



Southeast Mounted Drill Team Association

Judging Course

The judge's scoop

ACCEPTING THE JOB

Our Latest News

So, you've agreed to judge a competition for the SEMDTA. You will receive a written contract, via email, stating the competition date, location, your judging fee, the expenses the association will cover, and any obligations you have for judging the show. The contract must be signed and sent back to the SEMDTA Director within seven (7) days of receipt to confirm your acceptance of the job.

You should not have worked and/or held a clinic with teams you are judging within six months of the competition. You should have a basic understanding of SEMDTA rules and requirements of all the drill classes and divisions you will be judging. Each has its own criteria; therefore, you need to read and be familiar with the requirements and guidelines; you do not need to memorize them.

When hired, in case of updates or changes, you should go to our website and print off the current rules and requirements prior to your judging job, familiarize yourself with the information so you will be able to readily locate it, if needed.

Additionally, the Southeast Mounted Drill Team Association has automated the drill scoring process. As their Judge, you will be entering your category scores for each class, i.e., spacing, timing, alignment, degree of difficulty, etc. and any deductions, on a digital tablet. From there, the automated program takes over and tallies all scores.



Judges are asked to be available to speak with teams for up to an hour after the competition concludes. Teams value your opinion, be honest, professional, and encouraging in your comments.

How do I score?

SCORING GUIDELINES

How do I keep track of it all?

The SEMDTA has only one scoresheet with nine scoring categories for judging all Divisions/Classes. To judge effectively, you must study and be well ad versed in each of the following categories: Spacing, Alignment, Timing/Coordination, Degree of Difficulty, Horsemanship, Performance and Manners of Horses, Music, Appearance, and Overall Impression. Each category is assigned a certain number of potential points. Judges are expected to use the entire point range for all scoring categories.

When a team enters the arena to be judged, their spacing, alignment, and timing/coordination is presumed perfect. Judges should start these judging categories from a perfect score working downward as faults occur. Judges should start all other scoring categories, working up or down, from a mid-way neutral, non-committal score.

A Scoring Guidelines sheet is provided to help you score more consistently, make notes, and keep track of a team's riding faults. It also contains general scoring tips which you should find helpful.

Spacing, Timing, Alignment

and alignment is presumed perfect (starting from a perfect score). Judges should start these judging categories from a perfect score working downward as faults occur. Judges should start all other scoring categories, working up or down, from a mid-way neutral, non-committal score. Judges must total the marks and use the table below to find a score. Judges must allow for a six point deduction. Tick marks may be recorded on your Criteria sheet.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
100	94	88	82	76	70	64	58	52	46	40	34	28	22

SPACING	TIMING	ALIGNMENT

Insert this sheet in a clear cover of a binder or a sheet protector. Use a dry erase marker to make tick marks.

GENERAL SCORING

Please take note of the explanatory breakdown of the Degree of Difficulty scoring category to the right. With the exception of the Execution of Drill, other categories may be scored down in a similar manner. SEMDTA expects judges to use the entire scoring range for all other scoring categories, working up or down from a neutral, non-committal score. Be careful when scoring the first team in a class. You MUST allow yourself "scoring room" for a team which could perform much better.

Be honest in your scoring. If a team's ride is very good, score it that way; reward excellence where due! On the other hand, if a team's ride is bad, their score should reflect their need for work and improvement. To do

DEGREE

100	100 – Excellent (Perfect, rare)
95	
90	90 – Very Good (Hard to find)
85	
80	80 – Good (Outstanding)
75	
70	70 – Fairly Good (Fair)
65	
60	60 – Satisfactory
55	
50	50 – Sufficient
45	
40	40 – Poor
35	
30	

Our Scoring Guidelines sheet is a handy tool to help keep track of things while you judge. Find it under SCORING in the SEMDTA KNOWLEDGE BASE section of this course.

Judges should be careful when scoring the first team in a class too high. As a practice, you will want to leave yourself "scoring room" for rides to follow which may perform at a higher level.

