

GUIDELINES FOR GRADING

**THIS GUIDELINE IS DESIGNED TO ASSIST DC'S AND MEMBERS TO
UNDERSTAND THE GRADING PROCESS**

This document does not replace the current rules.

Download a copy of the PCV rule book from the Pony Club Victoria website: <http://www.ponyclubvic.org.au/en-au/ride/rules.aspx>

WHAT IS GRADING?

Grading was first introduced in 1969 for the discipline of showjumping but later adopted for the disciplines of dressage, eventing and combined training.

The aim of a grading system is to provide Pony Club Victoria members with fair and safe competition. All members should be able to expect to go out and meet riders of a comparable standard to themselves in a competition field.

The appropriate grading is achieved by assessing the ability of the horse and rider as a combination, irrespective of the age of the rider or the size of the horse, to perform safely and competently at a specific standard in their chosen discipline.

HOW DO YOU GRADE A COMBINATION?

The club District Commissioner is responsible for all grading of riders at their club and their decision is final. If sufficiently experienced, the DC may grade on their own initiative after taking into consideration all relevant information such as competitive ability and performances. They may take advice from experienced and knowledgeable people including coaches or their Zone Chief Instructor to assist their considerations (as per bylaw 33.1.g.ii) A separate grading is required to be undertaken for each discipline and horse/rider combination. Combinations can have different grading levels for each discipline. For example; have a grading of 3 in dressage but a grading of 4 in jumping disciplines.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that parents do not unduly influence the grading of their children. Grading should only occur when the combination is capable of competing safely. This applies to all age groups.

It is not the place for schooling or coaching.

UPGRADING

District Commissioners should be looking to upgrade riders where appropriate. Help riders accept and expect a brief loss of performance success when first upgrading. Consider enjoyment and ensure the rider is challenged. If unsure of upgrading, consider recommending that the rider enter an 'Open' section and reassess after the event.

DOWNGRADING

Downgrading of combinations is permitted and is at the discretion of the District Commissioner. Please note new rule 33.4.b; *Combinations may compete HC at a grade below their current grading if they have failed to complete 2 or more XC courses in the previous 6 months at their current grading.*

A combination could also compete in 'open' to restore/build confidence in a level below their grading if required.

ADULT RIDERS – CAN THEY ALSO BE GRADED?

Many clubs now offer adult membership and these members are also eligible to compete under the Pony Club Victoria banner. These riders are graded following the same guidelines.

Rule 34.5.d Adult Riding Member: *may receive rally attendance and may qualify to ride in a pony club Adult Riding Member section of a competition and require two mounted rallies by the combination in the preceding 12 months.*

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Combination must have attended two qualifying attendances before grading can occur.
- Ungraded transfer combinations must attend two or more rallies at new club before grading can occur.
- Results from 'Open' or EA competitions may be used as part of application for grading/upgrading.
- Safety of combination must be the first priority.
- Riders may not be led in competition as per dressage rule 3.1.b and showjumping rule 1.7.e, except if the rider has a SportsConnect exemption (see below).
- A horse under four years must not be graded.
- Derby competitions are completed under HT rules and therefore HT grading will apply.
- Horse welfare must also be considered at time of grading. Refer to PCA Policy here: <https://ponyclubaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PCA-Animal-Welfare-Policy-2017.pdf>
- Riders with a disability can apply for an exemption through 'Sports Connect' to allow them to compete on a level playing field. The forms can be downloaded from the PCV website. Once completed, forms are to be sent to PCV Coaching Director at ncas@ponyclubvic.org.au for approval.
- It is *recommended* that a rider should have achieved the D certificate prior to being graded for Horse Trials.
- A rider must be aged 8 or older to be eligible to compete in Horse Trials, no minimum age for Combined Training as per rule C.11.7.
- Refer to bylaws rule 33 – Grading for all requirements pertaining to grading.

HOW TO USE THE GRADING GUIDELINES

- A grading form request should be completed by rider and submitted to club DC. Rider should ensure that their horse's details are recorded in their Myponyclub member portal.
 - Go to >all about me>my horses>add horse.
- DC arranges for grading. This can be done at a rally by the DC or the DC may appoint a coach or other knowledgeable person to undertake grading. Please note, that after the initial grading, upgrading or re-grading can be made at any time, not necessarily at a rally.
- Grading form is completed and signed by rider, parent (if under 18) and DC.
- Club updates rider's member card and their Myponyclub profile with grading details as follows:
 - Access club database
 - Select >members>view/add members>select member>scroll down to grading>add new record>complete details>press update at bottom of screen.

