

# PONY CLUB



## Beach Riding Achievement Badge Workbook



**Guidelines:** Be able to help plan for an outing to the beach and choose a beach safe for group riding

**Key points:** Candidates should:

- Look at possible beaches or coastal areas near to your Pony Club
- Know that it is necessary to check with local councils, or the tourist board, that horses are allowed on the chosen beach
- Understand that local knowledge of a beach, perhaps from a Pony Club or riding school will be able to answer whether a beach has adequate parking
- Know of the dangers of Marsh Areas, sinking sand, sand bars (areas above the water line at low tide that quickly become surrounded with tidal water), rip currents
- Know which flags to look out for, what they mean. Red circles with a line through show a man swimming, so swimming is forbidden, a dog with a line through forbids dogs on the beach. Red flags mean no swimming. Yellow triangular flags are hazard signs, for instance, what looks like steps on the triangle, warns beach users of groyne
- Find out whether there is safe access to the beach with reliable safe sand underfoot
- Find out who else is likely to be using the beach at a chosen time
- Planning ahead, tack and clothing, picnic and water and food for the horses and ponies
- How to introducing horses and ponies to the beach rides, how might the horses behave in company on a beach
- Understanding tides, know that tides come in and out, that the tides will be of different heights during the year, and what effect this may have of the planned ride
- Know that if you type into Google the name of your chosen beach and Tide Tables, the information of high and low tide times will appear

- Understand what effect the weather may have on the trip; the dangers of fog, wind, and heat
- Safety on the day, know how to help prevent possible problems, such as ponies running away, unnecessary falls, other riders being frightened. What to do if a rider falls off
- Google the name of your chosen beach to discover whether there is a beach safety officer or RNLI presence
- Understand how to behave towards other beach users, and manners, (jumping the picnickers, children, dogs, other riders, children playing, kites and boats. Understand how a beach ride can affect the other beach users. Know that you must tidy away afterwards)
- To be aware of how to avoid dehydration and sunburn

**Additional reading:**

The Pony Club Manual of Horsemanship

Riding on Beaches and Estuaries – BHS (available online)

<http://www.awaywiththekids.co.uk/travel-news/rnli-beach-safety-know-your-flags>

<https://www.tidetimes.org.uk>

<http://www.tides4fishing.com/uk>

<http://rnli.org>

This workbook is a summary of the most important points on the given subject. Note that studying only the contents of this workbook will not be sufficient to allow you to pass this achievement badge assessment. All badges have a very strong practical component, and it is vital that you receive hands-on training, and carry out all the practical activities of this subject enough times, until you are confident and can do the tasks efficiently and effectively. Thereafter, this handbook will serve as a revision aid for assessment of the achievement badge and later when you are ready to do efficiency tests.

**NAME**

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**BRANCH**

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Riding a horse on the beach is a dream of many horse riders and owners but there's a lot more to it than you'd think, and to ensure that the ride fulfils your dream you are advised to do some preparation work beforehand.

You need to:

- Check the rules and regulations for which beach (and which sections of the beach) you are allowed to ride on, by contacting your local municipality for this information
- Prepare your horse for being near water by riding through water and streams at home
- Bring the right gear and tack
- Check the high and low tide times on the internet for the area in which you intend to ride on the day your ride is scheduled for. This is very important for your safety and that of your horse

## Equipment

- Wear comfortable clothes: While bikini and shorts are the most common clothes to wear on the beach, they are not suitable for beach horseback riding
- Before you swing into the saddle, your first priority should be an ASTM/SEI compliant horseback riding helmet
- Wear clothes and tack that can get wet. Wear long pants like, breeches, or jodhpurs. Shorts and inner leg pant seams can chafe against your saddle on long rides and become very uncomfortable. **Wear light clothes that you don't mind getting wet**
- If you are not doing a long ride and are there to play in the sea you can go bareback but if you are doing a long ride you need to make sure you have a correctly fitted saddle and that the stirrups are easy to get out of
- Using light stirrups is necessary for getting out quickly in case of a difficult situation in the water
- Make sure you are wearing a shoe with a heel so your feet cannot slip through the stirrup
- Protect yourself against sun burn, sun stroke and dehydration. Make sure you have covered yourself in sunscreen, and carry drinking water if you intend to be out for a long time
- Make sure you have a cell phone, a hoof pick and a small first aid kit with you in case of emergency

## REMEMBER TO CLEAN YOUR TACK AFTER A BEACH RIDE

### Choosing a Beach

Besides ensuring that the local municipality or beach control authority allows horse riding on the beach you are considering, you need to be aware of a few other aspects which will make your beach ride pleasurable and safe.



