

bending

self-evaluation

Knowing where you are gives you a good baseline and starting place. It is also motivating as you have a clear goal and can keep track of progress. This is especially helpful if you're struggling at some point, as we all do when it comes to training horses and reaching our goals!

Even more importantly, this is a way to take control of your own improvement. You can progressively advance and enhance the quality of your training from a zero to a three, from a three to a five, from a five to a seven, and even have some eight to tens along the way!

Get in the habit of scoring yourself and your horse. It's what great horsemen, trainers and riders do naturally.

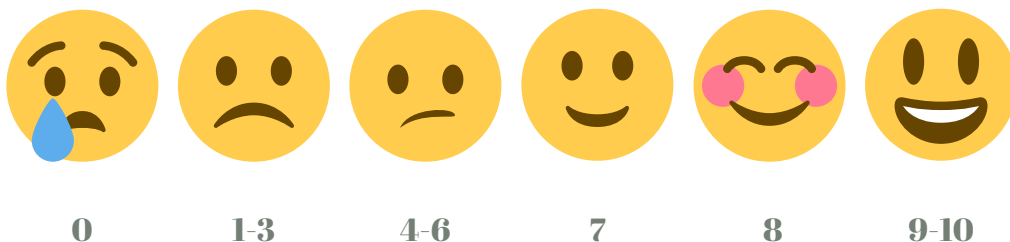
How to Score

In many competitions the scores are well defined, but it often does not apply to every day riding, training and the harmony you experience between you and your horse. Here are the important factors to keep track of as you train your way into a happy relationship with a happy horse... mentally, emotionally and physically.

In the chart to follow you'll be invited to score yourself and your horse on some important elements. On the left side you'll see the higher scores and ideal goals. On the right side you will see the lower scores and problems you might be experiencing.

Take a few minutes to focus on this and write down your scores, together with a date. Depending on how rapidly you progress, you might want to retake the evaluation again in 3 – 6 months.

How to know your score? Your facial expression and feeling will help you know!



the horse

DATE _____

Goals 7 - 10	Score <i>Write your score between 1 - 10</i>	Reality 0-6
Horse is supple, flexible, and trusting throughout its body <i>(which means the mind and emotions too!)</i>		Horse is braced, stiff. Does not trust, cannot let go.
Mouth is quiet		Mouth is disturbed - busy, open, chomping or horse is grinding teeth, tongue displaced, froth or foam
Jaw is relaxed		Jaw is clenched, hard, and braced against the bit <i>(or even the hackamore/halter)</i>
Equal pressure on both reins		Unequal pressure on the reins - horse takes or braces on one rein more than the other
Nose is slightly forward, is on or in front of "the vertical"		Nose is behind the vertical (afraid and avoids the bit), or is above the vertical (afraid and resists the bit)
Neck is softly arched		Neck is flat, or inverted (ewe necked), or short (arched but contracted)

Topline is strong, rounded, longitudinally flexed ("good banana")

Topline is weak, flat, or inverted and hollow backed ("bad banana")

Belly is lifted, strong

Belly is dropped, weak

Hind legs step under the horse towards the girth, carrying the weight. Horse is balanced, forehand is light. Body is 'behind' the legs

Hind legs step short, more under flanks. Heavy on the forehand, hind legs strung out behind. Body is 'in front' of the legs

Forward, fluid strides

Short, choppy strides; 'Rein Lane' (mental/emotional tension - not a physical problem). Horse is hesitant, not really going forward

Horse is curved latitudinally, equally from nose to tail

Neck is flexed, body is not bent

Flexes the neck equally left and right

Horse is braced on one side (or both); Flexes more easily to one side than the other - pushes against the rein or bit

Bends the body equally left and right

Horse is braced on one side. Bends more easily to one side than the other - pushes against your leg

Horse stays upright on
the circle

Horse falls in on the circle –
heavy on inside shoulder,
leans in

OR

Horse leaks through the
outside shoulder, falls out of
the circle

Horse is soft to the inside leg,
curves around it

Horse is braced to the inside,
pushes rider's leg – bent the
'wrong' way, against the rider
or line of travel

Circles are equally easy,
right and left

Left or right circle is much
harder

you

DATE _____

Goals 7 - 10	Score <i>Write your score between 1 - 10</i>	Reality 0-6
Sits nicely balanced in the center of the horse		Crooked, sits more heavily on one side
Good body awareness and control, stabilizes the horse		Not aware of body position, has poor control of body (horse destabilizes rider)
Stirrups are level		Stirrups are unlevel (even when adjusted to the same length). Rider puts more weight in one stirrup than the other
Hip joints soft and flexible which allows horse's movement to flow through and not block it		Hip joints are tight, contracted, closed - on one or both sides. Restricts horse's use of back and length of stride
Good wrinkles (back of upper thigh)		Bad wrinkles* (front of hip) <i>*Unless in short stirrups for jumping, cutting, etc.</i>
Pelvis upright		Pelvis tipped forward (hollow back), pelvis tipped backwards (slumped)
Vertically balanced		Leaning forward or leaning backwards or slumped

Compact core, stretched spine		Open core, tight and contracted back muscles
Laterally balanced		Leans to one side, or one shoulder higher than the other, or one shoulder in front of the other when traveling in a straight line
Arms relaxed, elbows down, upper arms almost parallel, hands soft and low, soft fingers, firm thumbs		Arms tense, elbows open, hands tense and high, tight fingers, soft thumbs
Reins are even in length, short or long		Reins uneven in length, one rein too tight, other rein too loose
<p>Legs "down"</p> <p>Legs relaxed and stretched downwards into the stirrups.</p> <p>Soft thighs, lower leg is steady in the stirrup</p>		<p>Legs "in"</p> <p>Legs tight and pressing inward. Outside heel is pushing against ribs.</p> <p>Tight thighs, lower leg is unsteady, sometimes loses stirrup</p>
Positions the horse. Allows the horse to find the position		Pushes and forces the horse into a shape, makes the horse do it
Feels and invites the horse to find it		Traps and forces the horse to do it