Member is now eligible to compete and can show their grading both through their PCV membership card (to be shown at competitions) or virtual card through the Pony Club Australia APP.

Your Zone Chief Instructor and DCI/ZA panel are a great point of contact should your club have any issues pertaining to grading of combinations.

GRADING REQUEST FORM

Complete form and submit to your DC at least one week prior to rally.

RALLY MONTH	DATE
RIDER NAME	DOB
HORSE NAME (COMPETITION – AS STATED ON CARD)	
Circle current grade (if any) and give date of grading as on membership card:	
Dressage: 6 /5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1	Grading Date: _____
Horse Trials 6 /5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1	Grading Date: _____
Combined Training 6 /5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1	Grading Date: _____
Show-jumping F / E / D / C / B / A	Grading Date: _____
New Grade Requested:	
Dressage 6 /5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1	
Horse Trials 6 /5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1	Max Height in cm 35 /50 / 65 / 80 / 90 / 105
Combined Training 6 /5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1	Max Height in cm 35 /50 / 65 / 80 / 90 / 105
Show-jumping F / E / D / C / B / A	Max Height in cm 55 / 70 / 85 / 105 / 120 / 135
Notes in support of this application from rider, for example event placings	
Section 2: Parent to complete	
I, _____ believe my child is/I am capable of riding at the requested level.	
Parent/Guardian Signature: _____	Date:/...../.....
Rider's signature (if over 18): _____	Date:/...../.....
Instructor's Name: _____	Date:/...../.....
Grading request approved Y/N	
Notes	
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DRESSAGE

When grading dressage, please also refer to the PCV Dressage Judges Expected Standards document.

<http://www.ponyclubvic.org.au/Portals/231/Rules/Dressage/DressageTests/Expected%20Standards.pdf?ver=2020-10-16-012519-527>

GRADE 6

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Maintain walk and trot independently most of the time in enclosed area	
Turn pony and achieve downward transitions	
Understand dressage arena markers	
Basic understanding of dressage rules	
Control and guide pony safely but position may be unsteady	

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GRADE 5

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Ride halt, walk, trot and canter in enclosed area	
Ride transitions and turns with good response by horse	
Ride 20m circles in trot and canter	
Ride transitions into and out of halt through walk	
Ride canter in a straight line	
Understand arena markers and basic dressage rules	
Control and guide pony safely but position may be unsteady	

At commencement of this level, riders may not be able to:

- Recognise leading leg in canter.
- Recognise correct rising trot diagonal.
- Ride straight lines or correct circle shapes.

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DRESSAGE

GRADE 4

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Ride halt, walk, trot and canter fairly accurately at or between markers	
Attempt increase in trot	
Ride 20m circles in trot and canter reasonably accurately	
Maintain immobility at halt	
Free walk showing clear lengthening of the rein to enable horse to stretch neck	
Ride fairly accurately on track	
Understand arena markers and basic dressage rules	

Expectations:

- As per Grade 5 requirements as well as:
 - Horse travels willingly and calmly forward.
 - Rider has a balanced position and control of hands most of the time.

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GRADE 3

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Execute halt, walk, trot and canter transitions at markers	
Execute moderately lengthened strides in trot	
Horse travels calmly and willingly forward	
Ride serpentines of 3 loops at trot	
Stretch out and down in trot	
Execute medium walk and free walk	
Understand arena markers and dressage rules	
Sitting trot or rising trot (correct diagonal must be shown)	

Expectations:

- Rider begins to influence the horse's way of going.
- Rider position balanced with steady hands and effective aids.

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DRESSAGE

GRADE 2

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Execute correct circles, 10m in trot and 15m in canter	
Execute 5m canter loop	
Show some lengthened strides in trot and canter	
Ride 3 loop and 4 loop serpentines at trot	
Ride leg yield in trot	
Stretch forward and downward in trot	
Execute halt, immobility and attentive for 4 seconds	
Simple change of canter lead through trot (3-4 steps)	
Giving of reins (2-3 strides) in canter over centre line	
Execute 5m canter loop off long side	
Ride straight and accurately on the centreline, in corners and on track	

Expectations:

- Rider steady in sitting trot.
- Horse travels forward and steady to contact most of the time.
- Execution and accuracy of aids evident.
- Horse shows correct bend, flexion, tempo and rhythm.

