

responsiveness

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.

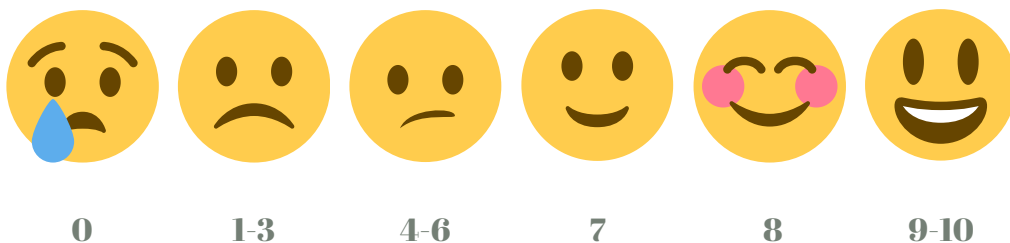
How to Score

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!



leading & handling

DATE _____

Goals 7 - 10	Score <i>Write your score between 1 - 10</i>	Reality 0-6
Easy to lead. Goes with you, stops with you, slows or speeds up with you... little to no pressure on the lead rope		Drags behind you or rushes ahead of you - you have to hold the horse back Excitable, barges into you. Plunges at the grass, hard to get his head up
Stands quietly while tied		Agitated, impatient, paws, pulls back
Easy to maneuver with your hands (while grooming, saddling, etc.)		Heavy and resistant, like moving a car with four flat tires!
You can back him up 20 steps by soft pressure from the halter		Resists going backwards, especially more than 3 or 4 steps. Pushes against the halter, tosses head, can't go straight
You can gently wiggle the end of a 12' rope and your horse backs away attentively		Horse resists, won't back up very well, goes crooked
You can easily move the hindquarters away from you, either with your hands or gently waving your finger or spinning your rope towards the hindquarters from 3 - 6 feet away		Horse overreacts and escapes from the pressure, OR doesn't move, resists, pins ears, swishes tail, kicks, etc.
You can easily move the front end away from you, either with your hands on the cheek and neck, or by gently waving your hands towards the nose and neck from 3 - 6 feet away		Horse overreacts and escapes fearfully, OR is heavy and dull, doesn't move, walks forward, pushes into you, pins ears, tosses head, etc.
Lowers head from finger-tip pressure behind the poll, or gentle downward pressure on the halter		Resists downward pressure. Reacts fearfully and tosses head, may even pull back. OR, is dull and heavy, unresponsive

riding

DATE _____

Goals 7 - 10	Score <i>Write your score between 1 - 10</i>	Reality 0-6
Comes to mounting block when you stand up there		Will not come close to the mounting block, avoids it
Stands still for mounting on a loose rein. Waits until asked to move off		Can't or won't stand still. Fidgety, impatient, move off as your foot goes into the stirrup
Moves forward from light pressure from your seat or legs		Overreacts to seat or leg, is hurried and tense OR Is dull to the seat and leg, ignores you, swishes tail, or fights your leg - may kick out or buck
Stops when you relax your aids or lightly use your reins		Does not stop OR Is hard to stop, is a forward-aholic OR Stops before you ask. Stops a lot!
Can back up your horse 20 steps by lifting the reins lightly with one hand		Horse doesn't go backwards, especially more than a few steps. Tosses head, jerks against the bit, opens mouth, hangs tongue, grinds teeth, hides behind the vertical (chin on chest) but feet don't really move
Easy to bend neck in lateral flexion		Difficult to bend. Neck and body are tight and tense rather than soft and supple OR horse doesn't want to bend the neck, fights the bit, pulls against you, opens mouth, etc.
Easy to move the front end with your reins (neck rein style - turns on the haunches without drifting forwards or backwards)		Horse escapes fearfully from the rein pressure OR doesn't move away from rein pressure on the neck. Dull and heavy on the forehead

Easy to move the hind quarters with your leg (turns on the forehand without drifting forwards or backwards)		Horse escapes fearfully from the leg, OR does not move off your leg or spur very well, is dull, OR kicks out at your leg
You can go from the halt or back up into a trot		Runs off OR is very sluggish to respond, if you get the trot at all
You can stop from a trot or canter within 6 feet		Difficult to stop – heavy on the reins, pulls against the reins, head flies up, opens mouth, charges through pressure from the bit
Upward transitions are easy and smooth		Horse hurries, tends to always break gait into trot or canter. OR upward transitions are difficult, sluggish, may buck going into the canter especially
Downward transitions are easy and smooth		Downward transitions are difficult, horse is always tense and hurried OR they are too easy, horse keeps breaking gait into the trot or walk
Horse is balanced from back to front, agile		Horse is heavy on the forehand, hard to maneuver
Goes sideways right and left, equally and lightly		Cannot ride your horse sideways, either directly sideways or as a leg yield. Goes better to one way than the other Horse either gets skittish or is dull and hard to move
Quiet and happy when ridden in contact		Horse is against the rider's hand, unsettled in the mouth, so-called 'hard' in the mouth, or heavy on the reins

NOTE: Do not confuse reactivity with responsiveness. A horse that escapes from pressure is not light, it is defensive and tense about the aids and needs more relaxation. You will always need to balance relaxation and responsiveness in horses, some more than others. If your horse is brace, tense and nervous, remember to use what you learned in MODULE 2: RELAXATION!