

4-H Hunt Seat Level III Expanded Descriptions

Level III Hunt Seat riding reflects a definite improvement in a previously Level II rider's ability to ride and control the horse. A Level III Hunt Seat rider demonstrates the balance and confidence to navigate a two-foot-plus hunter course, looking forward to the next turn or obstacle. Rider must use same project-identified horse for entire test. These descriptions represent the ideal picture, and actual scoring is left to the expertise of the rater.

Basic handling

A: Display confidence, safety, knowledge working around horse: It should be apparent that handler knows horse well. Handler may be asked to demonstrate specifics, explain tacking up processes, name equipment; discuss safety procedures or other aspects of the horse project.

B: Fitting and turnout of horse are show quality: Horse should be properly clipped, groomed for the show ring. (Rider turnout should be neat, clean and appropriate to the discipline. Rider must remember to wear approved helmet.)

Riding

A: Mount: (Refer to the Colorado 4-H Horse Project Rule Book and Project Manual for complete details.) Rider must check girth. Rider does not use the cantle of the saddle to pull himself up. Rider may touch the cantle until rider is standing in the stirrup, at which time the right hand switches to the pommel, with the left hand holding reins and resting just ahead of the withers. Rider should ease gently into the saddle. If mounting from the ground, rider may use one or two hops to get motion going. Reins must be held at all times and not used for balance.

Dismount: Holding reins, rider drops right stirrup and lifts right leg over saddle, standing in left stirrup. Using hands on saddle and neck in front of wither for balance, rider kicks off left stirrup and quietly slides down to the ground next to the horse. Remove reins from over horse's neck and present the horse. Rider must run up stirrups before leading horse.

B: Half turn on haunches: Hind feet may lift in continued walk under the horse, but must not swing out. Horse should not turn over his middle. Some horses, especially stock breeds, may use a pivot foot on the hind leg. The rider should know the difference and at least keep the forward movement continuing even with a pivot. Pivot and stop is not what is asked for.

C: Leg yield R/L @ walk/sitting trot: A leg yield asks the horse to cross one front foot over the other and one hind foot over the other with each step as the horse travels diagonally across the arena. The body of the horse, head through hips, should still be facing forward. Head should not face away from the direction of travel, and the hind legs should remain parallel to the front legs. Rider sits up, centered in the saddle and not hanging over one side. Note: A leg yield is the same as the two-track in Western except that it is done along the rail. You may see a slight bend of the horse's head away from the direction of travel. Some contact on the bit is maintained.

D: Canter to hand gallop in two-point position, back to canter: You should see a definite change of speed and the horse should show extension of stride. Rider should maintain the same contact with the horse's mouth and show following hands. The two points of the rider's body contact are the legs. The seat rises out of the saddle and rider's heels remain lower than the foot. The ankle bone should fall straight below the hips. Rider should sit down to come back to the canter.

E: Balanced halt from all gaits on the straightaway: Canter through the trot to a stop is expected, but a canter to a balanced, soft stop is acceptable for horses trained in western pleasure. There should be no lurching to the stop or sliding stops. The horse's mouth is closed and the head remains nearly vertical. The rider should show soft hands, and the stop should come from the rider's seat.

F: Change of diagonal; flying lead changes on serpentine: Changes should be near the center of the crossover. Changes of diagonal should be smooth and not balanced off of the reins. Some increase of speed is acceptable, as long as consistency and control of stride are maintained. There should be NO one-step simple lead changes. Late changes and cross-firing incur score penalties and depending on severity, may result in failing score for maneuver.

G: Lengthening at walk, trot, canter; show working gait transitions: Lengthenings may be rather flat, but rein contact should be maintained. This is commonly seen in stock breeds. Ideal: The horse maintains head set and bit contact, using a longer stride through the power of the back end. Rider should understand that extension and collection of strides means longer and shorter strides, not just a faster or slower pace. Note: This is not a dressage lengthening. Do not expect "big" tracking under.

H: Jump two-strided combination of fences, 2'3" in both directions: Distance between fences can be adjusted to the size of the stride of the horse. The rider should be familiar with what works for their horse. (The 36 feet normally recommended for this combination is for 16-hand hunters.) Rider's chest, head and eyes are up; rider looks for next fence. Heels are down, legs are secure and quiet, hands are soft and following; rider does not use hands for balance. Rider

maintains the two-point position before and after fence; rises with horse over jump, staying centered, moves hands along horse's crest over jump in order to avoid hitting horse's mouth with bit, sits up and gently settles into saddle on descent. Crest release or proper free-release are acceptable. Horse and rider should demonstrate teamwork that results from long-term familiarity with each other. For safety, repeated blatant horse disobediences or rider's loss of balance should result in immediate halt to the test.

I: **Rein back four steps:** Horse should display submission and softness. Rider displays quiet hands and use of leg aids. Faults: Horse opens mouth, tosses head; rider leans or jabs with reins.

Acknowledgement: These tips represent a compilation of opinions expressed over the years at Larimer County, Colorado 4-H raters clinics. They do not represent official Colorado 4-H policy, and riders should always consult the rule book and/or their extension office or an approved rater for updates.