

Fitting and Showmanship - A Brief Description

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Class Objective

Fitting and showmanship, commonly referred to as “Fit and Show,” is a class that enables the handler to show off the cleanliness, condition, and ground manners of their horse. You bring the horse into the class “in hand,” meaning you lead the horse instead of riding. Fit and show class can be done in a group setting where all class members enter the arena at one time, line up, and wait to be judged individually, or as 4H generally runs the course, each horse and handler enter the arena one at a time to be judged individually. The judge is looking for a well-mannered, sound (healthy), fit, clean horse with a good attitude, and a rider who is the same! You are expected to have clean and well fitting tack, and the rider is also to be clean and appropriately dressed. The 4H rule book outlines the tack and clothing requirements.

Class Procedure

As mentioned before, there are several different ways to run the class. Some judges will post a simple pattern before hand; some will tell you when you enter the ring. The class can be run with the entire class entering the ring at once, or one at a time. Since 4H runs the class one at a time, that is what we will stick to here.

You and your horse will wait in the warm up ring and /or “chute” for your turn to enter the ring. When it is your turn, you go to the beginning of the course. (Usually designed be a cone.) There will be someone stationed there to tell you the pattern, and keep the class running smoothly. He or she will tell you the class pattern. You will perform the pattern, and when finished, “set up” your horse and “present” to the judge. The judge will then inspect you and your horse, possibly ask you some questions, and then dismiss you.

The Real Details

Okay, so you know what is expected of you – now for the details. This packet will give you some tips and ideas on how to best present yourself and your horse in a fit and show class. Keep in mind, the entire time you are in the ring, you are being judged. Present yourself and your horse to the best of your ability. Here are some hints:

Before the Show:

Practice, practice, practice the following:

- positioning -- proper leading position (left or near side, between horse’s nose and shoulder) proper showing position (near side, arm’s length away, toes pointed toward your horse) and positioning for the quarter system (further explained at the end of the packet...)
- simply walking, stopping, and jogging/trotting your horse – Although this seems too simple, practice walking straight to the judge, stopping at the right spot, and keeping yourself in the correct position.
- pivots – Practice doing pivots (or 360s) with your horse. Remember the following ALWAYS turn your horse away from you. This is a safety precaution, and very important. Ideally, the hind right foot should stay planted during the pivot.
- setting or squaring up – The easiest way to teach your horse that you expect him to square his feet automatically every time you stop.
- stopping – Practice stopping quickly and safely.

- posture, eye contact and attitude – This is often the hardest thing! When you walk to the judge, maintain eye contact, smile and be pleasant! Say, “Good Morning!” to the judge! It does make a difference!

Conditioning:

- Points will be taken off for a horse that is too heavy to too thin.
- Take care of your horse’s feet. They do not need shoes, but they need to be trimmed and in good condition. Start oiling them now if they are dry or brittle.

Tack:

- You do not need a leather show halter or an expensive outfit for yourself. Clean, well fitting and safe are the most important. A clean nylon halter and lead will work well.
- Also, as mentioned before, check the rule book, as each style has its own separate list of what is acceptable and what is not.

Grooming:

- Bathe your horse. Preferably that morning, but the day before works too. Walk into the arena with a spotless horse.
- Take care of the mane. Some breeds are shown with long manes, and some are shown with manes pulled short.
- Trim your horse a few days to a week before, and be sure you know the trimming recommendations for your breed. (For example, quarter horses clip the bridle path, or area of the mane behind the ears, approximately 3 inches back, where some breeds clip quite a bit further.) Clip the bridle path, ears, around the eyes, muzzle, and fetlocks. The morning of class, be sure to trim the muzzle one more time. (This is a good time to break out the shaving cream and disposable razors for that smooth muzzle!)
- If your horse is turned out to pasture and you prefer to not clip the inside of the ears (outside of ears should still be trimmed), or the whiskers around the eyes, no point will be deducted **IF YOU TELL THIS TO THE JUDGE.**
- Braiding or banding? This is your choice. You do not have to do either.
- Morning of the show be sure to brush and remove any dirt, stains, and sawdust from your horse’s body, mane, tail, and feet, as well as any insect eggs.
- To hoof black or not to hoof black? You do not have to. Clean, healthy feet are the important thing.
- And lastly, comb the mane and tail **THOROUGHLY**. Many points are lost for tails with sawdust or tangles in them.

