

# Testing Over Fences

Notes by Lezah Williamson, Senior 'A' Examiner

Who shows over fences? In which disciplines/divisions do you show?

- Hunters
- Jumpers
- Equitation/medals
- Eventing
- Breed
  - Showing is about your horse being judged on different qualities
    - form over fences, distances, rhythm and leads for hunters; speed, agility and carefulness in Jumpers; a combination of the above with added emphasis on position in Equitation/Medals; boldness and endurance in Eventing, etc.
  - realize that both the **requirements** and the **criteria for Pony Club testing** is **different** than what you are being judged on at shows/events

At the Pony Club test – Examiners are looking at **your influence** on the *horse*

- Turn out: is not marked, but is checked for safety
- Marked phases are:
  - Gymnastics
  - Stadium course
  - Cross country
  - Alternate horse (B and above)

**How high do you jump now?** You must be able to complete the basic jumping height requirements of the test; come with a horse capable of doing the test requirements for your level

Think about how high you jump/what you do at home/in lessons:

- Single fences?
- Courses at home?
- Courses at clinics/lessons?
- Courses at shows?
  - You should be **schooling 6" higher** than you are showing/testing at
    - Then when you get to the test or show, it will look easy to both you and your horse
  - Many people come to Pony Club testing and are neither competing at nor schooling courses at home regularly at test height

- Going over a few single fences or through gymnastics at height is not the same as doing a whole course at height

Criteria: **it's not *just* about how high you jump, it's about how well you jump**

- **Height** – this is just one aspect of the test – it is the most overt, the most measurable; it is your baseline – ***if you and your horse can't jump the height, you should not be there***
- **Technical aspects of course:** require thinking/intuiting; gear changes cause horse to get out of balance
- **Types of fences**
  - Horses can be 'specialists' at 1-2 types of fences
    - Vertical: centre of arc is over the pole
    - Ascending oxer: centre of arc is over the back rail
    - Square oxer: the highest part of the arc needs to be over an imaginary place between the two rails
- **The mix of the type of fences**
  - Depends what sort of fence you're jumping into/out over
  - Depends if you're indoor/outdoor, off a corner, across a diagonal, on a line parallel to rail
  - Depends on type of footing you're jumping on
- **Combinations** (double/triple) and the types of fences in the combinations (vertical to vertical, vertical to oxer, oxer to vertical...)
- **Lines, approaches, corners, bending lines**
  - Have control of the corner
  - Control where the hind feet are; control placement of the hindquarters; control where the front feet, the frame and where the head is
- **Other aspects:**
  - Position of rider:
    - Eyes
    - Independent hand
      - Releases
        - Mane
        - Crest
          - Long
          - Short
        - Automatic
      - *Direct rein* is the most common
      - Outside rein is the *watch dog*
        - Controls straightness and impulsion
    - Legs
      - Position is important
        - Provides security for rider

- Develops/maintains impulsion
- Aids in turning and balancing
- Body
  - Follows the horse
  - Be neutral: the horse remains the same
    - If the rider moves, the horse needs to change
  - A Rider who is riding *with* the horse becomes one big energy bubble rather than two separate entities
- Tack: make sure it is influencing you positively
- Balance
  - Rider
    - security
    - confidence
    - influence on horse on corners, down lines and over fences
  - Horse
    - On corners (lateral)
    - An approach and after fence (longitudinal)
    - Over fence (bascule/shape)
      - Largely determined by take-off spot
- Straightness
  - Rider
  - Horse
    - Approach
    - Across the fence
      - You need to control where the horse's **HIND** feet are; that will influence the hindquarters, which are your engine.
      - It's **not good enough** just to **steer and point**; ***don't just ride the front end***
- Rhythm
  - Regular beats
    - Must be able to ride the course, including shortening and lengthening, without losing or negatively affecting rhythm
      - Not asking at all and leaving it all up to the horse is a real 'rookie' error
      - Asking **more often** is better than asking **harder**
- Tempo: time/rate of speed of beats
  - Count
- Impulsion
  - Keep your foot on the gas; keep the horse coming through from behind
  - Make sure you **know the difference** between **speed** and **impulsion**
    - Don't over-ride or have a hot seat

- Distances
  - Your percentage of good distances will positively or negatively affect your mark
  - The expectation is not that every single spot is good (but it would be nice)
  - Recognize that *on cross country*, you have *fewer fences* to show your stuff over, and if you chip on your first fence (which many people do), now you only have 2-3 fences to show that you can do it right
- Leads
  - C2/B can do simple or flying; B2/RA need to do PLANNED flying changes, or better yet, land on the right lead to begin with
- Response to Aids
  - Rider needs to know and apply the correct aids; must understand them and be prepared to explain them
    - If *you can't show it* but at least can tell your Examiners that you are *aware of what was supposed to happen and how to make it happen* through the correct application of the aids, that may be a positive for you
  - Horse must respond to the aids
  - Rider should use frequent, smaller aids rather than waiting until it's too late and having to apply a very large, disruptive aids
    - Rider shouldn't let anything disrupt the rhythm

### Differences in the levels

Look at Testing Procedures for an outline of progression thorough the levels. For example:

Releases:

- C2s may show crest release
- Bs should be starting to show automatic release and only some long crest release;
- RA, where primarily automatic release will be shown

As noted above, C2/B can do simple or flying changes, whereas B2/A should show planned flying changes

*Types of fences, lines and different fences in combinations are outlined in Testing Procedures for the different levels*