



January 2024 - 2025

Level 1 Horsemanship Skills Testing For Youth Under 12 Years of Age Showing Junior Horse Projects

Please note the following details about skills testing with junior horse project animals:

4-H members must be 12 years of age or older or have passed all applicable Level 1 Horsemanship Skills with each junior horse project animal in order to show. Youth under 12 that are showing animals in-hand or driving only, must pass applicable Level 1 handling skills only (i.e. riding/saddling/mounted skills are not required if the animal is not ridden.) Youth under 12 that are riding animals in junior horse show futurities must pass all handling and riding skills in Level 1. Youth under 12 that are driving are encouraged to have passed Level 1/2 Driving Skills and all driving exhibitors will have an optional equipment check and safety assessment conducted by show officials at the Junior Horse Championship Show.

Youth under 12 years of age must retest the appropriate Level 1 handling skills on an annual basis with each junior horse project animal to be shown.

For 4-H members under 12 years of age, a copy of the Level 1 Horsemanship Skills Evaluation Sheet must be included with entry forms or submitted at the show for each animal. The Evaluation Sheet must include signatures of 3 approved Horsemanship Skills examiners and indicate that the youth has passed all applicable handling skills. Youth under 12 years of age who have *not* passed Level 1 handling skills may be *enrolled* in the junior horse project but will not be allowed to *show* until they are 12 years of age (4-H age as of January 1 of current year) *or* meet the handling skills requirement.

1. Youth may be tested at their respective local, club or county testing, at other county or regional locations throughout the state, or at a regional testing (if available).
2. All youth under 12 years of age should be tested on all handling and/or riding skills in Level 1 of the 4-H Horsemanship Skills Program as applicable to their project animal(s).
 - ✓ Horses that are shown *only in hand or driving* do not have to be bridled and saddled for testing and are not tested on riding skills.
 - ✓ Youth that are *riding* horses 2 years of age and over that will be shown in riding classes must be tested on all handling *and* riding skills.
 - ✓ Retesting of youth that have passed the Level 1 skills in a previous year(s) is required to help ensure that youth are currently capable of safely handling their project animal(s). All appropriate handling skills should be included in testing, but examiners should emphasize those that demonstrate that the youth can safely and confidently control their animal(s).
3. Youth should have information on Level 1 Horsemanship Skills including the current *4-H Horsemanship Skills Resource Book* for 4H Members *prior to testing* and be adequately prepared for testing. Youth should have opportunities to practice and learn skills well in advance of testing.

4. Youth should be able to properly perform all of the Level 1 *handling* skills within approximately 30 – 45 minutes and all handling *and* riding skills within about 1 – 1½ hours. Youth who are unable to do so are most likely not able to master the Level 1 skills. *This is a guideline only and there may be some exceptions.*
5. Youth should be able to safely and confidently control and handle their animals for testing. Examiners may excuse or discontinue testing of any exhibitor due to concerns for the safety of any participant or horse, or lack of control of the horse by the 4-H member.
6. Current Junior Horse Project and Championship Show Guidelines and Pennsylvania 4-H horse show rules (including Junior Horse Championship Show rules) are available from local Penn State Extension offices or on the Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program Cloverlink site.
7. Testing information for youth is included in the current *4-H Horsemanship Skills Resource Book* (for 4-H Members). Youth should prepare accordingly for testing, wear appropriate riding attire and bring tack and equipment appropriate for their respective riding discipline.
8. Volunteers that are coordinating Level 1-2 testing should review *Level 1-2 Horsemanship Skills Testing – Information for Coordinators*. This information is available in the current *4-H Horsemanship Skills Resource Book* (for Volunteers/Professionals)
9. County listings of Horsemanship Skills Examiners are available from respective Penn State Extension offices or on the 4-H Horse Program Cloverlink site. **ONLY evaluation sheets signed by three (3) approved examiners who have successfully completed Level 1-2 examiner training are acceptable to fulfill the junior horse show requirements for youth under age 12.**

Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program website:
extension.psu.edu/4-h/projects/horses

extension.psu.edu

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