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GRADE 1

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Show medium and collected paces at trot and canter	
Execute rein back	
Execute shoulder-in, travers and renvers	
Ride counter-canter	
Execute simple changes (within 3-5 steps of walk)	
Ride 10m trot and canter circles	
Execute half turn on the hindquarters in walk	
Execute canter depart from walk	

Expectations:

- Well balanced and effective rider position.
- Horse to show free forward movement, in steady contact and on the bit.
- Harmony and balance shown with horse and rider.

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DRESSAGE

ADVANCED



REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Show collected, medium and extended paces	
Ride shoulder-in	
Ride half pass in trot and canter	
Execute flying changes	
Shorten the stride half pirouette at walk	
Execute rein back	
Execute canter depart from walk	

Expectations:

- Qualities of the training scale; rhythm, looseness, contact, acceptance of the bit, impulsion, straightness and collection now shown.
- Horse demonstrates balance and purity of all gaits, in correct tempo.
- Hindlegs of horse bend more, taking a greater load, lightening forehand and becoming more uphill.
- Horse now seeks the rider's contact, with poll the highest point.

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SHOWJUMPING

- When grading, gradually build the heights over a number of rounds to ensure riders won't be over-faced.
- Treble combinations permitted in PA, PB, PC only.

F GRADE

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Pony is willing to jump	
Pony can turn and offer transitions	
After successful jump attempt, pony can be returned to walk, trot and halt	
Rider understands basic rules of show jumping	
Independently completes a minimum of 6 jumps of max height & spread of 0.55m	
Rider is reasonably balanced over the fence and can use neck strap effectively if needed	

Expectations:

- For the genuine beginner combination.
- Of note, riders cannot be led over jumps in competition, as per bylaw 36.6 and Showjumping rule 1.7e.
- Combination obstacles are not recommended for this grade.
- At competition, 6 – 8 efforts will be required.
- At competition, starting height minimum 0.40m – maximum spread and height in jump off 0.55m.

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E GRADE

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Horse/pony is willing to jump	
Horse/pony can turn and offer transitions	
Attempts correct approach to fence	
After successful jump attempt, rider can control horse in pace or change gaits	
Rider understands basic rules of show jumping	
Independently completes a minimum of 6 jumps max height & spread 0.70m	
Rider is balanced over fence and can use neck strap if needed to protect horse's mouth	

Expectations:

- For the beginner combination capable of jumping 0.70m.
- Combination obstacles are not recommended for this grade.
- At competition, 8-10 efforts will be required.
- At competition, starting height minimum 0.55m – maximum spread and height in jump off 0.70m.

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SHOWJUMPING



D GRADE

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Horse travels willingly forward	
Rider developing a steady forward seat over fences	
Correct approach to fence, including attempting to place horse at centre of jump	
Control and balance shown whilst riding a series of fences including combinations	
Complete a minimum of 8 fences at max height and spread 0.85m including combinations	
Rider has good understanding of show jumping rules	

Expectations:

- At competition, starting height minimum 0.70m – maximum spread and height in jump off 0.85m.
- At competition, 8-10 efforts will be required.
- Combination obstacles are more likely at this level in competitions; therefore riders should be familiar with rules pertaining to them.

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C GRADE

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Combination is well balanced throughout course and over fences	
Rider uses correct eye contact	
Horse is calm, forward and confident	
Rider has good knowledge of show jumping rules	
Rider can adjust horse easily through pace and transitions	
Approach/Depart and lines are correctly ridden	
Complete a minimum of 9 fences at max height and spread including combinations	

Expectations:

- At competition, starting height minimum 0.85m – maximum height 1.00m and spread 1.05m in jump off.
- At competition, 9-12 efforts will be required.
- Treble combinations may be used in PC grade.
- Combination can maintain a good rhythm and attempt correct canter leads.
- Rider shows correct contact and release over and between fences.

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SHOWJUMPING



B GRADE

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider is independent and can adjust between two- and three-point position with ease	
Rider can navigate more difficult turns and distances	
Ride more accurate shortened and lengthened strides between related fences	
Rider has excellent knowledge of rules	
Complete a minimum of 9 fences at maximum height and spread including combinations	

Expectations:

- At competition, starting height minimum 1.00m – maximum height is 1.15m and maximum spread 1.20m in jump off.
- At competition, 9-12 efforts will be required.
- Correct canter leads established.
- Treble combinations may be used in PB grade.

