

Proper Turn-Out for SJHSA Shows

(updated from an article in the January 2004 SJHSA Newsletter)

The horse shows recognized by the San Jacinto Horse Show Association are considered to be "schooling shows." This means they're stepping stones to competition at higher levels, such as the shows recognized by THJA (Texas Hunter Jumper Association) and USEF (United States Equestrian Federation, the national governing body for equestrian competition). SJHSA shows are a good way to find out what competition is like, and to measure how you and your horse are progressing compared to those from other local stables.

SJHSA requires that all participants wear

- Shirt with a collar
- Boots and breeches, or (for younger Junior riders) jodhpurs and paddock boots
- Helmet: Junior riders' helmets MUST be harness-type helmets that meet current USEF safety standards.

SJHSA does NOT allow any participant to

- Compete in chaps or half-chaps
- Compete on the flat with a martingale
- Compete in Hunter classes on a horse wearing polo wraps, boots, or bell boots (show management MAY allow bell boots in muddy conditions)

Hunter and Jumper sports have their own traditions, including how the horse is presented, the horse's tack, and the clothes riders wear. SJHSA show managers hire knowledgeable judges, and participants are expected to follow the traditions of the sport, whether or not they aspire to compete at higher levels someday. These traditions are not written in any rule book. Here are some of them:

Cleanliness, neatness: Your horse should be clean and thoroughly groomed. Pull the mane to the proper length (unless the horse's breed requires a long mane). Trim whiskers, fetlocks, coronet bands (do not trim fetlocks and coronet bands if the horse's breed requires "feathers"). Brush out the tail. Braiding is not required, but if done, should be done properly. Your horse's tack should be clean and fit well. Bridle and martingale straps should be in their keepers. Martingales should have stops. Clean white or natural color saddle pads that follow the saddle contour should be used in Hunters and Equitation (no square pads). Excess stirrup leathers should be tucked under the saddle flaps or cut off. Your clothes should be clean and fit well. If you wear your show clothes while you groom and tack up your horse, wear something over them to try to stay clean.

Hair: Your hair needs to be neat and tidy. Girls should use a hair net to capture fly-away strands. If it is long enough, put it all under your helmet and secure it with pins. Young girls may wear pigtailed. Older girls and adults can use "show bows". It is NEVER appropriate to have long hair hanging down the back.

Helmet: Your helmet should fit perfectly for safety reasons, and for Junior riders, it must have a harness and meet USEF standards. It should be black. If your helmet is the schooling type, get a velveteen cover.

Coat: Coats are optional at schooling shows. However, many judges expect to see riders wear them in Equitation classes. If you wear a coat, it should fit well. The tail of the coat should be short enough so that the rider does not sit on it in the saddle. It should fit well through the shoulders, but allow enough room for jumping. The sleeves should be long enough so that just a little cuff shows when you are jumping. Dark colors (navy, dark grey, hunter green, dark brown, black) are fine. Lightweight wool is cooler in warm weather than polyester.

Shirt: For Hunter and Equitation riders, girls should have a shirt with a "ratcatcher" collar. You can have the collar monogrammed, or wear a stock pin. Boys should wear a "dress" shirt and tie. Sleeve length is your choice. If you wear a jacket, it's proper to have long sleeves (and the jacket is easier to get on and off). Make sure the fabric allows air flow for warm weather. For Jumper riders, if you don't wear a ratcatcher shirt, you may wear a polo shirt, but you should never wear a shirt with no collar. In any case, be sure your shirt is neatly tucked in when you enter the ring.

Gloves: Generally, a proper turn-out includes black gloves (leather, cotton, synthetic). However, many Hunter and Jumper riders do not wear them. Some judges expect Equitation riders to wear gloves. White gloves are not appropriate.

Breeches/Jodhpurs: Traditional colors for the show ring are beige, light grey, and khaki. Do not wear dark colors. White is not appropriate for schooling shows. Jodhpurs should be long enough to cover the top of your paddock boots, should be held down with an elastic strap, and you should wear garters.

Belt: Riders should always wear a belt. A dark color is best.

Boots: Boots must be clean and polished. Adults and older Junior riders should wear tall black boots, either field boots or dress boots. (Be sure they fit well and are tall enough. Do not polish the inside of the calf!) Younger Junior riders may wear paddock boots (brown preferred), with matching garters. Boots should be wiped just before you go in the show ring.

Braiding Traditions: Braiding is not required for SJHSA shows; but judges always appreciate a beautifully braided horse or pony. Braid the mane on the right side of the neck, even if the mane naturally falls on the left side. If you braid the mane, always braid the forelock, too. Never braid the forelock unless you braid the mane. If you braid the tail, braid it all the way down to the bottom of the tail bone. Never braid the tail without also braiding the mane. Practice to perfect your technique before you braid your horse for a show.

This is just a quick overview of some of the things a judge will notice. For more information, talk to your trainer or someone knowledgeable at your barn or favorite tack store. There are also many books that touch on show turn-out for horse and rider.