

SCORING CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS

Southeast Mounted Drill Team Association

Updated 7/28/25

Spacing, Alignment, Timing (Execution of Drill) *How Precise Was The Drill Ridden?*

❖ Teams will be scored on their spacing, alignment, timing and coordination in this category. Riders and/or sets should maintain an equal distance between them whether vertically or horizontally; the distance may vary as long as it is consistent. Riders keep their bodies lined up, side by side, when working in pairs, threes, fours, company fronts, etc. When going around corners, outside rider must speedup, inside rider may need to slow down to keep proper alignment. Lines and columns should be straight; riders should track directly behind, or in the same tracks as the rider in front of them. Riders need to be engaged in the drill at all times and watch each other to ensure they are in the right place at the right time. Riders need to adjust their horses' speed (without breaking gait), faster or slower, to hit their marks. These split-second adjustments need to be done quickly and smoothly to maintain good spacing and alignment at all times. Riders need to pass through and/or cross in front or behind each other without hesitation; no holding back, or rushing to get through an opening. A team should work extra hard to perfect these basic drill elements in their routine. This category is weighted heavily in competition. It is also an element of safety as poor spacing enhances the opportunity for collision or contact with other riders.

Degree of Difficulty *How Difficult Was The Drill Routine?*

❖ Teams will be scored on how difficult the routine was to perform in this category. More difficult maneuvers, little or no repeated maneuvers, and less use of set up maneuvers (going all the way out to the rails and back in before performing the next maneuver) increases a drills difficulty level. Routines that require multiple lead rider changes are more difficult than a follow the leader type drill. If a team carries flags properly, this can add to a team's degree of difficulty. A controlled closeness between riders, with no bumping (rider/horse contact), is more difficult. Difficulty is gauged not only by the foregoing, but also by the speed in which the drill is ridden. It is much more difficult for a team to do maneuvers smoothly and well at a faster pace/speed; however, **a team's control and precision should NEVER be sacrificed for an increase in speed; controlled speed comes with much practice.** Only when a team is ready should a coach consider an increase in speed (SAFETY first and foremost).

Horsemanship *How Well Did Riders—Ride?*

❖ Teams will be scored on how well riders rode in this category. Riders should display good horsemanship skills at all times. *If riding in a western saddle, **no posting**.* Riders should hold the reins in a like manner either one-handed in the same hand, or two handed. Riders should keep loose hands, if riding one-handed, low and quiet with very little movement; if riding two handed, keep elbows low. Riders should sit straight in saddles and have a balanced seat without having to hold on. AT NO TIME should a rider be excessively harsh in the correction of their horse.

Performance and Manners of Horses *How Well Did the Horses Perform?*

❖Horses will be scored on how well they performed the drill routine in this category. Horses are expected to be obedient, quiet and responsive. No biting, kicking, or bucking. Horses should not balk, shy, or rear, but work freely and willingly in the drill routine. The gait of all horses should be consistent. If performing a circle at a lope, all horses need to lope. If the team trots, all horses should trot, etc. Some maneuvers, as a pinwheel or arena sweep, do require horses to be at different speeds to perform the maneuver properly and this is expected and acceptable.

Music *How Well Did The Music Match The Pace of The Horses & Entertain?*

❖Teams will be scored on their music selection(s) and how it complements their routine. Music tempo should match the pace of the horses in the drill routine. In theme classes, teams will be scored on how well their music goes along with the theme of their drill routine. Music should be exciting, entertaining or inspirational to coordinate with the drill's theme and costuming. Music may be serious or funny to relay a message, tell a story, or promote a belief. Where more than one song is used, music should be combined smoothly and with little delay between them. Music should be upbeat and exciting to entertain the audience.

Appearance (Non-Theme Classes) *How well did The Tack, Apparel and Props Match?*

❖Horse tack, rider apparel and flags will be scored on eye appeal and how well items match in this category. Horses are expected to have matching tack with the exception of saddles and bits (what one horse wears all horses wear). All tack should be clean and in good working order. Tack should all represent the same discipline, either English or western, not mixed. Team apparel is “eye candy” for an audience and should be appealing, impressive, neat and clean. A team's uniform or costume should set them apart from other teams. Teams should strive to match tack, apparel, flags and accessories as much as feasibly possible for a uniform look.

