

Washington Horse Racing Commission

Exercise/Pony Rider Study Guide

2010

Exercise Rider/Pony Rider Study Guide

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The following information is designed to assist applicants who are applying for an exercise or pony rider license for the first time. When applying for their initial license the applicant will be required to pass both a written and practical test to assure that he/she is qualified to perform the duties of an exercise rider. All questions on the written test will be covered in this study guide.

As a licensed exercise or pony rider you are expected to understand and follow all the rules of racing (Title 260 WAC). The following rules and policies apply to all licensed exercise and pony riders. Obtaining an exercise license allows you only to exercise horses. You cannot assist a trainer or groom in other duties. You cannot feed, clean stalls, empty wheelbarrows, groom, or paddock horses for the races. Obtaining a pony license allows you to pony horses on the track and care for your pony horse. You must obtain a grooms license to do any other duties. Failure to adhere to these practices will result in citations being issued and/or disciplinary action by the board of stewards.

You are responsible for knowing and understanding all the rules of racing and track rules. Track rules are posted by the on/off gap, make sure you read them. **The outriders are racing officials and you must follow their instructions while on the racetrack.** If you have questions regarding any rules, the stewards are available to answer them.

Any violation of the rules that is observed by a racing official (outrider, starter, clocker, investigator, etc.) will be reported to the board of stewards for disciplinary action. The outriders are responsible for assuring that all safety procedures and rules are followed on the racetrack at all times. Failure to follow the barn rules, track rules and dress codes will result in the outrider issuing the rider a safety citation. These citations are referred to the board of stewards for disciplinary action.

The stewards are available if you have any questions regarding the process for obtaining an initial exercise or pony license and the testing procedures.

Acceptable dress code:

- Approved safety vest and helmet must be worn when on horseback. The safety vest and helmets must be securely fastened. **This means the vest must be zipped or secured and the chinstraps must be fastened, no exceptions. The safety vests and helmets must meet the safety standards required in WAC 260-12-180.**
- All persons on horseback must wear equestrian footwear that covers the rider's ankle and with a minimum of a ½ inch heel, except jockeys while riding in a race or immediately prior to riding in a race.
- If these requirements are not met, you will be asked to dismount and/or leave the track until such time as you are in compliance and may be referred to the board of stewards.
- These rules apply while you are on horseback on all the association grounds.

Track Rules:

- Do not attempt to enter the track after the track has closed or before it has opened. The outriders will open and close the track at the designated time. The track is not opened until there is a medic and veterinarian on duty. There are occasional delays opening the track but you must wait until it is officially opened.
- Walk your mounts to the track and when entering the quarter chute and when leaving the track. **Do not jog your horse through the stable area and run or gallop your horse in the chute.**
- When galloping or ponying a horse you **must** remain at least 20 feet off the inside rail. **The inside portion of the racetrack is for workers only.**
- You can be within 20 feet of the rail only when you are actually working a horse. Use extreme care when you are getting ready to start the work and will be dropping down to the rail and when you are pulling the horse up after the work.
- When jogging a horse the wrong way of the track, you **must** remain within 20 feet of the outside rail. No galloping is allowed when going the wrong way of the track. If your horse breaks into a gallop you must bring him back to a jog immediately.
- When your horse is with a pony horse, either the pony horse or your horse must be trotting at all times.
- If you are exercising or ponying a problem horse that needs special handling that may violate one of the track safety rules, the trainer must obtain prior permission from the outrider. Make sure you follow the outrider's instructions. This authorization must be requested on a daily basis and prior to bringing the horse to the track. **Getting permission once does not mean you can continue to violate the rules with this horse.**
- When the starting gate is open for schooling, you must use caution when backtracking a horse in front of the gates. If you are instructed to stop your horse by the starter or outrider, you must comply with their request.

Barn Rules while on horseback:

- No jogging or galloping through the barns or on the roadways.

- When riding through the barns you may be ponyed by another a horse through the breezeways but not down the aisles. When riding in another trainer’s aisle way you must walk the horse single file.
- When riding through the barns, respect each trainer’s area. Do not create an unsafe situation for individuals that are cleaning stalls, grooming or walking horses. Whenever possible, do not walk your horse through another trainer’s barn area.
- When switching from one horse to another **do not make the change on any main roadway** that is traveled by horses going to or from the track. The exchange may be made in the area between the receiving/test barn and the Fletcher Center or east of the main roadway close to barn 12.
- You must enter and leave the racetrack by using the gates on the north end of the quarter chute. You must use specific pathways going to and from the racetrack to maintain safety for both the horse and rider.

