discuss whether helpers are an ad/disadvantage when working with young horses.
70. Suggest a safe and suitable initial riding plan once the horse is ready to be 'ridden away'.
71. Discuss the use of operant conditioning in training of the young horse.
72. Give appropriate ideas for broadening the young horse's education.
73. Outline a plan to introduce a horse to jumping.
74. Outline possible problems that may arise when introducing horses to jumping.
75. Give a logical programme for the introduction of horses to cross country fences.
76. Understand safety implications related to helpers and other horses when in the vicinity of young horses.
77. Discuss practical time scales for the various stages of training young horses.

Test notes:

- All content covered in lower tests may be reassessed in this test
- The items shown in bold are particularly important; competence in these items will be given emphasis by the assessor when considering the result
- The B+ and AH Tests must be held before a candidate may take the A Test.

Recommended Minimum age: 17 years

Felt Colour: Blue
Pass with Honours: Purple

Please Note:

The assessor team reserves the right to withdraw any candidate at any stage if there are concerns about the welfare of the horse or pony they are riding, or the safety of others. All decisions will be made in line with The Pony Club's commitment to safeguarding and animal welfare.

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