



New York State  
Horse Council

## 2018 ULSTER COUNTY HORSE COUNCIL OBSTACLE CHALLENGE- Judging Criteria:

This event will give riders the opportunity to set goals, measure progress, gain confidence, expose your horse to new things, and compete. The Obstacle Challenge is about having fun, building confidence, promoting good horsemanship and challenging you and your horse to new levels. Judges are looking for a **partnership** that can navigate through the obstacles with physical skill, expression, and a good mental attitude. An un-mounted pre-ride walk through the course may be offered before each division, to ensure understanding of each obstacle.

### **General Judging Criteria:**

**Balance:** This applies to both rider and horse. Rider should have a centered and balanced seat, straight posture and eyes forward. Heels, hips, and shoulders all in alignment; heels down. The rider is not to lean excessively forward, back or sideways. No point deductions for grabbing mane while going uphill or over a jump. The horse should carry him/herself and the rider well. The horse is to be balanced while negotiating obstacles and pick up feet to avoid clipping and stumbling. Unless otherwise specified, always stay centered when crossing over or through obstacles (jump, logs, vines, etc.)

**Rider/ Handler's Control:** The rider or handler is judged on their ability to communicate with their horse, their personal judgment of obstacles, and their patience. They should also control the horse by knowing HOW to ask their horse to execute the obstacle as well as to keep the horse under control if the horse shies or spooks. The rider should maintain control of the horse at all times, whether mounted or unmounted, by either the reins or lead rope, with soft hands and proper positioning.

**Horse:** The horse should navigate the course with a desire to go forward without compromising its calm, relaxed attitude and natural way of moving, maintaining even cadence with all forward and backward movement. He should approach each obstacle squarely with obedience, authority and correct form, exhibiting willingness to complete each obstacle without giving any apparent resistance of cues from his rider. A calm, patient, willing horse will score higher than nervousness or rushing. Gaited horses will be judged according to the similar speed of the gait.

**Calmness:** relaxed carriage, willingness to move forward w/out tension in the body or eyes.

**Focus/Attention/Confidence:** The horse should give the majority of his/her attention to the handler and to the obstacle/task. The horse should be looking at and engaging the obstacle or task. Horses should be responding to the handler's cues and showing a quality of trying to accomplish the task. Looking around a bit is ok, but excessive looking away or past the obstacle and ignoring handler's cues are signs that the horse is not paying attention. Evasion, shying or spooking may indicate that further desensitization training is needed, or that there may be trust issues.

**Careful:** The horse should demonstrate an awareness of his/her body and feet. The horse should NOT be tripping or bumping into things.

**Technical Ability:** Horse demonstrates proper body mechanics and shows a command for technical maneuvers such as backing, side-pass, haunch and fore-hand turns, yielding haunches and shoulders, etc.

**Poise:** Judge will be looking for notable elegance and grace. A good attitude of the horse is most desirable including no excessive swishing of the tail, pinning ears, pawing, kicking, or bucking.

**Coaching:** It is the participant's responsibility to negotiate the obstacle on their own so a true test of their skills can be assessed. Once a participant has presented himself or herself to the obstacle judge there should be no further contact by another person. Coaching is defined as any verbal, gesture or implied assistance to a rider on course and executing the obstacle, regardless of when the coaching occurs during the obstacle negotiation. In-hand classes may allow an adult to accompany a child for safety purposes at the judge's discretion.

**Exit/Entry:** The horse must pass through both the designated entry and exit.

**Completed Task:** The horse should complete the task described and associated with each obstacle. Scores will be given for partial completion in a legitimate attempt. It is the participant's responsibility to bypass any obstacle they deem as beyond their team's skill level. **Safety and common sense should always be kept in the participant's mind. The judge may make a safety call at any time,** and ask the rider to move to the next obstacle.

**Scoring-** The Ulster County Horse Council Obstacle Challenge is a TIMED, JUDGED event. Obstacle negotiation is as important as speed.

Your score is determined by the judge and the timer...

Your overall time is scored.

Each obstacle is judged: You are scored by the judge from 0 through 5 faults on each obstacle, based on how well you and your horse work as a team to negotiate it. The better you do on an obstacle, the lower your score.

10 Faults- Skipped. Rider chose to bypass obstacle without making legitimate attempt to complete.

5 Faults- Obstacle attempted, but not completed within allotted time. The judge may allow the rider to continue past the allotted time at his discretion provided the horse is making progress, but must score accordingly.

4 Faults- Obstacle complete with hesitation, rough but done. Skills need development. Horse is extremely unwilling- shying at obstacle, backing up and spinning, unwilling to go forward. Horse only gets through the obstacle with continued strong encouragement from the rider's continued use of voice, leg and rein; harsh use of reins or spurs.)

3 Faults- Obstacle completed with slight deviation or hesitation. Horse moves through the obstacle, but is resistant with frequent stops and/or several steps back or away from the obstacle. Requires continued obvious encouragement from the rider.

2 Faults- Obstacle completed as expected, with very minor mistakes. Horse moves forward but is resistant with several short stops and looks closely at the obstacle. Requires stronger cues and obvious encouragement from the rider, but continues through the obstacle.

1 Fault- Obstacle completed smoothly and willingly, with no discernible mistakes. Horse moves forward willingly with only one or two slight hesitations with light cues and subtle encouragement from the rider.

0 Faults- Obstacle completed willingly with finesse. Smooth and effortless. Horse moves willingly toward and through the obstacle in a relaxed, forward movement with NO Hesitation and NO obvious encouragement from the rider. Subtle, refined cues used.

You are allowed 30 seconds to complete each obstacle. If you chose to move on before the 30 seconds is up without completing the obstacle, the full 30 seconds will be added to your score. Once the judge blows the whistle, please move on to the next one.

If you are uncomfortable with an obstacle, you may choose to skip it without attempting it, but you will score 10 points on that obstacle, in addition to the 30 seconds allotted.

At the end of the course, the points the judge gives you will be added to the time (minutes) taken to complete the course. The lowest score wins!