Track Layout:

- Emerald Downs is a one-mile track. The Class C tracks can vary in distance.
- Race and workout distances are usually referred to in furlongs. A furlong is one eighth (1/8) of a mile, (A three-furlong workout would be the same as a 3/8-mile work).
- There are distance poles spaced around the inside rail of the track every 1/16 of a mile. These poles are striped with different colors based on where they are located. The following is the standard colors of the poles:

1/16 Poles = Black and white
 1/8 Poles = Green and white
 1/4 Poles = Red and white

Starting Gate:

- The starting gate is usually located in the 6-furlong chute during training hours at Emerald Downs. The gate will have scheduled hours when it is open. These will change depending on the time of year and the number of horses that are schooling.
- When schooling a horse in the gate, the starter or assistant starter is in charge and you need to follow their instructions. They keep records of each horse and know where the horse is in his/her schooling schedule.
- All horses that have not raced must be approved from the starting gate prior to being entered to race. Usually the starter has three phases that each horse goes through to complete his gate schooling.
 1. Introduction to the gate along with standing and walking through an opened stall in the gate.
 2. Standing in a closed gate and having an assistant starter hand open the front doors with the horse leaving the gate slowly.
 3. Closing the gates and using the same process as race day by automatically opening the front doors and ringing the bell.

Horses learn these lessons at different rates. Some will require going to the gate more often than others.

- Older horses that have raced are often put on the starters list. This usually means that they did not act properly during the loading of the gate prior to the race being run and need additional schooling prior to being allowed to enter another race. Again the starter is in charge and decides when the horse is off the starters list and can be entered again so you need to follow his/her instructions.
- **You must know the name of the horse, and the trainer’s name, that you are ponying or exercising for so that you can inform the starter.**

Emergency Conditions:

There will be occasions when an incident or spill will occur on the racetrack where a rider and/or horse are down on the track or there is a loose horse. This causes a dangerous situation for everyone on the track at the time. When this happens the clockers will activate the emergency alerts and you must respond as follows:

- There are lights mounted on the top of some of the distance poles located around the inside of the track. When a rider or horse is down or injured these lights will be flashing. When these lights are flashing you need to either leave the racetrack or go to a location that will not interfere with the emergency vehicles that may need to come onto the track.
- The clockers will often signal a problem on the track by activating a foghorn. When you hear this sound, respond in the same manner as when the lights are flashing.
- Based on the severity of the situation the racetrack may be closed for an extended period of time. Leave the track in the safest way possible.
- **Do not work horses when the emergency lights are flashing.**
- When you see a rider or horse down, notify the outrider immediately. When you are dealing with foggy weather conditions, notify the outrider and give them the location of where the incident is located.
- When the emergency alerts are activated, be aware that there could be a loose horse or horses on the track. You need to know the safe way to respond to this situation.

Examples:

- If a horse is loose and is running toward you, turn your horse around and go the same direction as the loose horse. This could keep you and your horse from a head on collision.
- If there is a loose horse or a horse/rider down on the track you need to either get your horse off the track or go into one of the chutes and wait for the emergency to be cleared.
- If you are taking your horse off the track or to one of the chutes, you need to know where the emergency equipment (ambulance, medic, horse ambulance, etc.) is going and make sure you go in a direction that avoids interfering with them or causes your horse to spook.

Workouts:

The trainers may ask an exercise rider to “work” a horse instead of using a jockey. A work is allowing the horse to run at a speed between a gallop and the actual speed that it runs when in a race.

All workouts must be called to the official clocker. Usually the trainer will take care of this task; however, there may be times when you will be asked to “call in the work”. There is a speaker located on the track that you can use while on horseback. You must give the clocker the name of the horse, the distance you are going to work and where the workout will start. If possible also give them the name of the trainer. Make sure you call the work in before you actually work the horse.

Tack and Equipment:

Usually the trainer or one of their employees will have the horse tacked prior to you arriving in the barn. Since you are the one going to be riding the horse, you should check both the saddle and bridle to make sure they are on properly and are in good condition. Usually you will have to adjust the stirrups to fit your personal requirements. Knowledge of the various types of bits and equipment used on the racehorse will help

you when you are exercising a horse that might have a behavior problem. Understanding the uses of various types of equipment will enable you to work with the trainer to figure out what will work best on each horse.

