

## Chapter 17

# RATINGS – moving on up!

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***D**id you know that rating tests are intended to recognize achievement and increase enjoyment of Pony Club members by encouraging increasing confidence, independence and good safety habits? They are to be carried out in an environment that encourages candidates to “show and tell” what he or she knows.*

## *Purpose of Ratings*

Pony Clubs use the Standards of Proficiency as a plan for instruction programs. Therefore, rating tests are an evaluation of the Pony Club member’s progress through the rating levels. At the same time, the rating tests should be a positive educational experience. Riding is a hobby, something we do for fun! We use ratings to recognize achievement and to increase enjoyment by encouraging Pony Club members to gain confidence, independence and good safety habits while working with mounts. Goal setting, teaching and testing are good ways to accomplish this purpose.

## *Responsibilities of the DC*

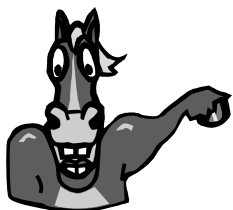
Club rating tests at the D-1 through C-2 levels should be offered at least twice a year, more often if the number of candidates warrants it. Since a club's instruction program is based on the Standards of Proficiency, a rating test measures a child's progress in that program. Every child must be given the opportunity to test at an appropriate level after one month of joining a club.

The DC's responsibilities are to:

1. Provide instruction programs based on the Standards.
2. Evaluate Pony Club members as to their readiness for a testing. Candidates should have a good attendance record and be competent in all requirements of the rating level prior to the testing.
3. Select and contract to use a site that is appropriate for the requirements of the rating level. Complete the List of Locations to secure insurance for the landowner and the activity.
4. Choose examiners from the local area or invite them from a neighboring Pony Club. An examiner should be someone who is not overly familiar with the candidates. If possible, select someone who has attended a recent Standards and Ratings Clinic. Compensation for the examiner is at the discretion of the DC or may be stated in the Club Policy, but reimbursement for all travel expenses should be offered. Treat examiners with consideration and provide them with a quiet place for lunch and for writing up test sheets.
5. Well ahead of the test, provide examiners with a copy of the Standards being tested, test sheets, time schedule, and these guidelines. Ask how they interpret a certain skill or requirement about which you may have a question. Discuss with them any local conditions and financial arrangements. Inform them if any candidate has a learning, physical, or other disability if this information is known by DC by reason of disclosure to DC by candidate or candidate's parent or other legal guardian and with their written permission.
6. Notify candidates and parents about the schedule and details of the test at least four weeks before the testing date. Send each a copy of the relevant Standard and Test Sheet.
7. Be present to oversee proceedings and handle any unusual circumstances or conflicts that might disrupt the test. These are your Pony Club members— know what your examiners expect of them. (If your own child is a candidate, an impartial observer should be appointed.) As much as possible, be available to answer questions. Be aware of the nearest emergency medical facility and its phone number.

8. Be sure that examiners, candidates, parents and other spectators understand that there will be no unauthorized assistance, misuse of equipment, carelessness while working with horses or ponies, or unsportsmanlike behavior. Candidates are expected to show courtesy to one another, to examiners, and to their mounts.
9. Provide lunch and refreshments for examiners, and fluids for candidates and mounts. Inform parents of meal arrangements for candidates prior to testing.
10. Make sure that after the test the landowner (and anyone else involved) was thanked and the property left as it was found.

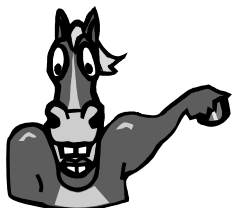
### *Member Readiness – Are we ready yet?*



**TIP: Develop a club rating application form and establish deadlines for their return to you. Consider a self-evaluation question as a part of the rating application. It will provide an opportunity for the member to do some goal setting and learn to plan ahead.**

The Standards of Proficiency describe the specific requirements for each level. A Pony Club member is ready for a rating test if he or she is able to regularly perform the requirements for that level in a **supervised teaching situation**.

Because D-1 is an introductory level, there will be no fail on the D-1 test sheet. After meeting the Standards, a Pony Club member may or may not be ready to attempt skills required at the next rating level. If not, he or she will continue to receive instruction appropriate to the earlier level until a greater degree of proficiency is achieved.

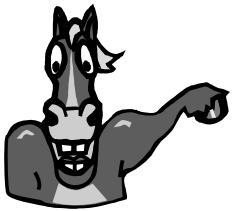


**TIP: Start using the Flowcharts at the D-1 level. This gives everyone a clear picture of where the member is in relation to pursuing the next rating level.**

All Pony Club members should be encouraged to progress at a pace that is comfortable for them. Pony Club instructors should be very familiar with the Standards of Proficiency, so that the instruction program is based on the clear progression of skills described in the Standards. The candidates should have the assistance of an older Pony Club member or knowledgeable adult in preparing for the rating test.