Work to be consistent and honest in your scoring. If a team's ride is very good, score it that way; reward excellence where due! On the other hand, if a team's ride is bad, their score should reflect their need for work and improvement. To do otherwise relays an inaccurate message and doesn't justly reward those teams that may have performed at their peak.

Come prepared to judge

PRACTICE AT HOME

Practice your oral critique and scoring at home

You should practice before you arrive to judge. You will judge most scoring categories from a neutral, non-committal score, up or down, to make placement in your order of preference. Study the numerical value for each aspect of every drill. Know the deductions and the point values. Learn how to score each event quickly and accurately.

Try to practice whenever possible. Attend a competition where you are not judging, or possibly visit local drill teams to critique their practice performance. Please be sure to call them first, as some teams may be uncomfortable with your presence. Arrive and leave quietly and be sure to thank them for allowing you to visit.

While judging, your oral critique skills will be the first to weaken under stress. Teams place a great deal of importance on your opinions and look forward to the advice you have to share.

This skill is beneficial to you as a Judge. The more you practice, the more familiar and comfortable you will become. You will discover that you will start to examine your decisions and make determinations for the placing you give. You will gain quality insight into drill events and have a wealth of knowledge.

Know the meanings of the descriptive terms by using drill terminology. Words such as alignment, spacing, timing, gaits, tracking, paces and collection. They are supportive and encourage teamwork.

There are many generic names for maneuvers, such as threads, crosses, wedding rings, etc. Each Association has descriptive terms that are used to help describe different maneuvers. If you do not know the name of a particular maneuver, describe it.

You should know how maneuvers look when done correctly. Train yourself to spot inconsistencies. Note where the team places maneuvers in the arena. Do they ride with crowd appeal in mind? Does the music selected match the type of performance being done? Is the timing and rhythm “in time” with the music? The coordination of all these parts, including music, uniform, and maneuvers are important to the overall results.

One for every ride

THE ORAL CRITIQUE

Verbalize what you are seeing

A critic is one who practices the art of evaluation and makes judgements or comparative worth. An oral critique requires knowledge of the subject and an ability to communicate your thoughts in a clear concise manner.

As an SEMDTA drill team judge, you will be required to do an oral critique of each team in each event. You should be able to verbally explain what is happening by what you are seeing and evaluate.

Turn on your recorder, press the red, REC/PAUSE button and identify the team and the drill they are about to perform; the competition name and date, and introduce yourself and your location in the facility. Press the red, REC/PAUSE button again when you are finished with your introduction.

Prior to your critique each team will take a courtesy lap. This is your time to visually evaluate uniforms, equipment, colors, grooming, lameness and so on.



When you are ready to begin the critique, press the red, REC/PAUSE button again and you are recording! Please do not give a running commentary of the drill performance. Teams already know their maneuvers and the order in which they occur. What they expect to hear is what you like or disliked and your opinions about what you are viewing.

As you observe a team ride, your critique should offer what is being done correctly and where improvement is needed. Be specific on problem areas, i.e., “The black horse in the second pair is lagging behind” or “The spacing on the second pair from the front is too long when compared to the others in line.” Comment on music, costumes, theme, props, etc. Remember to be positive and use tact. The information you provide should be helpful in understanding your scoring and provide them insight into polishing future performances.

When you finish your critique, you must end it by pressing the STOP button. The stop button is what creates a new file and/or audio “track” for the next team.

Drill team judging is probably one of the most difficult types of judging you will do. You must balance several issues at once. Your critique and communication skills help teams to improve, while allowing you to be accountable for your decisions.

Know the scoring categories

SCORE SHEETS

Always complete the entire score sheet

You should rarely have two teams with the same score! However, this occasionally happens. Because it is rare to have only one judge, the combination of the two judges’ scores usually breaks the tie. Most Associations have a tie-breaker criteria. The SEMDTA uses Execution of Drill (Spacing, Timing & Alignment), Degree of Difficulty, and Horsemanship respectively for breaking ties.

Always complete the entire score sheet (digital or hardcopy), including any point deductions. Include the total score and your signature at the bottom of any hardcopy score sheet.

