



January 2024 - 2025

Guidelines for Pennsylvania 4-H Obstacle Trail Equestrian with Disabilities Division

Obstacle trail is one class in the Equestrian with Disabilities (EWD) Division intended for riders with disabilities. The Equestrian with Disabilities Division is intended primarily for riders with disabilities who are unable to participate in other divisions with *or* without reasonable accommodations.

Exhibitors, their parent/guardian and health care professionals should determine if the classes in the EWD division are most appropriate for their abilities *or* if they wish to participate in other divisions. If the exhibitor wishes to participate in *other* divisions, please contact your county educator as noted below if accommodations are requested. Exhibitors with disabilities may participate in *either* the Equestrian with Disabilities Division *or* in other divisions but *not* in *both* divisions in the current year. *Exceptions to the previous statement are:* Exhibitors in the Equestrian with Disabilities division *may* participate in the following classes: Obstacle Trail, Walk-Trot Equitation, Grooming and Showmanship (Open Division) or Equestrians with Disabilities (EWD) Grooming and Showmanship, Miniature Horse In Hand Trail and Miniature Horse Jumping.

Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact your county extension educator in advance of your participation or visit. Requests for accommodations should be made to the county extension educator at least three weeks in advance of the event.

Classes included in the Equestrian with Disabilities Division are divided into three subdivisions: maximum assistance and minimum assistance and independent. The parent or guardian is responsible to consult with their child's health care professional to determine the appropriate level of assistance. Riders should be placed in the class that is most appropriate for their ability.

Maximum assistance – riders in this division are those riders who require two or more aides (leader or 1 or 2 side walkers). Horse must remain under the control of the leader with an attached lead at all times.

Minimum assistance – riders in this division are those riders who only require one aide (leader or side walker).

Independent- riders in this division are able to safely control their horse independently without the assistance of an aide. Each independent rider will have one assistant available and standing in the designated area.

Course designers must consider safety first at all times and are encouraged to design courses that will demonstrate proper horse handling techniques and horsemanship skills for riders with disabilities. Courses should be designed that are appropriate for the skill level of participants yet provide a safe and fair evaluation of riders' abilities. Experienced riding professionals should be consulted as needed for assistance and guidance when planning courses, as well as when conducting EWD classes at 4-H shows.

Courses must be posted at the beginning of the show and a copy should be made available to all entrants. Riders will be allowed to “walk” the course (without their mounts) if needed prior to the start of the class.

Refer to current *Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Show Rule Book* for specific rules and additional details. Additional resources on EWD horsemanship are available from:

- Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International at pathintl.org
- Pennsylvania Council on Therapeutic Horsemanship (PACTH) at cecth.org

Obstacle Trail

Minimum and maximum exhibitors must be accompanied by at least one and no more than three aides. (if one aide is used, he/she must remain in close proximity to the horse). Assistant for Aide must be familiar and have worked with the rider. The aide must assist the rider during mounting and dismounting. Assistant for Independent riders will stand in a designated area for the duration of the exhibitor's course or class. All aides/assistants must be 14 years of age or older. Aides may, if needed, communicate verbally with the rider, but any physical assistance in guiding or controlling the horse will be penalized, except in the case of emergency.

For Minimum and Maximum assistance exhibitors, a lead rope is required and may be attached *or* unattached to the horse, depending upon the ability of the rider. If the lead line is attached, the rider will not be penalized *unless* the aide provides undue assistance. If the lead line is unattached, the aide should hold the lead line and keep it available to assist as appropriate. The lead line must remain attached with a maximum assistance rider.

If a halter *and* bridle are used *and* the lead rope is attached, the lead rope must be attached to the halter; (*Exception: A leading Y is permitted with a snaffle bit only.*)

Rider must guide mount through a pre-posted course. Riders must execute the course as posted. Each obstacle will be scored between one and ten. The “Pennsylvania 4-H Obstacle Trail Score Sheet” will be used to facilitate scoring this class.

Horses will be shown at a walk and sitting or posting trot or jog or alternate gait at the appropriate and indicated parts of the course. RIDERS WILL BE ASKED TO TROT OR JOG AT SOME PLACE IN THE PATTERN.

Course distances and obstacle recommendations:

1. A minimum of five and maximum of seven obstacles will be used.
2. 20-36 feet from starting/ending point to first/last obstacle.
3. At least 20-30 feet of jog/trot area between obstacles when jog/trot is used.
4. Figure 8 with two-25-foot diameter circles.
5. Figure 8 around two markers – markers must be a minimum of 14 feet apart.