*Member Readiness, continued*

At no level is it appropriate for a candidate or parent to make arrangements for testing outside the club or region. All testing of members at these levels must take place in the home club of the member, unless advance permission has been granted by both DCs who are involved in the testing.

*Organizing a Rating*

**TIP: Whenever possible, complete the test in one day. If it is necessary to conduct a test over several days, all requirements must be completed within a four-week time period.**

**6 WEEKS PRIOR TO TESTING DATE**

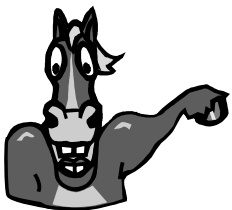
- ▶ determine the number of candidates, choose a site and secure examiners (usually one for every three candidates, and examiners should be someone from outside the club)
- ▶ meet with candidates to explain the process and requirements

**4 WEEKS PRIOR TO TESTING DATE**

- ▶ notify candidates and their parents about the date, place, time, attire, what to bring, meal arrangements, cost (if any), etc.
- ▶ supply each candidate with a copy of the particular Standard and Test Sheet on which he or she will be tested



**REMEMBER: Send the Rating Update Form to USPC and RS immediately following rating.**

*Responsibilities of Examiners*

**TIP: Select an examiner from another club. Some older Pony Club members make good examiners, particularly for D levels. They can also be used as scribes or assistants to adult examiners. However, a responsible adult **MUST** be present. If there is great hardship in getting an examiner, the DC may conduct the test.**

Examiners should study the Standards of Proficiency, Test Sheets, and these guidelines, and be familiar with the texts studied by candidates. They should be sensitive to young people, and able to conduct the test in a positive, educational framework. Attendance at a local USPC Standards and Ratings Clinic, whenever possible, is highly recommended.

Testings can be stressful for candidates (and parents), and examiners should empathize with young people's moods and diverse personalities. The examiner should set the tone of the testing as a teaching situation, drawing the best from each candidate. Outgoing, confident candidates should not be allowed to intimidate those who are not. Each candidate must be encouraged to demonstrate what he or she knows.

The examiner should request details of the facility and equipment available, and of any learning and/or physical disabilities of candidates. If a disability exists that limits performance, but the candidate can ride safely and still meet the requirements of the Standard, he or she should pass the test. There is a range from ADEQUATE to SUPERIOR, and anyone within that range should pass. Candidates must be asked to jump only to the Standard. Testing should never be above the Standard.

Examiners must complete Test Sheets and make written comments, especially for those sections where the candidate did not meet the Standard (DNMS). Comments should be specific and encouraging, with suggestions for correcting any problems. Although examiners may suggest a particular exercise as a teaching aid, **ONLY THE REQUIREMENTS LISTED ON THE TEST SHEET MAY BE TESTED**. Even when a candidate does not meet the Standard, the examiner's comments should be as positive and encouraging as possible.

Care must be taken when notifying candidates of test results to avoid uncomfortable situations among candidates, parents and examiners. In addition to continuous feedback during a test, a complete critique should follow the test, with parents invited to listen **IF CANDIDATES AGREE**.

## *Testing Conditions*

Organizers and Examiners should be prepared to adjust to different conditions that may exist at the time of a testing. Under no circumstances should children be kept mounted for long periods; riders may dismount while others are performing individual skills. There should always be plenty of water available for both riders and horses.

**HORSE MANAGEMENT**

Oral examination must be used for the Horse Management sections at all levels. Orals may be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in very small groups at the D level, and in small groups of three to four at the C level. Care must be taken to see that candidates are afforded every opportunity to express what they know, thereby gaining confidence in a testing situation. The rating test should be educational and must be limited to the requirements listed on the Standards of Proficiency for that rating level.

All candidates, but especially lower level Ds, need a relaxed test atmosphere. Oral questioning can take place in a quiet room or under a tree, although many questions can be asked while the horse is present and the Pony Club member is demonstrating skills. It often helps to have one examiner do the actual “hands-on” and riding sections, while someone else does the oral questioning. In a testing that includes several rating levels, one group can ride while another is doing orals, and vice-versa.

**SHARING OF MOUNTS**

All Pony Club members should be tested riding a safe and reliable mount. Any candidate’s, parent’s, or DC’s concerns about a given horse or pony should be discussed with the Organizer or the Examiner well before the rating test. The borrowing/sharing of suitable mounts is allowed at the D-1 through D-3 level, but **only** if the rider is familiar with the mount and has ridden it – prior to the testing – on the flat and over fences safely and successfully at the level being tested. At the C-1 and C-2 level, a mount may not be shared for a full testing by candidates at the same testing. The exchange of mounts for testing is not allowed at this level.

