

bending

self-evaluation

Knowing where you are gives you a good baseline and starting place. It is also motivating as you have a clear goal and can keep track of progress. This is especially helpful if you're struggling at some point, as we all do when it comes to training horses and reaching our goals!

Even more importantly, this is a way to take control of your own improvement. You can progressively advance and enhance the quality of your training from a zero to a three, from a three to a five, from a five to a seven, and even have some eight to tens along the way!

Get in the habit of scoring yourself and your horse. It's what great horsemen, trainers and riders do naturally.

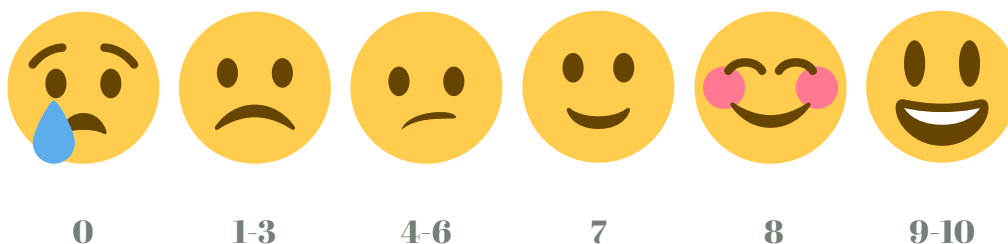
How to Score

In many competitions the scores are well defined, but it often does not apply to every day riding, training and the harmony you experience between you and your horse. Here are the important factors to keep track of as you train your way into a happy relationship with a happy horse... mentally, emotionally and physically.

In the chart to follow you'll be invited to score yourself and your horse on some important elements. On the left side you'll see the higher scores and ideal goals. On the right side you will see the lower scores and problems you might be experiencing.

Take a few minutes to focus on this and write down your scores, together with a date. Depending on how rapidly you progress, you might want to retake the evaluation again in 3 – 6 months.

How to know your score? Your facial expression and feeling will help you know!



the horse

DATE _____

Goals

7 - 10

Score

Write your score
between 1 - 10

Reality

0-6

Horse is supple, flexible, and
trusting throughout its body
(*which means the mind and
emotions too!*)

Horse is braced, stiff. Does
not trust, cannot let go.

Mouth is quiet

Mouth is disturbed - busy,
open, chomping or horse is
grinding teeth, tongue
displaced, froth or foam

Jaw is relaxed

Jaw is clenched, hard, and
braced against the bit (*or even
the hackamore/halter*)

Equal pressure on both reins

Unequal pressure on the reins
- horse takes or braces on one
rein more than the other

Nose is slightly forward, is on
or in front of "the vertical"

Nose is behind the vertical
(afraid and avoids the bit), or
is above the vertical (afraid
and resists the bit)

Neck is softly arched

Neck is flat, or inverted (ewe
necked), or short (arched but
contracted)

Topline is strong,
rounded, longitudinally
flexed ("good banana")

Topline is weak, flat, or
inverted and hollow backed
("bad banana")

Belly is lifted, strong

Belly is dropped, weak

Hind legs step under the horse
towards the girth, carrying the
weight. Horse is balanced,
forehand is light. Body is
'behind' the legs

Hind legs step short, more
under flanks. Heavy on the
forehand, hind legs strung
out behind. Body is 'in
front' of the legs

Forward, fluid strides

Short, choppy strides; 'Rein
Lame' (mental/emotional
tension - not a physical
problem). Horse is hesitant,
not really going forward

Horse is curved latitudinally,
equally from nose to tail

Neck is flexed, body is not bent

Flexes the neck equally
left and right

Horse is braced on one side
(or both); Flexes more easily
to one side than the other –
pushes against the rein or bit

Bends the body equally
left and right

Horse is braced on one side.
Bends more easily to one
side than the other – pushes
against your leg

Horse stays upright on
the circle

Horse falls in on the circle –
heavy on inside shoulder,
leans in

OR

Horse leaks through the
outside shoulder, falls out of
the circle

Horse is soft to the inside leg,
curves around it

Horse is braced to the inside,
pushes rider's leg – bent the
'wrong' way, against the rider
or line of travel

Circles are equally easy,
right and left

Left or right circle is much
harder

you

DATE _____

Goals

7 - 10

Score

Write your score
between 1 - 10

Reality

0-6

Sits nicely balanced in the
center of the horse

Crooked, sits more heavily
on one side

Good body awareness and
control, stabilizes the horse

Not aware of body position, has
poor control of body (horse
destabilizes rider)

Stirrups are level

Stirrups are unlevel (even when
adjusted to the same length).
Rider puts more weight in one
stirrup than the other

Hip joints soft and flexible
which allows horse's movement
to flow through and not block it

Hip joints are tight, contracted,
closed – on one or both sides.
Restricts horse's use of back
and length of stride

Good wrinkles (back
of upper thigh)

Bad wrinkles* (front of hip)
*Unless in short stirrups for
jumping, cutting, etc.

Pelvis upright

Pelvis tipped forward (hollow
back), pelvis tipped backwards
(slumped)

Vertically balanced

Leaning forward or leaning
backwards or slumped

Compact core, stretched spine		Open core, tight and contracted back muscles
Laterally balanced		Leans to one side, or one shoulder higher than the other, or one shoulder in front of the other when traveling in a straight line
Arms relaxed, elbows down, upper arms almost parallel, hands soft and low, soft fingers, firm thumbs		Arms tense, elbows open, hands tense and high, tight fingers, soft thumbs
Reins are even in length, short or long		Reins uneven in length, one rein too tight, other rein too loose
<p>Legs “down”</p> <p>Legs relaxed and stretched downwards into the stirrups.</p> <p>Soft thighs, lower leg is steady in the stirrup</p>		<p>Legs “in”</p> <p>Legs tight and pressing inward. Outside heel is pushing against ribs.</p> <p>Tight thighs, lower leg is unsteady, sometimes loses stirrup</p>
Positions the horse. Allows the horse to find the position		Pushes and forces the horse into a shape, makes the horse do it
Feels and invites the horse to find it		Traps and forces the horse to do it