Class Procedure:

Entering the ring:

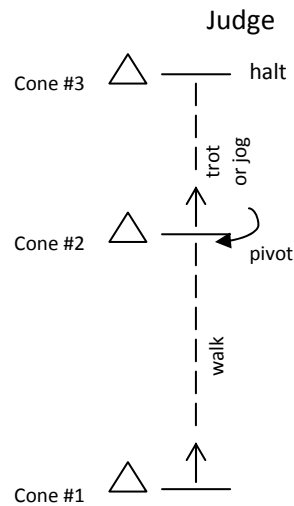
- You will wait in the warm up area until it is time to enter the chute, and then into the ring. Be ready. Rushing to get to class causes your nerves to flare up, as well as your horses.
- As soon as the horse in front of you begins the course, you should walk your horse to the designated starting spot. (If you have a young or nervous horse that will not wait calmly, wait until the person in front of you is closer to being finished.)
- You are being judged from the moment you enter the ring.

Beginning the class:

- At the beginning of the course, there will be a member of the ring crew. He or she will tell you the pattern (if it has not been posted.) If you have any questions, do not be afraid to ask!!!
- Repeat the pattern back to the person to be sure you understand it.
- You will also be asked your number, which the ring crew will tell the judge.

Pattern:

- This will vary from time to time, depending on the show and judges. Typically it is this: Begin at cone #1; walk to cone #2; trot to cone #3, stop.



- Some hints to keep in mind... The cones are there to guide you, but you need to keep far enough away from them that you will not run into them when you pivot.
- Have your horse square before you begin the course. This presents a more polished look.
- Walk your horse crisply to cone #2, making sure you maintain your positioning and eye contact with the judge. Stop briefly at cone #2 and pivot. (This is where training your horse that you expect him to square his feet automatically every time you stop comes in handy. You don't want to make the judge wait while you square his feet, but it presents a very polished picture, and will be easier for your horse to move into the pivot from a square position.)
- Stop again briefly, and move off into the trot.
- Stop your horse quickly at cone #3 – Don't let him drag you around.
- Square your horse, and get in the proper position, and look at the judge.

Inspection:

- The judge will then greet you, and begin inspecting you and your horse.
- Maintain proper positioning at all times (again... refer to Quarter System section at end ...)
- Maintain eye contact, and be pleasant!
- Often the judge will ask questions about you and your horse.

Dismissal:

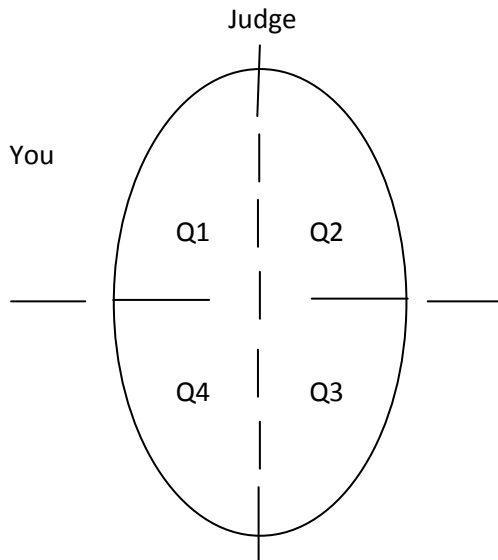
- After the judge has finished inspection, you will be dismissed.
- The judge will tell you where to leave the ring.
- You are still judged until you leave the ring, so keep up the good work until you are out!

Behavior Issues:

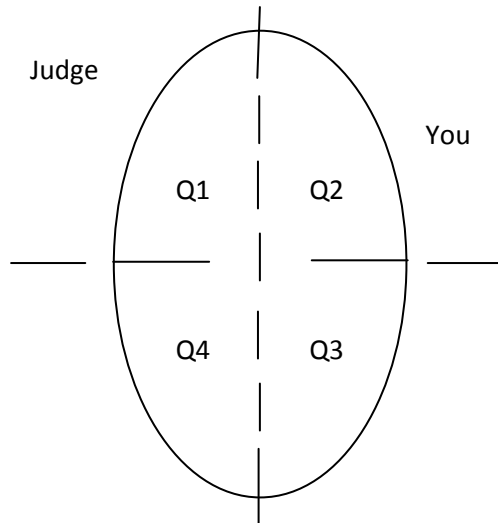
- If you have a nervous or young horse that refuses to stand still, do not get frustrated. Keep calm, and work with your horse.
- Quite often, the judge will work with you. (I have inspected horses as they jogged in circles around me!)
- Keep smiling, and remember the class only lasts a few minutes, and then you are done!

