



Horse Show Preparation Checklist

A practical, start-to-finish list for riders, parents and trainers: from entries weeks out to the trailer ride home. Print it, tick it off, keep it in your tack trunk.

Show / Venue: _____ Dates: _____
Rider / Horse: _____ Classes: _____

4 to 6 Weeks Out

Paperwork & Planning

- ☐ Read the prize list and confirm class eligibility, age and level rules
- ☐ Submit entries before the closing date; confirm stall, shavings and hay orders
- ☐ Check membership status (rider, horse, owner) with your breed or discipline association
- ☐ Confirm current Coggins, health certificate and vaccination requirements for the venue
- ☐ Book trainer, groom, lodging and trailer transport
- ☐ Plan your budget: entries, stalls, office fees, braiding, travel, tips

Horse Fitness & Care

- ☐ Schedule farrier visit about 1 to 2 weeks before the show
- ☐ Dental and veterinary check if due; ask your vet about travel and show-day plans
- ☐ Review conditioning plan so the horse is fit for the number of rounds or classes
- ☐ Practice trailer loading and a trial haul if the horse is inexperienced
- ☐ Schedule a clip and bath plan

1 to 2 Weeks Out

Rehearse & Refine

- ☐ Ride your show patterns, tests or courses at home
- ☐ Do a full dress rehearsal in show attire and tack at least once
- ☐ Confirm ride times or order of go once the schedule is posted
- ☐ Check all tack for wear: stitching, billets, girth, reins, stirrup leathers
- ☐ Clean and condition saddle and bridle; replace anything questionable
- ☐ Wash saddle pads, boots, wraps and blankets

Rider Attire

- ☐ Show coat, shirt, breeches or chaps fit and are clean and pressed
- ☐ Boots polished; spare laces if applicable
- ☐ Approved helmet fits properly and is in good condition
- ☐ Gloves, belt, hairnet, hair ties, number holder
- ☐ Backup shirt and breeches in case of spills or tears

Tip: Check your association rulebook for attire and tack rules. They vary by discipline and level.

Packing List

Tack & Equipment

- ☐ Saddle, bridle, bit(s), girth, extra reins and stirrup leathers
- ☐ Show pad and schooling pad; boots or wraps
- ☐ Halter and lead rope (plus a spare); stall guard or chain
- ☐ Longe line, longe whip and surcingle or side reins if you use them
- ☐ Show sheet, cooler, rain sheet and blankets for the weather
- ☐ Fly sheet, fly mask and fly spray

Grooming Kit

- ☐ Curry, hard and soft brushes, hoof pick, mane and tail brush
- ☐ Show sheen or detangler, shampoo, sponges, towels, sweat scraper
- ☐ Braiding supplies: bands, thread, comb, scissors, seam ripper
- ☐ Hoof polish or hoof dressing and a small brush
- ☐ Clippers and spare blades if you touch up at the show
- ☐ Stain remover, baby powder or whitening product for last-minute touch-ups

Feed, Water & Stall

- ☐ Hay, grain and supplements pre-measured and labeled per feeding
- ☐ Water buckets, feed tubs, hay nets; water from home if your horse is picky
- ☐ Muck fork, rake, wheelbarrow or muck bucket, shavings fork
- ☐ Extra shavings if not pre-ordered; stall fans and extension cord rated for outdoor use
- ☐ Stall decor or sign if desired

Health & Safety Kit

- ☐ Equine first-aid kit: bandage material, antiseptic, wound care, vet wrap, thermometer
- ☐ Contact numbers for your vet, farrier, trainer and emergency contact
- ☐ Copies of Coggins, health papers, registration and membership cards
- ☐ Human first-aid kit, sunscreen, bug spray, any personal medication
- ☐ Hand sanitizer, water bottles and snacks for you

Day Before & Show Day

The Day Before

- ☐ Bathe, clip touch-ups and, if applicable, braid
- ☐ Load the trailer, check hitch, lights, tires and brakes
- ☐ Fuel the truck; confirm route and arrival time
- ☐ Lay out show clothes, number, boots, helmet and gloves
- ☐ Lay out tomorrow's feed and confirm the alarm

Arrival & Setup

- ☐ Check in at the show office; pick up numbers and confirm stall assignment
- ☐ Inspect stall for nails, loose boards or hazards before unloading
- ☐ Walk and hand-graze your horse; offer water
- ☐ Walk the show grounds, warm-up arena and rings; locate the in-gate and bathrooms
- ☐ Check the schedule board and ring order for changes

Before Your Class

- ☐ Eat, hydrate and use the restroom
- ☐ Dress, tack up and groom; final tack check
- ☐ Warm up with enough time for your horse to settle (leave a buffer)
- ☐ Know your pattern, course or test cold; review it with your trainer
- ☐ Arrive at the in-gate early; check in with the ring steward if required

After Your Class

- ☐ Cool out, walk and offer small sips of water until the horse is comfortable
- ☐ Remove tack, wash or sponge off sweat, rug as needed
- ☐ Check legs and body for heat, swelling or soreness
- ☐ Thank your trainer, groom, ring crew and volunteers

Heading Home & Post-Show

Pack Out

- ☐ Strip and clean the stall as required by the venue; dispose of waste properly
- ☐ Return borrowed items; settle any outstanding fees with the office
- ☐ Pack the trailer carefully; check that nothing is left behind
- ☐ Walk your horse before loading; offer water and hay for the trip

Back at the Barn

- ☐ Unload, check legs and overall condition, and give a light feed
- ☐ Wash and dry all pads, boots and wraps; clean tack
- ☐ Give your horse an easy day or turnout before returning to work
- ☐ Watch for signs of fever, cough, nasal discharge or lethargy over the next days and call your vet if concerned
- ☐ Write down what went well and what to improve next time

Show Notes

This checklist is general guidance. Always follow your show's prize list, your association's rulebook and your veterinarian's advice.