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A GRADE

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Navigate tight turns and ride angles over fences	
Flying changes can be used to change leads between fences as required	
Rider has extensive knowledge of rules and combination distances	
Complete a minimum of 9 fences at maximum height and spread including combinations	

Expectations

- At competition, starting height minimum 1.10m – maximum height 1.25m and maximum spread is 1.35m in jump off.
- At competition, 9-12 efforts will be required.
- Treble combinations may be used at PA grade.
- Complete control of horse and striding now evident (shortening and lengthening).
- 6 Bar competitions are permitted at this level, maximum height rule does not apply to Puissance and 6 bar classes.

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HORSE TRIALS

- Where possible, utilise fences set at the height and spread suitable for the grade.
- When no suitable cross-country course is available, the use of show jumps built at some distance from each other and resembling as much as possible cross-country fences, should be used.
- Course need not be full length but at least 8 obstacles used for grades 5 and above. Riders must recognise that a full course at competition will have approximately 14-30 efforts depending on grade being ridden (see HT rules for further details).
- Allow riders to walk the course first.
- Combinations should be able to complete the obstacles set with control and without difficulty.

SHOW JUMPING PHASE OF HORSE TRIALS

- Of note, SJ phase dimensions at Horse Trial events are not the same as 'pure show jumping' dimensions.
- Course built for grading should have at least six fences.
- See table below for specifications.

COMBINED TRAINING

- Combinations are graded according to their competence and safety in dressage and show jumping for combined training. Please utilise both the dressage and showjumping guidelines to determine CT grade.
- If the combined test has a cross country phase, then horse trials grades are applicable.
- As per rule E2.2, no assistance may be given, rider MAY NOT be led in any phase.
- See table below for specifications.

COMBINED SHORT COURSE

- A combined jumping course comprises both cross country and show jumping fences. Grading is per horse trials.
- No rider under 8 years may ride in any short course that comprises of solid cross country fences.

SUPERCROSS/DERBY EVENTS

- Comprises cross country and showjumping with no dressage phase.
- Grading is per horse trial rules.
- As per rule E.3.4, no rider under 8 years may ride in any course that comprises of solid cross-country fences.

Grade	Distance	No of efforts	Max. Height	Max Spread		Speed metres/min
				At base	At highest point	
PCV 110	Not more than 470m	9-12	1.10m	2.10m	1.40m	325
1	Not more than 470m	9-12	1.05m	1.80	1.30m	325
2	Not more than 470m	9-12	0.95m	1.50m	1.00m	325
3	Not more than 470m	9-12	0.80m	1.00m	0.80m	300
4	Not more than 470m	8-10	0.65m	0.80m	0.65m	275
5	Not more than 470m	8-10	0.50m	0.65m	0.50m	250
6	Not more than 470m	8-10	0.35m	0.35m	0.35m	200

Table: Specifications for showjumping phase of horse trials & combined training as per 2021 rule book

HORSE TRIALS

GRADE 6



REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can jump a variety of Grade 6 XC fences at trot and in sequence	
Rider can control pony in a variety of terrain	
Rider has basic knowledge of walking a XC course	
Rider has basic knowledge of HT rules	

Expectations

- Minimum age – rider must be age 8 or older to be eligible to compete in Horse Trials.
- Combination to be able to jump a minimum of 8 show jumping efforts at 0.35m in height and spread prior to showing competence on XC.
- Forbidden assistance as per rule C.10.22.
 - Outside assistance to rider or horse during the course is forbidden under penalty of elimination. The combination is to complete the course unassisted. Refer to full rule for further details.
- Combination to meet competency of Grade 6 dressage grading requirements.

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GRADE 5

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can execute a variety of Grade 5 XC fences at trot and in sequence	
Upon cantering, rider can safely bring horse/pony back to slower gaits	
Rider has basic knowledge of walking a XC course	
Riders has basic knowledge of HT rules	

Expectations

- Combination can complete a minimum of 8 showjumping efforts at height and spread of 0.50m and base 0.65m.
- Combination can meet competency of Grade 5 dressage grading requirements.
- Water is now an optional in courses at this level and where clubs choose to offer. If water is used, an option not involving water must be provided as per rule E7.