**RECOMMENDED TIME FRAMES**

**D levels:** Groups of 4-5

1 1/2 – 2 hours riding

1 1/2 hours unmounted

**C levels:** Groups of 4-5

2 – 2 1/2 hours riding

1 1/2 – 2 hours unmounted

Generally, a workable schedule is as follows:

- ▶ Turnout/Inspection (parts of the horse, tack, conformation, shoeing, etc., may be asked at this time)
- ▶ Flat riding phase
- ▶ Riding in the open (D-2 and up)
- ▶ Cooling out
- ▶ Horse Management (bandaging, first aid, etc.)
- ▶ Oral questioning phase (parents can be used to watch horses at this time)

## *Test Site Requirements*

The following facilities should be available for D-1 through C-2:

- ▶ Enclosed area, sufficiently level for flat and stadium phases
- ▶ Ground poles, cavaletti/trotting poles and grids
- ▶ Open area for cross-country, with varied terrain, if possible
- ▶ Cross-country type obstacles, suitable for level (NOT TO EXCEED LEVEL)
- ▶ (Cavaletti/trotting poles in the open may be used for Ds.)

### **REQUIRED RIDER EQUIPMENT**

#### **All Levels**

- ▶ ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet
- ▶ Hard-soled shoes which cover the ankle or boots with heels

#### **C-1 and Above**

- ▶ Correct formal or informal attire

**ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT/FACILITIES REQUIRED:****D-1 Level**

- ▶ Enclosed area
- ▶ 6-8 trotting poles and stall or holding pen

**D-2 Level**

- ▶ Stalls

**D-3 Level**

- ▶ Stalls
- ▶ Stall cleaning equipment

**C-1 Level**

- ▶ Horse blanket
- ▶ 1-2 Pony Club members with ponies and tack

**C-2 Level**

- ▶ Easy-to-longe horse/pony (may be candidate's)
- ▶ Longeing equipment appropriate for animal
- ▶ Easy-to-load pony/horse (may be candidate's)
- ▶ 1-2 D-Level riders with ponies and tack
- ▶ Farrier tools

**OTHER EQUIPMENT****D Levels**

- ▶ Basic grooming tools

**D-2 Level**

- ▶ Protective boots and/or bell boots

**D-3 Level**

- ▶ Up-to-date *USPC Health & Maintenance Record Book* (three months minimum)
- ▶ Protective boots and/or bell boots
- ▶ Stable bandages

**C-1 Level**

- ▶ *USPC Health & Maintenance Record Book* (six months minimum)
- ▶ Shipping bandages
- ▶ Simple conditioning schedule

**C-2 Level**

- ▶ *USPC Health & Maintenance Record Book* (nine months minimum)
- ▶ Shipping and stable bandages
- ▶ Thermometer and watch with second hand
- ▶ Letter from DC re: teaching program
- ▶ Longeing equipment appropriate for horse

**RING EQUIPMENT****Dimensions of Fences D to C-2**

Rating	Height		Width at Top		Width at Base	
	CC	SJ	CC	SJ	CC	SJ
D-2	18"		1'	1'	1'6"	1'6"
D-3	2'6"		2'6"	2'6"	4'3"	4'3"
C-1	2'9"		2'9"	2'9"	4'3"	4'3"
C-2	3'0"		3'3"	3'3"	4'7"	4'11"

\*\*\*Based on USPC Eventing Rules and USEF Eventing Rules\*\*\*

When a second height is required at any one level, use appropriate dimensions shown on the chart above.

Fence dimensions for C-3 and up are available on the Standards of Proficiency.

**COURSE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

D-1: Very simple course, once around

D-2: Uncomplicated course, generous turns, safe distances for horse/pony

D-3: No difficult turns, safe distances for horse/pony

C-1: Related distances: bending lines. Safe distances for horse/pony

C-2: Slightly more difficult turns; safe/related distances; bending lines



**REMEMBER: Pace is sometimes difficult for inexperienced riders to judge. D-3 speed should not exceed 240 to 300 meters per minute appropriate for the size of the horse. C-1 speed should not exceed 325 to 350 meters per minute.**

## *Testing New Members*

A new Pony Club member who is young and inexperienced may become a D-1 and then take two to four years to reach the D-3 level. An older, more experienced rider who joins Pony Club may be capable of passing several rating levels at his or her first testing. However, the D-1 through C-2 Program Committee strongly suggests that a new Pony Club member be rated no higher than D-3 at a first rating, so that he or she can gain a broad experience of Pony Club. All Horse Management sections must be tested orally.