When entering scores on an SEMDTA digital scoring tablet, make sure to ONLY enter numbers, NEVER letters, negative (-) signs, commas, periods, or any other symbols on the score sheets.

You should know the type of drills being performed and the requirements and rules for each.

You should know the assigned point value for each drill and how to apply any deductions. If necessary. You will score individual parts of each drill.

Ultimately, you will value each team’s drill performance to place and rank it within their respective classes and divisions.

SEMDTA provided judging equipment (click on items to see user information)

JUDGING TOOLS

You will use this equipment for judging SEMDTA competitions

- [17.5" X 24.5" Portable Table](#)
- [Digital Scoring Tablet](#)
- [Digital Audio Recorder](#)
- [Walkie Talkie](#)



The digital audio recorders that SEMDTA judges will use is a Sony ICD-PX240. Judges are to familiarize themselves with the recorder's use prior to judging. It is extremely important that judges press the STOP button after they are finished critiquing a team to make a new audio recording file for the next team. If you are uncertain, ask show personnel the evening prior to judging.

The evening prior to the competition, judges will receive hands-on training for the digital scoring tablets to learn how to input their scores and any deductions into the automated program.

The walkie-talkie will be on the correct channel when you receive it the morning of the competition. After each ride, when you are ready to judge the next team, press and hold down the PTT call button (wait a second or two) then speak letting the announcer know that you (state your name) are ready! Wait a second and release the PTT call button after you are done speaking.

Be polite and professional

JUDGING ETIQUETTE

Public perception is very important

Other than a polite greeting, absolutely no interaction with teams or Coaches until the conclusion of the entire competition. This applies to your secretary as well.

Personal items to bring

PERSONAL SUPPLIES

Have them ready in case you need them

Although Event Coordinators or Show Secretaries may have supplies available for your use, do not assume this to be the case. Come to the competition prepared and with your own supplies!

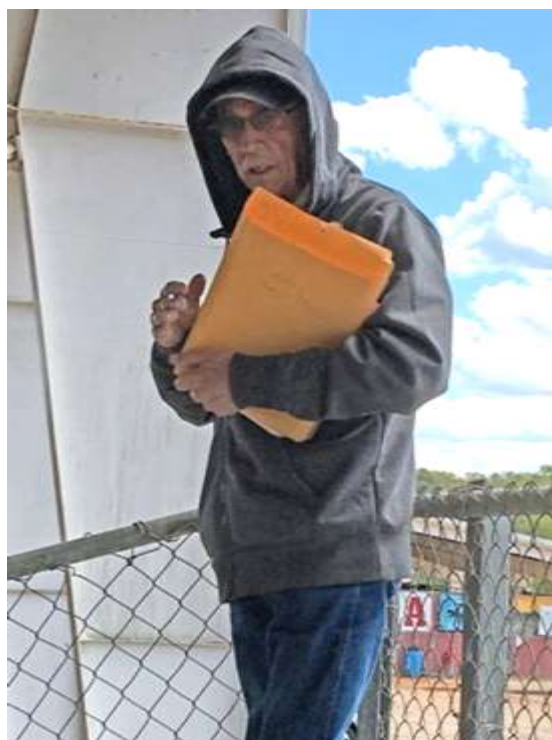
Association Rules: Keep them handy for quick reference during the competition.

Calculator: Bring a calculator and extra batteries to tally or double-check your scores. You will only need a calculator as a backup in the event the internet goes down at an SEMDTA competition venue.

Drill Criteria Worksheets: Many judges find a criteria worksheet to be a very helpful judging tool. Use one sheet for each class to make your notes, tick marks, and record scores. These personal worksheets can be invaluable for referring to when answering questions after the competition.

Other supplies: A small bag or backpack for supplies, pencils, erasers, pens, clipboard, binder, scratch paper, paper clips, extra batteries for your electronics, extension cord, hat, coat, blanket, gloves, seat cushion or folding chair, beverages and/or snacks, and cooler.

You are wise to check on and prepare for the weather conditions around the area of the competition. Even then sometimes weather can change without warning. Bleachers can be very cold in a covered arena even in mild weather, and a small fan will give you some relief in hot, humid weather. Come prepared for any weather!



