TROIKA CHALLENGE

Rules and Guidelines
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Troika Challenge is the product of **Judy Mackenzie** (Payson Riding Lessons) and **Tessa Nicolet** (Cohesive Horsemanship) getting together and talking about equestrians and their equine partners.

SECTION 1. Troika Challenge Objective and Guiding Principles

1.1 Troika Challenge Objective

The Troika Challenge (TC) was created to recognize and promote an Eclectic Equestrian and a versatile equine that demonstrate a strong partnership founded in empathetic leadership. Troika challenge is three phases, three levels, three guiding principles.

1.2 Troika Challenge Guiding Principles

There are 3 guiding principles to the Troika Challenge. These make up the culture that is emphasized and valued for these challenges. These are also the criteria that will be used to score all parts of the challenge.

Empathetic Leadership - The ability of the equestrian and equine pair to demonstrate an understanding of each other and the communication used between the two. This includes mutual trust, leadership, harmony, and confidence. Ease of communication and softness of cues are scored here. Empathetic leadership includes how well the equestrian leads their equine through each part of the challenge. Equestrian and equine demonstrate a mutual understanding of their partnership roles.

Balance and Relaxation - Physical, Emotional, and mental balance and relaxation. Specifically balance and relaxation throughout the equestrian and equine's bodies and use of communication. This includes proper and athletic bend, gaits, impulsion originating from the hind end. Relaxation should not be confused with lack of motion… this principle is aimed at finding relaxation through proper movement and clear communication.

Willingness and Fluidity - Equestrian and equine pair demonstrate a willingness and lack of hesitation to complete a task. Gaits are shown to have steady rhythm, tempo, and cadence. Transitions are fluid and free of tension. Equestrian and equine demonstrate a willingness to adapt and meet challenges with grace and fluid movement.

SECTION 2. GENERAL RULES AND INFORMATION

2.1 Troika Challenge Courses and Tests.

There are three phases to a Troika Challenge: In Hand Obstacle Course, Xenophon Test, and Mounted Obstacles Course.   All courses and tests are scored based on the 3 guiding principles of the Troika Challenge; Empathetic communication, Balance and Relaxation, Willingness and Fluidity. These are described in section 1 of this document. Actual patterns of courses and tests as well as ride times will be made available to contestants at 5pm the evening prior to the challenge.

All courses and tests can be called and can include 'buddy' horses outside the court.

Required movements for each part and for each level are described in tables 1.1 and 1.2.

A. Phase 1 - In Hand Obstacle Course

Equine and handler team will maneuver a prescribed pattern of obstacles from the ground. Each level progressively increases the challenge and degree of communication between handler and equine. The goal of the in hand test is to negotiate obstacles and demonstrate empathetic yet clear communication between handler and equine from the ground. In hand and Mounted obstacle courses are timed and will be designed to take place over an arena not larger than 60m by 60m. In hand and mounted obstacles are similar and are described in detail in Appendix A.

B. Phase 2- Xenophon Test

Prescribed dressage/Prix Caprilli like tests are ridden at each level. All tests include fences on the diagonals. Each movement is given a numerical score based on the 3 guiding principles of the Troika Challenge. The Xenopon Test will be ridden on a 20m by 40m dressage court with letters at 5m apart on the long sides.

C. Phase 3- Mounted Obstacles Course

Equine and handler team will maneuver a prescribed pattern of obstacles from the saddle. Each level progressively increases the challenge and degree of communication between handler and horse. The goal of the mounted obstacle course is to negotiate obstacles and demonstrate empathetic yet clear communication between handler and equine from the saddle. In hand and Mounted obstacle courses are timed and will be designed to take place over an arena not larger than 60m by 60m. In hand and mounted obstacles are similar and are described in detail in Appendix A.