In the event a candidate receives permission to try for more than one level at his or her first rating, both candidate and examiner must have copies of all Standards and Test Sheets up to and including the level desired. Each level of Horse Management **must** be covered, and examiners must be very careful, when testing riding, not to miss anything from the previous levels, (i.e., mounting is covered in the D-2 but not the D-3 Standard).

The oral sections of each level will be covered first. If any part is not passed, the candidate will take the riding test at the rating level at which the oral requirements were completed. If successful, the candidate will be awarded that rating; if not, the rating appropriate to the riding standard achieved will be awarded.

Other than when a new Pony Club member is rated for the first time, members may take only one rating at a time, and each rating must be fully completed before the next one is attempted.

### *Retesting*

If a candidate does not meet the Standard in one or more areas (up to 1/3 of the sections on the Test Sheet), a re-test may be scheduled on sections not passed. Only the original examiner may authorize such a re-test, and must so indicate on the candidate’s test sheet. Such a re-test must be completed in one day and within one month of the original testing.

Failure to pass any part of the re-test will require the candidate to take the entire test again when next scheduled by the club. If the re-test is not completed within a month, the entire test must be taken again at a regularly scheduled test.

If a candidate takes a portion of the test over again with a different examiner, BOTH examiners must have signed the test sheet and certificate before the candidate is considered to have passed. Normally, any test or re-test must take place within the Pony Club member’s own club. The DC decides whether or not a Pony Club member may be tested or re-tested with another club.

### *Subsequent Testings*

Candidates are responsible for, and can be tested on, the requirements of any previous level.

<b>PROGRAM/RATING</b>	
D-1 – C-2 . . . .	Club responsibility/club staffed . . . . .Regionally supported
H-B – C-3 . . . .	Regionally <u>or</u> Nationally organized . . .Nationally supported
B – A . . . . .	Nationally organized . . . . .Nationally supported

### *National Ratings*

**NOTE:** The H-B rating will be offered beginning in 2007.

H-B, C-3, B, H, H-A, and A candidates should be active participants in club and regional activities. Candidates must be recommended by both the DC and the RS. The RS will endorse only those candidates who meet the requirements listed in the Standards of Proficiency. Occasionally, an RS may not feel qualified to endorse a candidate’s readiness or eligibility for a particular rating. In such cases, the advice of a DC, former RS, test prep clinician, or another may be sought.

## *National Ratings, continued*

If there is any question in the mind of the RS about candidate readiness, the candidate may be requested to outline for the RS the manner by which further preparation will be accomplished. This encourages the candidate to clarify needs and resources. A candidate should not be encouraged to try for a rating “for the experience.”

The National Testing Committee assigns National Examiners to these testings, with the exception of regionally organized H-B and C-3 tests. All other arrangements, including use of facility, transportation, lodging and meals for the examiners, are made by the RS, or by someone appointed by the RS. The RS is responsible for mailing fully completed applications (received from the DC, so make sure you get your candidate’s application to your RS in a timely manner) to the National Office by the appointed deadline. Incomplete applications are returned, and the delay may jeopardize the candidate’s opportunity to test.



**TIP: National rating application forms are found on the USPC Web site.**

### **HOW TO PREPARE FOR UPPER LEVELS**

National ratings are a big step and a major investment of time and money for the candidate and parents. You are strongly encouraged to meet with upper level candidates and their parents EARLY in the Pony Club year to discuss:

- ▶ Candidate’s rating goals for the year
- ▶ Alert members to application deadlines – for both the RS and National Office
- ▶ What the candidate needs to do to achieve this goal
- ▶ Possible instructional opportunities (clinics, regional prep sessions, possible competitions)
- ▶ Appropriateness of the mount, possible options
- ▶ Expenses – national application fee, necessary tack and equipment, lodging, meals, regional fee, stabling, etc.

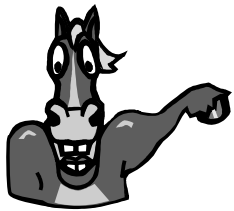


**TIP: Each region organizes the testing differently. Be sure to clearly understand what your region will provide for the candidates and the fees that may be involved.**

- ▶ What expectations does the candidate have of the club
- ▶ What expectations does the club have of the candidate

### *Where to Go for Help*

Clubs and regions throughout the country must work to ensure that all ratings are recognized as important, even vital, to the USPC goal of developing well-rounded, capable horsemen. If problems or questions arise, it is important to know that there is someone available for answers. The D-1 through C-2 Program Committee is anxious to ensure that USPC, as an educational organization, is meeting the needs and expectations of all Pony Club members and their families. This committee works closely with the Curriculum-Standards Committee, the C-3 Program Committee, and the National Testing Committee. Please feel free to call on the current chairs of these committees if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions.



**TIP: Refer to the current Annual Directory or the Web site for names, addresses and phone numbers of the Committee Chairs.**