**Trail Challenge Rules**

The Trail Challenge consists of a series of individual obstacles that a horse and rider must navigate, as they are judged on their control, trust, partnership and performance. Each obstacle is judged out of a score of 5 points. Each rider/horse combo has a maximum of 7 minuets to complete the course in full, with max 2 attempts at each obstacle. If time permits at the end of the course the rider may go back to try and complete a missed obstacle.

The Trail Challenge day will start out with a rider meeting to (1) introduce the judges, (2) describe the course, (3) describe the judging of the course, and (4) answer any questions from the riders.

The course is comprised of natural and man-made obstacles that vary from course to course. These obstacles could include, but are not limited to: bridges, gates, objects hung above in a curtain-like fashion, side passing or backing through, over or around items, dragging items, mounting or dismounting, gait changes, etc. if mounting is required as part of the Challenge, a mounting block will be furnished/supplied. Should a rider believe that an obstacle is not within their or their horse’s ability to negotiate safely, they may choose to skip that obstacle with no points given for that obstacle.

**Judging**

Partnership – Each obstacle is judged on how the partnership works together.

* This working team should negotiate each obstacle with calmness and patience, moving safely through the obstacle.
* The partnership should demonstrate the ability to navigate through the course when obstacles warrant it, and the horse should willingly respond to the rider’s cues on more difficult obstacles.
* Credit will be given to partnerships negotiating the obstacle with style and appropriate rate of progress. There will be no additional points given for ‘show boating’.
* If a rider is dismounted (falls or is bucked off) they are disqualified from the event. They may however choose to re-mount and complete the course without receiving points if they so choose too.

Horse – Should: be relaxed, show awareness, be attentive, respond to the rider, demonstrate quality of movement. The horse ‘should not’ display resistance, spook, shy, or refuse, stumble, tick or clip an obstacle and will be rewarded or deducted in points accordingly by the judge.

**Equipment**

* Horses must be saddled, unless being led by lead and only if the horse is young or green.
* Appropriate riding footwear is MANDATORY. Riders will NOT be allowed to compete without proper footwear.
* Helmet is required for any riders under 18 yrs old.
* Pee-Wee (8-12) riders and younger may be given vocal assistance on the course. They are allowed to receive assistance at each obstacle, but they will be deducted points accordingly. This does not apply to Lead-line category.
* Minor variations of obstacle equipment will be at the judges or Trail Challenge Director’s discretion. The intent of the judged obstacle is that it remains the same for everyone.

**Points**

Each obstacle is scored out of 5 points. Riders compete in their age category and will receive a ribbon up to 6th place. In the event of a tie where 2 riders have scored the same in points, the tie breaker will be the fastest time. *Example:* Suzie and Sally both have 48 points each, but Suzie completed the course in 5:35 mins, while Sally completed it in 6:89 mins; First place would go to Suzie and Second to Sally.

5 pts – Horse/Rider approach obstacle with ease and focus, navigate the obstacle without hesitation and leave calmly.

4 pts – Horse enters obstacle with some hesitation, stepping to the side or back slightly but completes the obstacle under the complete control.

3 pts – hesitation is very evident as the horse steps back or sideways several steps showing some refusal. Rider gives continued encouragement and horse performs obstacle but exits abruptly.

2 pts – There is obvious nervousness, refusal and dancing around by the horse. Rider convinces the horse to at least try. It appears that given more time, the team would be able to negotiate the obstacle, but they are unable to do so at this time.

1 pt – Horse “puts on the brakes” and refuses to even try with coaxing from the rider. Continued efforts by the rider escalate into a “fight” and the rider is forced to give up.

0 pts – Rider does not attempt obstacle or is unable to complete the obstacle before maximum allowed time. Also, zero score will be given if rider uses excessive force (verbal or physical) or is otherwise deemed to be exhibiting unsportsmanlike behavior. If rider behavior is deemed abusive it shall be grounds for immediate disqualification.

**General Penalties at any Obstacle**

* Not following the prescribed pattern
* Horse refusing the obstacle (veering away, backing away, rider having to repeatedly give physical incentive).
* Horse stopping and rider having to turn horse away and make another attempt.

**General Disqualification of all Points at an Obstacle**

* If the rider drops part of the obstacle (jacket, rope, flag, etc), zero points awarded.
* If the obstacle is not completed within the 2 attempts allotted, zero points awarded.
* If the rider exceeds the 7 min total time frame to complete the course, zero points awarded.
* Rider is bucked off or has fallen in some way, Disqualification of the Rider/Horse combo.

Judging of obstacles is done by the appointed Judge or Trail Challenge Director. The Judges decisions are final and are not to be disputed. A rider may ask for clarification after the event is over/end of the day.