Table 1.1 - Required Movements by obstacle for the In hand and Mounted Obstacle Courses.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	In Hand Basic Description	Mounted Basic Description
Troika Challenge Basic Obstacle Requirements and Descriptions					
Number of Obstacles	6	8	10		
Allotted Time (within 30 seconds)	4 Minutes	4 Minutes	4 Minutes	4 minutes to maneuver entire course	4 minutes to maneuver entire course
Required Gait between Obstacles	Must Show Walk only	Walk & Trot Must show at least 3 strides of Trot, N0 Canter	Walk Trot or Canter. Must show at least 3 strides of canter	Travel between obstacles	Travel between obstacles
The Box	Walk	Walk	Walk	In box show 1/2 turn on forehand and full turn on haunches	In box show 1/2 turn on forehand and full turn on haunches
Sideways L	Sidepass	Sidepass	Sidepass	Sidepass L in prescribed direction	Sidepass L in prescribed direction
Figure 8	Walk	Trot	Rein back	Figure 8 Around two objects	Figure 8 Around two objects
Cloverleaf	Walk	Trot	Canter	Clover leaf pattern in direction prescribed around 4 objects	Clover leaf pattern in direction prescribed around 4 objects
Garrocha Pole	Walk	Trot	Canter	Not Applicable	Full Circle Right and Left in order prescribed
Parking	Halt	Halt	Halt	Show a complete stop for 5 seconds next to or on/in object as prescribed	Show a complete stop for 5 seconds next to or on/in object as prescribed
Rope	Halt	Halt / Walk	Halt / Trot	Swing Rope around and over equine at stand still	Swing Rope around and over equine at prescribed gait based on level
Bridge	Walk	Trot	Trot	Cross over bridge Must show all 4 feet on bridge	Cross over bridge Must show all 4 feet on bridge

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	In Hand Basic Description	Mounted Basic Description
Troika Challenge Basic Obstacle Requirements and Descriptions Continued					
Water/ Tarp	Walk	Trot	Canter	Cross water/tarp obstacle - must show all 4 feet in obstacle	Cross water/ tarp obstacle - must show all 4 feet in obstacle
Jump	Walk (less than 12")	trot (less than 24")	Canter (less than 30")	Cross over Jump	Cross over Jump
Tunnel	Walk	Trot	Canter	Move horse through Tunnel	Move horse through Tunnel
Pedestal	Halt	Halt	Halt	Place 2 front feet on Pedestal for 5 seconds	Place 2 front feet on Pedestal for 5 seconds
Gate - Open	Walk	Walk	Walk	Open Gate, Leave Open	Open Gate, Leave Open
Gate - Close	Walk	Walk	Walk	Close Gate	Close Gate
Ball	Halt/Walk	Halt/Walk	Halt/Trot	Bounce Ball next to horse 3 times	Push ball from point A to B
Pack it!	Walk	Trot	Canter	Put object on horse and move horse around as prescribed and replace object	Put object on horse and move horse around as prescribed and replace object
Drag	Walk	Walk	Trot	Not Applicable	Drag Object as prescribed and replace drag
Target	Walk	Trot	Canter	send equine's nose to touch object	Ride up for rider to pick up object
Ground Tie	Halt	Halt	Halt	Drop lead rope and walk full circle around horse with horse standing still	Not Applicable

Table 1.2. Xenophon Test required movements by level. Not all required movements will appear in all tests.

Troika Xenophon Test Requirements by level			
Movement	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**
Walk	Working and Free	Working and Free	Working and Free
Trot	N/A	Working and Free	Working and Free
Canter	N/A	N/A	Working and Free
Halt	From walk	From walk or trot	From all gaits
Reinback	4 to 6 steps	4 to 6 steps	4 to 6 steps, with bend
Turn on Forehand	Half - departure at walk	Half - departure at walk or trot	Half - departure in all gaits
Turn on Haunches	Half - departure at walk	Full - departure at walk or trot	Full - departure in all gaits
Leg yield	Walk	Walk / Trot	Walk / Trot / Canter
CrossRail	Walk	Walk / Trot	Walk / Trot / Canter
10 meter Circle	Walk	Walk / Trot	Walk / Trot
15 meter Circle	Walk	Walk / Trot	Walk / Trot / Canter
20 meter Circle	Walk	Walk / Trot	Walk / Trot / Canter
Lead Changes	N/A	N/A	Through walk / Trot

2.2 Rider Divisions

Competitors are required to choose one rider division under which they will complete the challenge.