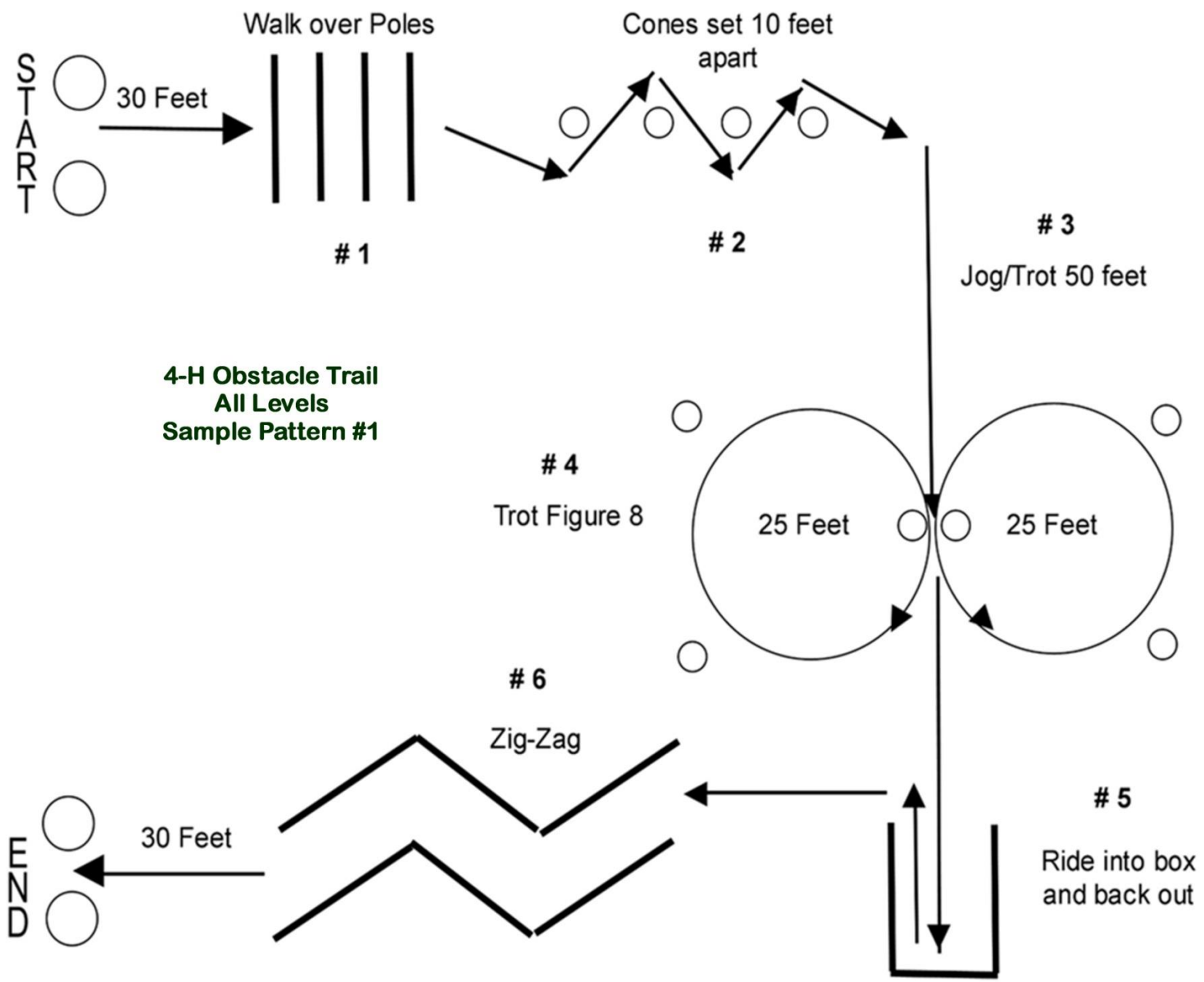
6. Walk-overs – 4 rails (at least 10 feet long) placed at no less than 24 inches apart.
7. Zig-zag – Guide the horse through a “Z” of ground poles at the walk. Rails must be at least 6’ apart.
8. Serpentine at least 5 markers (obstacles must be at least 10 feet apart).
9. 360 Box – Turning the mount around in a prescribed circle or box (may be combined with stepping over poles that are used to make the box – this would count as 2 obstacles). Box must be at least 10 foot square.
10. Halt at any prescribed location on course.
11. Backing
 - All backing shall be only a straight line
 - Maximum assistance shall not be asked to back into or out of an obstacle
 - Minimum assistance and Independent rider back through obstacles should be at least 6 feet wide with no angles or bends.

Unacceptable Obstacles

1. Handling or dragging of obstacles
2. Mounting or dismounting

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The University is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information, or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University's educational mission, and will not be tolerated. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Office, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901, Email: aao@psu.edu, Tel 814-863-0471.



4-H Obstacle Trail
All Levels
Sample Pattern #1