Quarter System

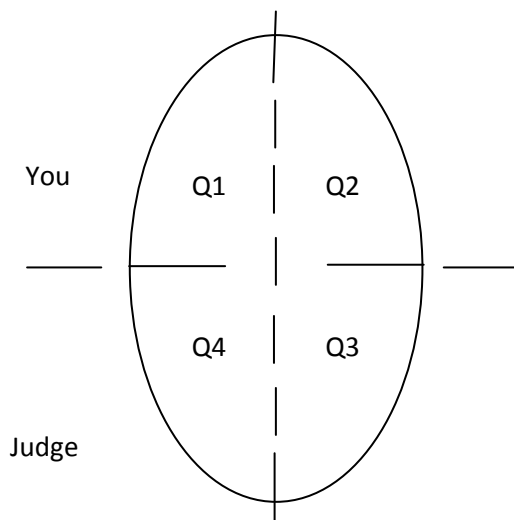
This is the proper positioning of the handler to allow the judge the best possible view of the horse at all times. It is called the “Quarter System” as the horse is divided into fourths, or quarters, and the judge – you and the judge should not be in the same quarter at the same time. Below are some pictures and basic descriptions:



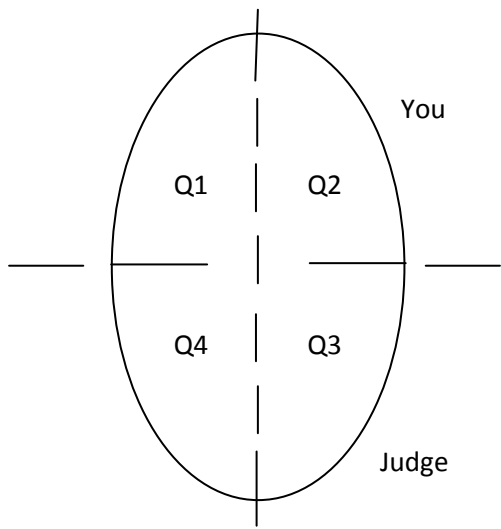
When walking or jogging/trotting to the judge, be sure your horse's nose is lined up with the judge. You will be in “Quarter #1” where you will stay while you set up your horse.



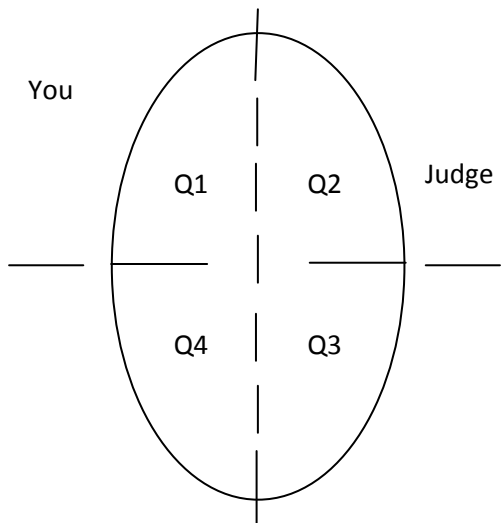
When the judge passes the center line of your horse and moves into “Quarter #1,” you move crisply into “Quarter #2.” Position yourself so you can maintain eye contact, if possible.



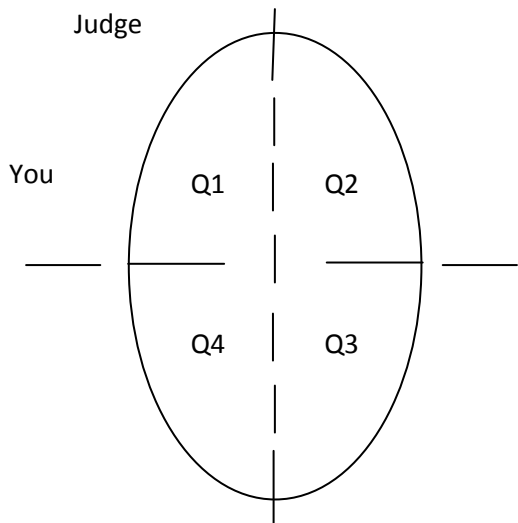
When the judge continues to move around the horse, and passes the horse's center line into “Quarter #4,” you now move back to “Quarter #1.”



When the judge passes the center line behind your horse, move back into "Quarter #2."



When the judge passes the mid line of your horse, you move into "Quarter #1."



When you are dismissed, return to the proper leading position, and walk off with your horse. Remember you are still being judged!

Summary

Know the rules – What tack you need, and what clothing you are required to have.

Prepare – Have a healthy, fit, horse; use clean and safe equipment; practice leading at walk and jog/trot, stopping, pivots, and setting up; walk into the ring with a clean horse

Class – smile, and relax; remember your proper leading, showing and quarter system positioning

And most importantly, HAVE FUN!!!!