A. Junior

Open to riders 5 to 17 years of age. Juniors must wear a helmet while handling or riding an equine in all parts.

B. Adult

Rider that is 18 years or older, who does not make a living or receive income from training, teaching/lessons or clinics.

C. Professional

Rider that is 18 years or older, who does make a living or receive income from training, teaching/lessons or clinics.

2.3 Horse Divisions

All equines 4 years of age and older are welcome to take part in the Troika Challenge in levels 1 and 2. Equines must be 5 years old to take part in the level 3 challenges.

All equines must be sound and healthy.

Gaited equines are welcome and are scored in the same manner as all other equines.

Mules and other equines are welcome to compete.

Section 3 - Tack, Attire, and Equipment

The responsibility for correct tack, attire, and equipment rests with the competitor. No prescribed tack and attire is specified; however, the following requirements must be met:

3.1 Equine Tack Requirements
A. Tack must include a saddle, stirrups, and a bridle or bosal.
B. Bitted bridles, bitless bridles, and sidepulls are allowed. Natural or authentic bosal hackamores are allowed.

C. Any cavesson/noseband must be adjusted to allow room for two fingers placed horizontally on the bridge of the nose.
D. Any allowed bit can be used regardless of tradition or discipline.
E. The following bits are not allowed:
- Mechanical hackamores
- Gag bits
- Twisted or wire bits
- Elevator bits
- Combination bits
- Shank bits that exceed 8.5 inches in shank length as measured from the top of the shank where it attaches to the headstall to the bottom where it attaches to the rein
- Any bit with a port higher than 3.5 inches, including Spade bits
- Any bit considered inhumane by the Judge.

3.2 Equestrian Attire Requirements

A. Riders must wear long pants, breeches, or riding skirt; a long- or short-sleeved shirt, and a hat or helmet. No sleeveless shirts or tank tops are allowed. Additional attire such as jackets, vests, gloves, chinks, armitas, half chaps, and scarves are permissible.
B. Riders can use footwear appropriate for showing in the tradition in which they are dressed. Heeled footwear are recommended, although the use of a different type of footwear that may be mandated by a specific tradition is acceptable.
C. Juniors must wear a helmet while handling or riding an equine in all phases.
D. Tack and attire must be neat and orderly.
E. Changes in clothing are allowed for the different phases of the challenge.
F. Changes in tack are allowed for the different phases of the challenge.
G. Numbers must be worn at all times when an equine is being shown or in warm up.

3.3 Equipment Allowances

A. Hoof boots (i.e., boots used in lieu of shoes) are allowed.
B. Bell boots and protective boots are allowed for in hand and mounted obstacle courses.
C. Use of a whip (crop) is allowed. The whip must not exceed 4 feet (48 in.) in length, including any lash. The whip does not have to be carried in all parts.
D. The following equipment is not allowed:
   a. Tie downs
   b. Tongue ties
   c. Martingales
   d. Serretas
   e. Chains on Halters
   f. Bearing, side, draw, or balancing reins
   g. Flashes

h. Blinkers
i. Ear plugs/muffs
j. Metal-core nosebands or hackamores
k. Studded or spiked curb/chin straps
l. Any other cruel and unusual tack and equipment

E. Electronic communications devices, headphones, earphones, electronic entertainment devices, etc. are prohibited in the competition arena. Such devices may be used in the warm up area..

Section 4 - Levels and Scoring

Equestrians will decide on the level for which they are entering the challenge for each phase. For instance an equestrian equine pair could compete in level 1 for the In Hand phase, Level 2 for the Xenophon phase, and Level 3 for the Mounted obstacle phase.   Any combination of levels is acceptable. High scores for each phase in each level will be recognized and the overall high point for each level will also be recognized at each challenge. Furthermore, the highest scoring pair for empathetic leadership will be recognized for the overall challenge.