**Park and/or Ride.** If you are not stabled close enough to the beach to enable you to ride your horse down, you need to consider where you can **park** the horse boxes and vehicles you will be using to transport your horses and riders to the beach. Bring some fresh water for your horse, if there is none available at the beach.

DO NOT ride up and over the **dunes** from this parking area, which can damage the dune vegetation. Use the paths down to the beach, where available; or at least ride in single file to limit the damage.

While a municipality may grant permission for a ride, they may not be aware of safety issues for riding. It is important we make ourselves aware of the **ground underfoot** on a beach. After high tide, a portion of the beach may remain water logged for a while. This can become very bog-like and horses walking through this can lose shoes or worse, get stuck! So, you must avoid areas on the beach where water is standing in pools away from the sea itself. This includes where a river is coming down into the sea.

There are also areas on the beach where the sand just gives way causing **sink holes** which can be quite dangerous.

If you intend going into the water, be aware of back wash tides and **currents**.

Riding with an experienced rider who knows the beach is thus strongly recommended, as they should know about these danger areas and will be able to avoid them. **Local knowledge** is essential.

## Choosing your horse, time and approach: things to consider

**Find seasoned horses to ride with.** Give your horse a calming influence for beach riding by **finding other riders who frequent the beach**. If it's your horse's first or second time riding on the beach, being with other confident horses helps keep your horse calm. This is very helpful because many horses are afraid of the ocean the first time they see it.

**Choose a time of day with few beachgoers.** Horses become alarmed if there are a lot of people and noises in a concentrated area. Going to the beach when there are few people is best. Not only **does this minimise your horse's exposure to stimulation, but it minimises how many obstacles** your horse has if it gets loose.

- A spooked horse is a hazard to itself and other beachgoers
- Go to the beach in the early morning or late evening, or on weekdays
- Avoid going to a popular beach in the middle of the day on a weekend

**Choose a good weather day.** Avoid the beach on very windy days as this can be very unpleasant for you and your horse and even painful with the wind blowing in his and your eyes. Wind could also make your horse very spooky. Avoid a time with heavy fog or mist, when visibility is reduced.

**Go at low tide.** Horses don't usually like to go directly into the water, especially on one of their first beach trips. Choose a time of day when the waves are low, usually at low tide. Low tide also helps because it usually reveals a strip of firm sand that is good for horses to walk on. It also helps to go on a day that isn't windy because it minimises waves. Remember check the internet for your area on the day you want to do the outing for this information.



**Direct your horse slowly into the water.** If it is one of your first times to ride your horse on the beach, your horse is likely a bit afraid of the water. Let your horse get acclimated to the beach before urging it into the sea. Try riding your horse in circles in the sand, getting closer to the water each time around.

- If it is your first time, your horse may not want to go near the water at all
- It may take several trips before you can urge your horse into the water

**Steady your horse. Be patient with a nervous horse and don't force it into the water.** Once your horse seems ok with going into the sea, go at a slow walk. Horses sometimes get knocked off balance when waves hit their legs, so be ready to steady your horse with the reins and your legs, **and don't go in too deep.** Beware of currents and eddies in the water.

- If your horse puts his nose down in the water like he is going to roll, discourage this by pulling up his head and urging him forward with your legs
- **If your horse wants to roll in the shallow water and you don't mind getting wet, you can let them roll.** Just be careful to get out of the way