Where to sit?

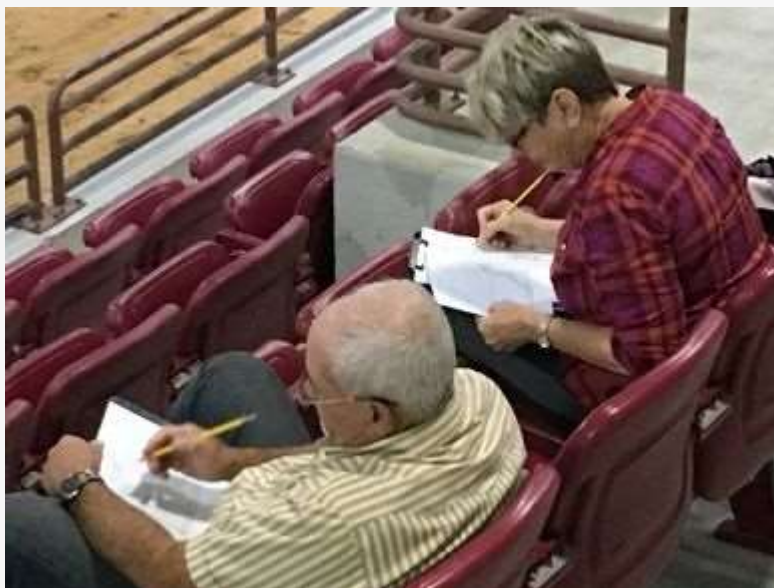
A PERFECT VIEWPOINT

Picking out a good place to set up

As the judge you must observe from outside the arena. A good viewing point is up high, above the fence walls of the arena. This allows you to see the entire picture. If this is not possible, improvise. Many judges prefer sitting at the center of the arena because many maneuvers are performed there, although this is not imperative to doing a quality job. You can sit at either end, just allow for alignment and spacing variables.

If possible, try to find a quiet place away from spectators and other judges. Hearing another judge may be distracting. Spectators can also be distracting when they are cheering for their team. They may overhear your audio comments and misunderstand and distort your meaning. The comments you are giving are only for the team that is performing and should be handled with confidence and integrity.

Should spectators begin to encroach upon your area, you should ask them politely to move to allow a buffer area for you to be able to judge in quiet without interference. If you need help, please notify the Director on your walkie talkie.



Judges should look for a quiet place to sit away from spectators or other judges. If the crowd encroaches on them unexpectedly, it is okay for a judge to ask them politely to move back to allow a buffer area for them to judge in quiet without interference.

Keep it all organized

SET UP YOUR WORK AREA

Table, tablet, recorder, walkie talkie, supplies...oh my!

Some judges sit to judge, while others stand. Whichever you decide, be organized, and have your judging tools ready. Being unorganized wastes valuable time and makes a poor impression.

As you set up, remember to secure items so they will not blow away, be easily knocked off, or be likely to fall from the bleachers.

When you judge for SEMDTA, you will have digital score sheets in the order of go on a scoring tablet. Only in the event the internet goes down, would you need to be prepared to use hardcopy score sheets.

It is imperative that you keep your score sheets and any criteria “worksheets” in the performance Order of Go. Some judges place their criteria “worksheets” in a binder, and keep the score sheets in a pocket divider, or manilla envelope. Some judges prefer to move score sheets in “front-to-back” order on a clipboard. This will be for you to decide.

If a team moves or scratches from the performance order, it can cause confusion. So, carefully listen to the announcer for any changes in the line-up and reorder criteria and score sheets, as needed.

Take a moment to relax. Look around and evaluate the arena. Find the center, then divide it in half, by fourths, thirds and so on. This will help you balance the drill performance. Identify arena markers, gates and posts to assist you with uniformity, alignment, position and balance. Notice where the audience will be positioned so you can evaluate crowd appeal.

Do you need one?

THE JUDGE'S SECRETARY

The duties of a secretary a/k/a scribe

If you want or need a secretary, you will need to provide your own and cover their expenses.

