

harmony

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.

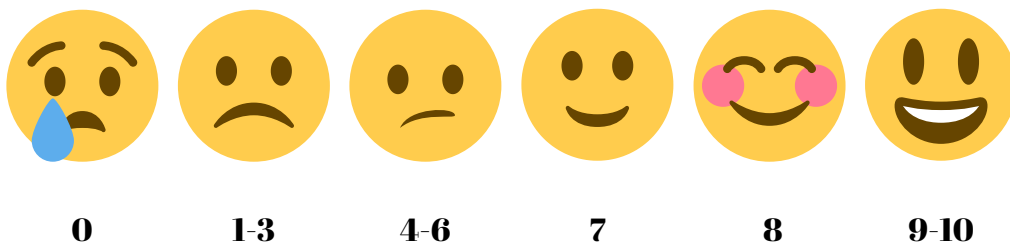
How to Score

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

handling & groundwork

DATE _____

<p>Goals 7 - 10</p>	<p>Score Write your score between 1 - 10</p>	<p>Reality 0 - 6</p>
<p>Ground: You have a soft feeling through the lead rope or a longer line. The physical connection between you and your horse feels soft and beautiful... um, what's the word? <i>Harmonious!</i></p>		<p>You have a hard feeling on the rope or rein, on your seat or against your leg. Horse is against you to some degree.</p> <p>Horse resists the rope or your hand, pushes or pulls away, is tense or scared or frustrated and confused, is not in harmony with you mentally or physically.</p>
<p>Positive expression</p>		<p>Negative expression: Dull, disinterested / bored OR Tense, fearful, fractious OR Pushy, dominant, aggressive</p>
<p>Attentive - ears forward looking at you, asking for leadership, guidance or clarity: 'What do you want?'</p>		<p>Will not or cannot look at you.</p> <p>Does not want your guidance, does not ask questions.</p>
<p>Goes willingly with you when leading, and stands quietly on a loose line for handling, grooming, saddling, bridling – not to mention shoeing, trimming, therapy, vet and dental procedures, etc.</p>		<p>Doesn't stand still, restless uncooperative, nips or kicks, swishes tail, pins ears, tosses head, afraid of the bridle or saddle, disturbed by the girth/cinch, etc. Has to be tied/cross-tied (versus can be cross-tied). Difficulties with vet, farrier, dentist, etc.</p> <p><small>(See more in M4 to solve problems. In this case it is about YOUR vision of how harmony should look and feel in these procedures.)</small></p>

Willing, calm, and responsive when playing on the ground.

Tense, reactive, unresponsive, pulls away, bracy, cranky, unwilling, threatens or charges at you...

Horse is relaxed, travels with suppleness, lightness and is light on the line during leading and groundwork.

Tense or unwilling, heavy, leans against or fights the line (your hand).

“Good banana” body language – softly rounded top line.

Flat, downhill or hollow (bad banana) – head and tail high, back is low.

the horse

riding

DATE _____

Goals

7 - 10

Score

Write your score
between 1 - 10

Reality

0 - 6

Horse is with you – mentally,
emotionally, and physically.

Horse is braced, stiff. Does not
trust you, bracy, and evasive or
argues and fights with you.

You have a soft feeling in the
rein, on your seat and with
your leg.

The physical connection
between you and your horse
feels soft and beautiful.

The horse is against your hand,
against the rein, the leg, and
your seat. It is a hard feeling,
not a soft one – bracing, leaning,
or pushing against.

You have to use a strong seat /
strong leg (remember a horse
can feel a fly – it is not a
question of sensitivity!)

Horse resists, is tense or
frustrated and confused, is
not in harmony with you
mentally or physically.

Positive expression – ears more
forward, blinking eyes.

Negative expression – ears
pinned, tense, worried, angry,
staring / wide eyes, droopy
lower lip.

Goes with you, looks where
you're going (*both your noses
are on the same line*).

Not with you, pulling towards
the gate, would rather be at the
barn or with the other horses,
not looking where you are
looking.

