

Rider Classes

When judging a riding class a Judge should consider the ability of the rider to maintain a correct, well balanced, deep and supple seat, with the rider being in perfect harmony with the horse. The rider should demonstrate the ability to apply the aids of leg, hand and body accurately and effectively upon request.

To quote the FEI rule book:

“All the movements should be obtained without apparent effort of the rider. He/she should be well balanced with loins and hips supple, thighs and legs steady and stretched downwards. The upper part of the body easy, free and erect, with the hands low and close together without, however, touching one another or the horse and with the thumbs as the highest point, the elbows and arms close to the body, enabling the rider to follow the movements of the horse smoothly and freely and to apply the aids imperceptibly. This is the only position making it possible for the rider to school his/her horse progressively and correctly” (end quote)

The Seat

The seat of the rider is very important. If the rider is not balanced and relaxed on the horse's back, the horse cannot be influenced correctly. The rider should sit well down in the deepest part of the saddle with the weight evenly distributed on both seat bones.

The Head

The head of the rider should be carried well above the shoulders so that the weight flows straight down through the spine. Any movement of the head, either forward or backwards or sideways would affect the balance of both horse and rider.

The Shoulders

The shoulders of the rider should be carried square and parallel to the horse's shoulders. The rider should maintain a vertical position and when viewed from the side, a line could be drawn from the rider's ear, shoulder, elbow, hip and heel to the ground.

The Upper Body

The upper body of the rider should be carried tall and erect with the weight going down the spine and evenly distributed on both seat bones. The rider should sit tall without becoming stiff and should maintain the suppleness of the lower back. The rider should not allow his/her body to tilt forward in front to the vertical, as the weight would be removed from the seat bones. Nor should the body lean back behind the vertical, as this would place too much weight on the horse's back.

The Lower Back & Lower Spine

The lower back and spine of the rider, together with the hips and loins play a very important role in riding as they act as a shock absorber and absorb the movements of the horse. If this part of the body is not supple, the rider will be quite uncomfortable on the horse, in both sitting trot and canter.

The Hands

The hands of the rider should be held above the wither so they form a straight line from the horse's mouth to the riders elbow. The thumbs should be held almost uppermost with the hands close together but not touching one another or the horse.

The upper arm and elbow should be relaxed at the rider's side, with the upper arm, elbow and forearm almost forming a right angle. The hands should remain steady but not ridged and they should always follow the movements of the horse.

The Legs

The legs of the rider should be in contact with the horse, with the knees closed but relaxed and the lower leg stretched well down with the heels just below the toes. The lower leg should maintain a light but permanent contact just behind the girth, without gripping and they should be allowed to do their job of feeling, communicating and creating impulsion. The ball of the foot or the toe should rest on the stirrup irons with the toe almost parallel to the horse's shoulder.

Common Faults

Collapsed hip
Drawing up of the lower leg and knee
Toes pointed downwards or out
Upper body too stiff or slumped
Leaning forward or back (in front or behind the vertical)
Rider not in the rhythm of the horse's movement
In-correct diagonals
Gripping with the back of the calf
Hands too flat
Rider looking down
Rider round shouldered