



Leading Your Way to Success

By Sarah Chapman

Showing is a unique discipline as the class is divided into three parts with all the elements having an influence on the judge's decision. There is the group 'go round', an individual ridden show and an in-hand show where the judge decides on the conformation or type merit of the animal.

Many riders perceive the in-hand section as less important than the ridden show, but in fact it has a large bearing on the result. 50 marks - half of the total - in marked classes come from the in-hand section, and in non-marked classes, the judge is still making that crucial decision on where to place your animal.

What the judges say

Judges often complain at the poor way riders stand their horses up and the attitude of the riders. Showing is about positive and negatives so coming out with a positive attitude will create a better image. Smile, be cheerful; it will help and costs nothing!

The Showing Register is passionate about training and here are a few tips on what you can do to lead your way to success!

Practice at home

The first and most important point is to stand the animal correctly to the best advantage considering its conformation and any faults. You do not have to stand square like in dressage. This is achieved by practice at home with someone to help you. Start with a level area and walk round coming to a halt facing the animal so you can see the position of the legs as you come to halt. Ask your assistant to take a photo and then have a look at the photo. This will help you to consider the stance as if you were the judge. Repeat this until you have achieved the best result. Practice with your assistant walking round the animal like a judge and adjusting the legs by one step backwards or forwards to achieve the best look from both sides.

When you trot up the animal should trot as if it is on the bridle so keep your hand under the chin and balance the trot. If the hind leg is engaged and it is trotting into the contact, this will improve the placement of the foot and stride. For example, if the animal dishes or moves wide behind, trotting slightly slower will help

minimize the appearance of the fault.

If the animal fidgets, think about your body position and use your body to help block the animal, for example stand slightly to the left or right if it tries to swing to the side.

At the show

When the steward asks you to come forward BE READY! Have your reins adjusted and prepare yourself by walking a small circle behind the line so you appear alert and walk briskly forward. Stand your animal as you have practised. If the animal fidgets, try up to three times and then let it stand as judges do not like endless adjusting. The judge will ask you to walk away and trot back. Have some energy about you and be purposeful to show off a good, strong walk away; turn around to the right - do not try to trot through the turn - then take a few strides of walk to get straight before trotting at an even regular pace straight towards the judge. Once past the judge, trot straight for several strides then round the corner back to the line. If the ground is very hard

and your animal has a short stride, walk on the straight and do not trot round the corner. However, if the animal moves well make the most of your time in front of the judge, they might still be looking at you so run for a few strides behind the line just in case.

Should you bow at the end? There is a trend to bow but this is not necessary and if it is a large class, the judge might have moved onto the next animal. Showing a few more strides of trot is better than a bow. At local level shows it is more common for the handler to bow.

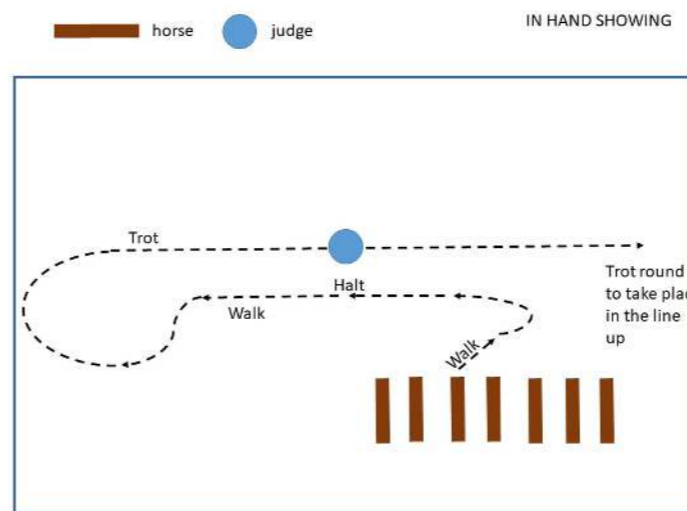
Often neglected is the importance of being positive in your manner towards the judge and officials. However, you feel on the day you should smile, say, "good morning," or, "good afternoon," and when the judge asks you to move off, say, "thank you". Good manners are as important in the rider as they are in the animal.

Remember, you can become as good as any professional if you practice!

What the professionals say:

Simon Charlesworth said: "Practice trotting up at home to avoid at all costs someone having to chase you with a rag. When you run the horse should trot!"

Craig Eleanor has an excellent tip for children in particular: "When practicing, imagine you are walking along a ruler with a lollipop at the end. Walk down the ruler, around the lollipop and back along the ruler."



What the judges say:

Judge Penny Clifford commented: "I was very disappointed in how poorly the ponies were stood up when I judged at HOYS in 2021".

Meanwhile judge Phillip Cooper said: "A handler with a smile and a horse with its ears pricked is always going to be more appealing than one that looks as though they have had a very late night!"



In A Nutshell:

- Practice makes perfect
- Ask a professional for help, or book an in-hand appraisal
- Be honest about your animal's conformation and paces and how it will look at its best
- Carry something to attract his attention when standing still so its ears prick
- Always look cheerful and positive - it could earn you a higher place
- If things go wrong, learn from the experience!