## Basic riding safety and etiquette

1. Riding safety and etiquette is a combination of common sense, good manners and respecting the horses, riders, and other persons and pedestrians around you
2. When you are riding you are more than a passenger. Be aware of your horse, what you are doing and where you are riding at all times
3. **Always listen to the guide's/lead rider's instructions and obey them**
4. Never pass the guide or lead rider, unless he/she has said you may do so. Stay at the pace set by the guide
5. Never ride off until all riders are mounted and ready
6. When riding in a group, be aware of the other riders. Do not allow your horse to get too close to the horse in front or you might get kicked
7. Do not suddenly cut in front of other horses, especially when cantering and jumping; nor pass them at speed
8. As a courtesy to others, give verbal warnings for dangers (i.e. holes, low branches) and pass back messages clearly that the guide may have given
9. **Another rider's leg or horse does not make a good rubbing post for your horse and could result in biting and kicking**
10. Horses can be startled by sudden movements. **Don't throw things (i.e. hats, cameras) to or from a horse.** Always dismount to remove or put on coats and jackets etc
11. Hats and sunglasses should be firmly secured
12. Always ride in boots that have a small heel, and that you would be happy to walk a long distance in



13. Be sure that you do not damage the fragile beach vegetation or dunes by riding over them indiscriminately and repeatedly. The beach authorities at many places are trying to recover beaches and dunes by re-planting and shoring up dunes. Rather ride closer to the shoreline
14. DO NOT ride too close to other people enjoying the beach. Accidents happen quickly and someone could be injured. It is not considerate to allow the hooves of your horse to kick sand neither over sun bathers, nor to barge over any person. Remember, many people are afraid of horses, too; and don't want you to come too close to them

## Care for your horse after the beach ride

If you have transported your horse to the beach, give your horse some fresh water to drink before beginning the journey home. If you are thirsty, he is thirsty!

When you get home, do a few things to refresh your horse.

- Wash your horse down with clean water to wash away salt-water and sand
- Check for and clean any scratches and cuts because salt-water contains microbes that can cause infection
- Check that your horse still has all his shoes. If he has lost a shoe, you will need to call the farrier, and keep him off stony ground until the farrier has arrived. You may want to tape up the foot for protection
- Give the horse clean fresh water to drink. If it was a long ride, you need to give the horse a meal (concentrates) with some electrolytes. Make sure the horse has plenty of hay

## Care of Tack

Immediately wipe down and dry out any leather that got wet. Rub on a conditioner for leather. Salt-water can destroy the stitching on the leather and damages leather. Damaged leather can lead to bad riding accidents if it breaks.

## BE SAFE

The following avoidable risks account for the vast majority of serious accidents.

- Not wearing a hard hat
- Failure to match horse and rider
- Going too fast on dangerous terrain
- Failure to check buckles and girths a first time and a second time after a few minutes of riding
- A hat or coat falling from a horse in front and spooking the ones behind
- A kick from a horse
- On foot in the paddock without using correct safety principles
- Riding when overweight and out of shape
- Lagging behind and catching up by speeding forward



- Prematurely “bailing out” to get off a runaway
- Unqualified ride leaders
- Having too many riders for the number of guides
- Improper mounting and dismounting
- Attaching lead ropes or reins firmly at inappropriate times
- Stirrups and boots (boots with heels too high or no heel at all or stirrups too big for the foot)
- Tying a horse too loosely
- Riding with loose horses
- Running home
- Tired horses and riders
- Separating a herd bound horse
- Incorrectly leading a horse on a ride

## OTHER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Beware of dogs running off the lead, as these can be a big problem as they often like to chase horses. Do not attempt to gallop away. Keep turning your horse so that he has the use of his back or front legs depending on where the dog is, while moving towards the owner of the dog. Ask tell the owners to put their dogs on a leash as they are supposed to be. If you or your horse get bitten you must see a vet or a doctor, so make sure you get the name of the owner and contact details **as they are liable for any medical bills. The owner also needs to provide details of the dog's rabies vaccinations and status.**

The beach is a great place for fitness rides but remember your horse needs to be reasonably fit if you are going to canter or gallop on the beach, especially if the sand is quite thick. Working in thick sand can result in muscle strain or even tendon injuries.

Walking your horse in the cold sea water is also great for cooling down legs after a cross-country event for example, but avoid it if your horse is very tired.

1. Look at this picture and list as many things as you can that could be a safety issue for these riders




2. What would you suggest is the best time to ride (tide permitting)?  
a) 07:00 am                      (b) 10:00 am                      (c) 08:00 pm
3. Give reasons why the other two times are not suitable:

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4. Why is cleaning tack after a beach ride so important?

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5. Is this statement True or False: **“It is a good idea to canter your horse on the beach every morning when your horse has just come out of 6 weeks rest due to a tendon injury (or illness)”**. Discuss.