Exercise riders usually bring their own whips when galloping or working the horses. Currently a new safety whip has been introduced and the rules are being changed nationally to make this type of whip required for use during the live race. Washington is currently in the process of changing our rules to meet the model rules with the safety whip that the jockeys will be required to use. Exercise riders should know the rules regarding the use of whips during training and the types of whips that are permitted. It is advisable that all exercise riders keep updated on changes involving the whips.

Bits:

There are many different types of bits that are used on the racehorse. Trainers will use the bit that they feel the horse will respond to the best or may change based on the running style or temperament of the horse. The following are some of the more common used bits.

- D – Bit (Snaffle) One of the most common bits used on racehorses. There are several variations of this bit. 
- Ring Bit – Used when more control is needed primarily from side to side such as when a horse is either getting in or out. 
- Rubber D – Bit – Used when a horse has a very sensitive or sore mouth. 

Blinkers:

Many horses will wear blinkers, which is a hood that fits over the horse's head with various sizes of cups attached to the side of the eye openings. These prevent the horse from seeing to the side and behind him. The various types of blinkers are french cup, half cup, full cup, extended cup based on the height of the sides of the cup.

The following are some of the reasons a trainer might use blinkers on a horse:

- Horse looks around too much and does not pay attention to racing.
- Horse shies when the rider moves around while mounted or uses his whip.
- When a horse is getting in or out.
- Shies or is intimidated by other horses.

What to do when injured:

- Any injuries need to be reported to the medic on duty, whether medical attention is needed or not, and/or referred to the WHBPA so they can arrange medical assistance.
- Report the accident and injury immediately to the medic on duty, your employer (trainer), and to the WHBPA. The WHBPA will need the following information regarding the injury:
 - Name of person injured, type of injury, employers name, date, time and place of injury.

Drug & Alcohol Rules:

WAC 260-34-020 and WAC 260-34-030 clearly state the rules regarding drugs, alcohol and controlled substances. A violation of these rules will result in your license being suspended or revoked. **Any licensee that tests positive for either an illegal controlled substance or alcohol is prohibited from performing any duties of their license until they provide a clean test.** WAC 260-34-030 allows drug and alcohol testing of any person riding a horse on the grounds of a licensed racing association. That means all exercise riders, pony riders, outriders and jockeys are subject to be tested. The names of all persons on horseback are placed in a computerized random pool and a specific number of these licensees are tested each week. This selection is computer generated so all persons with these licenses must be aware they could be tested anytime they are performing the duties of their license.

A steward, a commission security investigator or the commission, acting through the executive secretary, may require any licensee or applicant to provide breath, blood and/or urine samples for the purpose of drug or alcohol analysis under any of the following circumstances:

- If you have documented history of a violation of these rules either in a racing jurisdiction or on your criminal background check you may be subjected to random testing.
- Random testing of all persons on horseback.
- Conditional or probational license stating you can be tested anytime.
- When a steward or commission security investigator finds that there is reasonable suspicion to believe that the applicant or licensee has used or is under the influence of alcohol and/or any drug.

No licensee or applicant while acting in an official capacity or participating directly in horse racing shall commit any of the following violation:

- Be under the influence of or affected by intoxicating liquor and/or drugs, have an alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent or higher, or have within their body any illegal controlled substance while on the grounds of any licensed race meet; **An update was made in 2009 changing the allowable alcohol concentration for persons on horseback to not be 0.02 percent or higher.**
- Engage in the illegal sale or distribution of alcohol;
- Engage in the illegal sale or distribution of a controlled substance;
- Possess an illegal controlled substance;
- Possess on the grounds of any licensed race meet any equipment, products or materials of any kind which are used or intended for use in planting, propagating, cultivating, growing, harvesting, manufacturing, compounding, converting, producing, processing, preparing, testing, analyzing, packaging, repackaging, storing, containing, or concealing an illegal controlled substance, or any equipment, products or materials of any kind, which are used or intended for use in injecting, ingesting, inhaling or otherwise introducing into the human body an illegal controlled substance; or
- Refuse to submit to blood, breath and/or urine testing, when notified that such testing is conducted pursuant to the conditions of WAC 260-34-030.