Talk with your secretary to make sure your needs are clear and understood. They are there to assist you at your discretion and can be of great service. However, you are ultimately responsible for your scores.



From reading explanation sheets to inputting scores, a secretary can be very helpful!

Be sure your audio recorder is OFF when you give any scores or other information to your secretary.

If you use criteria worksheets, you may find it very helpful to have your secretary transfer your scores to the hardcopy score sheet, and/or input the scores into your digital judging tablet.

When you judge an event with required maneuvers, such as Short Program, your secretary may assist you by reading the “explanation sheet” to you as the maneuvers are being performed. As they read the maneuvers you can locate and evaluate each maneuver in sequence.

When working alone, it is helpful to post a small list of the “required” and “additional” maneuvers at the top of your clipboard for easy reference. This allows you to check off each maneuver as it is being performed and will not distract you from your verbal critique.

You are giving a gift of yourself

THE BIG PICTURE

Practice and knowledge are the key

You are required to give an evaluation of the drill performance, which includes what you are seeing, hearing and feeling. The information you provide is used as a teaching tool and should be an explanation of why and how you judged them, which helps improve future performances.

Judges that are very familiar with drill and who have served as a drill master or coach, have offered teams assistance by giving them their own perspectives or personal ideas on how they like to see maneuvers put together, i.e., smoother entry/exit, or maneuvers that appeal to them.

Take this opportunity to remember safety, horsemanship, sportsmanship, and topics of importance to you. Note the health and workability of the horses and equipment.

There may be a horse that is not suited to drill. Be careful when addressing this issue. When you notice something that needs correction, give a possible solution. If you do not have a solution, give ideas of where teams might obtain the answer.

On occasion you may single out individuals with helpful suggestions. Use encouragement, never embarrass the rider. If a rider needs help with equitation, express it in general terms. Give insights that other teammates may be hesitant to mention to fellow members. What you provide will enable riders to evaluate what you are seeing and make applications.

Practice and knowledge are the two ingredients that are the most valuable to you. Remember to stay positive and above all, enjoy giving the gift of yourself and your knowledge to teams.





SEMDTA Judges hand out ribbons and awards at the end of each day of competition.

Be ready for questions

AFTER THE COMPETITION

Speak with teams and their coaches

Judges are requested to stay one hour following the distribution of score sheets for questions or concerns. You should take this opportunity to converse with the other judges, make note of their placings and perspectives and be available to coaches and advisors for questions, etc.



Learning is an ongoing process

SEMDTA KNOWLEDGE BASE

Keep your knowledge fresh...you never know too much!

FLAG PROTOCOL

What flag ornaments are allowed?

Flag order, proper carriage, etc.

SCORING

Where should I start?

Suggested rating scale

DRILL MANEUVERS

Know their names.

Learn how they are to be done

SEMDTA RULES

Classes/Divisions/Disqualifications

Know our rules and regulations

ORAL CRITIQUE

A quick reference guide

Judges find this tool helpful

SCORE SHEET

Know the Categories

Know the deductions

SCORING CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS

SEMDTA definitions

Know them before judging

EXECUTION OF DRILL

What is it?

Know it and judge it!

JUDGES CHECK LIST

A quick reference guide

A list of items for consideration.

DRILL CRITERIA WORKSHEET

A personal judging tool

A place to keep track of it all

[Print the On-line Course](#)

To receive SEMDTA certification and judge for the association you must take both tests below and pass the Judge Certification Test with a score of 92 or above. The Judge Certification Test is an "open-book" test. Please use a digital audio recorder to critique the drill routine on the video and submit your audio file and score sheet for our review.

~ If you have prior judging experience and pass the Judge Certification Test with a 96 or above we may contact you soon to judge for us!

~ If you are new to judging and receive a passing score of 92 or above on the Judge Certification Test, we require that you receive additional classroom time and hands-on training during an SEMDTA competition(s) with experienced judges (not while they are judging) to teach, train and evaluate you fully prior to certification and judging on your own. We will invite you to set this training up after you take the tests below.

JUDGE CERTIFICATION TEST

SCORING & AUDIO SKILLS TEST