Levels -

Contestants should choose their level based on the required maneuvers described in this document (See tables 1.1 and 1.2).
Level 1 - only requires a walking gait.
Level 2 - Requires the contestant pair to demonstrate the walk and trot.
Level 3 - Requires the contestant pair to demonstrate the walk, trot, and canter.

The overall entry level for overall recognition is determined by adding the levels for each phase. If the sum of the levels for each phase is from 3 to 4 = overall level 1, from 5 to 6 = overall level 2, from 7 to 9 overall level 3.

For example:
Contestant A enters In hand at level 2, Xenophon at level 1, and Mounted Obstacles at level 3
Contestant B enters In hand at Level 1, Xenophon at level 2, and Mounted Obstacles at Level 2
Contestant C enters In hand at level 2, Xenophon at Level 2, and Mounted Obstacles at Level 2

All three contestants are in overall level 2.

Scores -

In Hand and Mounted Obstacles -

Each obstacle will receive a score out of 10 points possible based on the three guiding principles of Troika. Obstacles are numbers and must be completed in numerical order. The judge will ring a bell should the contestant pair not follow that order and will mark a 2 point penalty. All obstacle courses can be called. The caller is only allowed to call the number and name of the upcoming obstacle and cannot guide the contestant pair in any other way. The contestant pair will also receive a score for how they maneuver between obstacles at the prescribed gate for their chosen level. 10 points are possible between each obstacle. A 2 point deduction for each obstacle is incurred if the course steward needs to replace or fix an obstacle. If the equestrian fixes the obstacle no extra deductions are incurred other than as reflected in the score for the execution of that obstacle.

Time -

The obstacle courses, In hand and Mounted, are timed from the moment the equestrian starts to open the gate (makes contact with gate) to enter the course to the moment the equestrian closes the gate as they exit the course. Times between 3:30 minutes and 4:30 minutes receive no deductions or additional points. Times below 3:30 minutes receive 1 extra point. Times above 4:30 receive a deduction of 1 point for every 30 seconds above 4:30.

Xenophon Test -

Scores are given for each prescribed movement of the test based on the 3 guiding principles of Troika. The Xenophon test is not timed. The contestant pair is allowed a caller at all three levels. The caller can only call the movement as written on the test and cannot aid the equestrian pair in any other form.

Percent score for each level are multiplied by a multiplier to determine points earned as follows - Level 1 = 1.1, Level 2 = 1.2, Level 3 = 1.3. Recognitions within levels, phases and overall are based on the points earned.

A collective score for each phase is earned for Empathy. The Empathy scores are added for all three parts and the highest overall Empathy score receives recognition as the Empathy Champion for that level and the Troika Challenge.

Contestant	In hand Obstacles (Level / %, Score - Empathy score)	Xenophon Test (Level / %, Score - Empathy score)	Mounted Obstacles (Level / %, Score - Empathy score)	Overall Scores (Level / Total Score - Empathy Sore)
A	2 / 68%, 81.6 - 9.0	1 / 72%, 79.2 - 8.5	3 / 66%, 85.8 - 7.5	2 / 246.6 - 25
B	1 / 75%, 82.5 - 8.0	2 / 69%, 82.2 - 7.5	2 / 71%, 85.2 - 7.5	2 / 249.9 - 23
C	2 / 65%, 78 - 7.5	2/ 68%, 81.6 - 9.0	2 / 76%, 91.2 - 7.5	2 / 250.8 - 24

Based on the results recorded in the above table, Contestant C would be recognized as the overall Level 2 Grand Champion High Point and Contestant B the Level 2 Reserve Grand Champion. Contestant A would be recognized as the Empathy Champion for the Challenge.

Organizers of Troika Challenges can choose to also recognize contestant pairs within each part and level.

Appendix A - Obstacle Descriptions

Soon to come!