<p>Puts effort into doing things <i>with</i> you.</p>		<p>Resistant, or dull and robotic. Needs to be micromanaged. Doesn't think.</p>
<p>Happy, willing, positive way of going.</p>		<p>Unhappy, unwilling, sluggish, lazy or tense and frantic way of going.</p>
<p>Horse can find comfort in motion with you, rather than only when you are stopped. This is about the quality of your riding – stability and leadership in the saddle.</p>		<p>Horse is uncomfortable in motion with you – rider's hands are restrictive, body and legs are tight, constant disharmony - no relief from pressure, rider is not steady during the task.</p>
<p>Happy body language – relaxed, rounded top line.</p>		<p>Unhappy body language – tense, hollow topline.</p>
<p>Harmony on a loose rein.</p>		<p>Cannot use loose rein - loss of connection and control.</p>
<p>Harmony in contact - "holding hands".</p> <p>Rider knows how to teach the horse the psychology of contact.</p>		<p>Disharmony in contact, horse doesn't want to hold hands:</p> <p>Mouth is disturbed - busy, open mouth, chomping or grinding teeth, tongue displaced, frothy or foamy. Horse is tense and troubled, cannot find comfort, doesn't understand the 'goal of contact', avoids contact (behind the bit)</p> <p>Rider forces the horse into a head set or into vertical flexion. Jaw is braced against the bit (or <i>even the hackamore/halter</i>).</p>
<p>Harmony in the tasks and exercises.</p>		<p>Frequent loss of harmony during tasks and exercises.</p>

you

DATE _____

Goals

7 - 10

Score

Write your score
between 1 - 10

Reality

0 - 6

Your goal is harmony.

Your goal is obedience, or
surviving!

Self-aware, present. Sensitive
to horse's perceptions and
personal space.

Matches energy.

Centered, focused, grounded.

Unaware of how you are
perceived by the horse.
Insensitive to the horse's
personal space.

Too fast or too slow compared to
the horse's energy... too direct,
too abrupt or unclear.

Move feet and arms too much,
rushing and not centered or
"grounded". Not focused and
present.

Positive mood & attitude,
positive expectations.

You bring your best to the
barn! You are the leader.

Bad mood. Unsure, worried,
tense. Negative attitude and
expectations, critical.

Not bringing your best.

You are not the leader!

Feels for the horse, sensitive
and considerate, patient and
forgiving. Gives the horse the
opportunity to think. Teaches
and shapes.

Impatient, insensitive. Doesn't
consider the horse's perspective.
Treats the horse as if it should
know. Makes rather than shapes.

<p>Simple and clear goals and an overall plan for the session - both on the ground and riding. This is good leadership.</p>		<p>No plan for the session. No clear objectives or goals - short or long term.</p>
<p>Balanced, stabilized body when riding: Structure without tension. "Magic X" stability.</p>		<p>Crooked, sits more heavily on one side. No structure, slouchy posture.</p>
<p>Contact - Nice to 'hold hands' with, via the bit: Fingers are soft and quiet, arms relaxed and soft.</p>		<p>Hands unsteady, too high or jammed down, arms are stiff (straight elbows, tight wrists) fingers are tight and / or constantly moving.</p>
<p>Quiet seat, soft hip flexors.</p>		<p>Rider is constantly pushing and nudging with their seat.</p>
<p>Legs are quiet and softly draped and under the rider's body. Feet are 'level' or heels slightly down. Feet point straight ahead, 'headlights on toes.' Legs act as guides - are stretched down, not 'in'.</p>		<p>Legs are in front of the rider's body, heels are too far down, or legs are too far behind the body and heels are up. Legs are busy or tight, strong, and gripping. Legs and heels/spurs are 'in' and constantly touching or poking/pushing on the horse. Headlights are more like disco lights!</p>
<p>Steady, consistent and clear rhythm: <i>"I am the metronome"</i></p>		<p>No rhythm, inconsistent rhythm - gets faster or slower.</p>
<p>Calm and focused, in control of your energy. Present - mentally, emotionally, physically.</p>		<p>Tense, unfocused, distracted, erratic energy - hectic or detached, not present.</p>

Emotionally fit.

Calm and thoughtful, can think it through and adjust when horse is having trouble.

Emotionally unfit.

Nervous, tense, intense, frustrated, impatient, angry, forceful, reactive. long term.

Rides with the psychology of leading the dance: *"I'm doing this, how about you?"*

Tells the horse what to do, micromanages. Horse cannot find peace / comfort.

Does not 'lead the dance' from their body movement and use of energy.

Comfortable tack: saddle, bridle, kind bit.

Narrow, restrictive saddle. Girth pulled too tight.

Harsh, thin bit. And/or bit is pulled too high up in the mouth, pressure on the poll from bridle too tight; Tight noseband, tight curbchain, etc.