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HORSE TRIALS



GRADE 4

REQUIRMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can jump a variety of Grade 4 fences at trot and canter	
Combination can confidently jump obstacle into water with drop (max 0.15m)	
Combination can confidently enter water complex via ramp or drop of max 0.50m	
Rider is not interfering with horse when jumping	
Rider is developing a steady light seat	
Rider has knowledge of XC course walking and HT rules	

Expectations

- Combination can complete a minimum of 8 showjumping efforts at height and spread of 0.65m and base of 0.80m.
- Combination can meet competency of Grade 4 dressage grading requirements.

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GRADE 3

REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can jump a variety of Grade 3 fences in varied terrain at canter	
Combination can confidently drop into water complex (max 1.00m)	
Combination can confidently jump obstacle into water with or without a drop max 0.30m	
Rider does not interfere with horse when jumping	
Rider has good 2-point seat over fences and control of canter between fences	
Rider has knowledge of XC course walking and HT rules	
Rider knows how to recognise if the horse is becoming tired or stressed	
Rider knows how to care for horse to ensure recovery after the course has been ridden	
Rider knows how to correctly fit any gear used	

Expectations

- Combination can complete a minimum of 9 showjumping efforts at height and spread of 0.80m and base of 1.00m.
- Combination can meet competency of Grade 3 dressage grading requirements.

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HORSE TRIALS

GRADE 2



REQUIREMENTS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can jump a variety of Grade 2 fences in varied terrain at canter	
Combination can confidently drop into water complex (max 1.20m)	
Combination can confidently jump obstacle into water with or without a drop max 0.50m	
Rider can shorten and lengthen the horses canter as approaching obstacles	
Rider position correct over fences and appropriate canter speed between fences	
Rider can correctly re-present to fence if a refusal or run out occurs	
Rider has excellent knowledge of how to walk XC course and HT rules	
Rider knows how to recognise when the horse is becoming tired or stressed	
Rider knows how to care for the horse to ensure recovery after the course has been ridden	
Rider knows how to correctly fit any gear used	

Expectations

- Combination can complete a minimum of 9 showjumping efforts at height of 0.95m and spread of 1.00m and maximum base of 1.50m.
- Combination confident with all HT dressage requirements including; 5m trot loop, moderately lengthen strides trot, 20m stretching trot circle, as per 2021 HT dressage tests.

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GRADE 1

EXPECTATIONS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can jump a variety of Grade 1 fences in varied terrain	
Combination can confidently drop into water complex max 1.40m	
Combination can confidently jump obstacle into water with or without a drop max 0.80m	
Rider can shorten & lengthen canter as approaching fences	
Rider shows correct position over fences and appropriate speed between fences	
Rider can correctly re-present to fence if a refusal or run out occurs	
Rider has excellent knowledge of how to walk a course and HT rules	
Rider knows how to recognise if horse is becoming tired or stressed	
Rider has extensive knowledge to assist horse with recovery after all phases	
Rider know how to correctly fit all gear used	

Expectations

- Combination can complete a minimum of 9 showjumping efforts at height of 1.05m and spread of 1.30m and maximum base of 1.80m.
- Combination confident with all HT dressage requirements including; 10m trot loop, lengthen trot and canter, 15m canter circles and 20m stretching trot as per 2021 HT dressage tests.

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HORSE TRIALS

GRADE PCV 110



EXPECTATIONS	COMPETENT Y/N
Rider can stop horse effectively in open area	
Combination can jump a variety of Grade PCV 110 fences in varied terrain	
Combination can confidently drop into water complex max 1.60m	
Combination can confidently jump obstacle into water with or without a drop max 1.10m	
Rider can shorten & lengthen canter as approaching fences	
Rider shows correct position over fences and appropriate speed between fences	
Rider can correctly re-present to fence if a refusal or run out occurs	
Rider has excellent knowledge of how to walk a course and HT rules	
Rider knows how to recognise if horse is becoming tired or stressed	
Rider has extensive knowledge to assist horse with recovery after all phases	
Rider know how to correctly fit all gear used	

Expectations

- Combination can complete a minimum of 9 showjumping efforts at height of 1.10m and spread of 1.40m and maximum base of 2.10m.
- Combination confident with all HT dressage requirements including; medium trot and canter and leg yield as per 2021 HT dressage tests.

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