Appearance (Theme Classes) *Did The Tack, Apparel and Props Match The Theme?*

❖Teams will be scored on how well their costumes relay the theme of their drill routine. Imagination and creativity play a huge part in the costuming of riders and horses In the Theme Classes. Teams that go “all-out” (above-and-beyond) in their theme costuming (people & horses) should receive the highest scores in this class. Apparel, whether fantasy, comical, attractive, captivating, and even elaborate should match the theme and music chosen for a routine. It is not necessary to match costumes and accessories, including any flags or carried props, in this class. Items on the riders and horses should be attached securely as penalties may be accumulated for any dropped items in the Theme Class.

Overall Impression *How Well Did the Routine Flow and Appeal to the Crowd?*

❖ Teams will be scored on the overall quality and effect of their drill routine in this category. Maneuvers should be placed in the arena for maximum audience enjoyment, i.e., during some portions of a drill, a quad team may need to down size their performance area (not use entire arena) for a more centered, dramatic effect (spectacularity is lost when four riders are separated far apart during an entire drill). A team's routine should keep the crowd engaged and not bored. Routines should have symmetry and definition of maneuvers. Maneuvers should be connected in a manner to flow from one maneuver to another smoothly and with limited use of set up maneuvers. There should be a good use of riders working in pairs, 3's, 4's, 5's, etc. (when possible) to add variety and excitement to a drill routine.

PENALTIES

Alphabetically

Broken Tack, Dropped Item (-10)

❖ Any broken horse tack or any item that is dropped to the ground (each occurrence).
If drill is halted for any adjustments/repairs, time will continue to run (+) a Re-Group penalty.

Exceeding a Trot (Green Division) (-20)

❖ Any rider exceeding a trot in Green Division classes (each occurrence).

Carrying Props or Flags (Green Division or Novice Division) (-15)

❖ Any rider carrying a prop or flag in Green or Novice Division classes.

Collision/Bump Contact (-10)

❖ Any physical contact between two or more horses or their riders from uncontrolled closeness (each occurrence). This does not include the touching of rider hands, if an obvious part of a drill routine.

Fall of Horse or Rider (collision between two) (-100)

❖ Any physical contact between two or more horses, two or more riders, or horse and rider with an object, resulting in a fall. A team will be allowed to stop, re-group and carry on once the horse and rider are in position. A substitute rider is allowed to fill the position, or the position may remain empty if the rider is unable to continue. *Time will continue to run (+) a Re-Group penalty.*

Fall of Horse or Rider (not from a collision) (-10)

❖ The fall of either a horse or rider. A team will be allowed to stop, re-group and carry on once the horse and rider are in position. A substitute rider is allowed to fill the position, or the position may remain empty if the rider is unable to continue. *Time will continue to run (+) a Re-Group penalty.*

Harsh Excessive Correction of Horse (-10)

❖ Jerking heavily on horse's reins, slapping or hitting the horse, excessive spurring the horse, etc. (each occurrence).

Incorrect Flag Carriage (-5)

❖ A rider not holding a flag staff in the correct position. (each occurrence).

Incorrect Flag Protocol (-25)

❖ A team not fielding flags in the correct order and/or position in their drill routine. (each occurrence).

Inside or Outside Coaching/Giving Direction (-75)

❖ No coaching or giving directions from inside or outside the area. A whistle or other method of cuing by lead riders in a drill routine is acceptable.

Not Fielding ALL Three Gaits (Novice Division) (-20)

❖ Novice teams must demonstrate the walk, trot and canter.

Off Course (-10)

❖ One or more riders being out of position during a maneuver/transition.

Over/Under allowed Time (per minute or fraction thereof) (-10)

❖ Time is taken from first horse in, to last horse out at the entry gate. Each class has an allotted time. A team will be penalized for going over or under the allotted time per minute and/or fraction of a minute. If a team runs out of music or the sound system fails, judging will continue until the last horse is out of the arena.

Re-Group (-10)

❖ A team that stops their drill for any reason to carry on. A team may need to stop their drill for severe tack breakage; fall of horse or rider, medical emergency, etc. A team, who is unable to continue due to injury to horse or rider, may ask for permission to leave the arena and return at the end of their class to complete their drill (time and all deductions remain).

Administrative Penalties

Late Music

❖ A team that turns their completed music selection(s) in after competition's established music deadline will incur a 10 point deduction per class (per judge), entered.

Late Registration

❖ Each competition has an established entry deadline for all properly completed forms and full payment. A team that turns in forms or payment after the established deadline will incur a 25 point, per class entered deduction.