

Enquiries re Starting a New Branch, Centre or Centre Plus

You may have a group of young riders who are interested in becoming involved with the activities of Pony Club, and to have access to the training and qualifications of Pony Club. If there is not already a branch or centre in your geographical area, consider starting a new branch, centre, or centre plus. This is what you need to know, as a starting point. Use the information given to decide whether your situation is better suited to opening a branch, opening a centre, or opening a centre plus.

What you need to start a Branch

- An absolute minimum of 5 members, ready to join up and commit
- Those members must own their own horses or ponies, or if not owners must have access (perhaps via a lease or half-bait agreement) to horses or ponies that they can bring to mounted rallies
- The time and opportunity to hold a monthly (or near monthly) rally. These rallies may be mounted or un-mounted, with the proviso that at least one rally per quarter must be mounted
- A venue (or venues) where you can hold the mounted rallies. The venue(s) must be easy to reach by each of your potential members, and must meet the minimum safety requirements as per our risk assessment guidelines
- A number of adult volunteers (minimum 3) who will act as the branch committee, and run the branch. The committee positions include:
 - A District Commissioner, who is the head of the branch. They need not be knowledgeable about horses, but must have good organizing and delegating skills, as well as good inter-personal skills. This person may not be the owner of the proposed venue, nor be financially involved in the activities of the venue. The DC is responsible for guiding the structure and organization of rallies and appointing instructors or examiners, as required, for these events.
 - A Treasurer who will manage the branch's financial affairs. This includes collecting membership levies and any other fees, controlling expenses, and transferring the regional and national portion of the fees to the appropriate regional or national accounts. The Treasurer must be able to produce a simple set of accounts (income and expenditure) on a quarterly basis, or on demand. The Treasurer may not be related in any way to the DC.
 - A Secretary who will assist the DC in completing and maintaining the branch records, liaise with members and their parents, and carry out whatever they are reasonably required to do with regard to running the branch
 - An Instructor will be required, to guide or undertake the training of members. Any or all of the persons holding the above positions may be the instructor(s) if suitably qualified, or an instructor may be appointed by the DC on an ad hoc basis. The instructor may be appointed for the entire year, or asked to train only at one or more rallies, in which case multiple instructors would be required. These instructors are also volunteers, and on the committee

- Further volunteers can be used in other positions of your deciding, or be 'floating' committee members who help out as and when required
- Those wishing to start a branch must complete the application form available on the Pony Club website, and submit them to the regional pony club committee for approval

What if you can't fill all the above criteria? Your proposed members don't own their horses, or you don't have enough volunteers to run a branch. Read on. The next option might be suitable.

What you need to start a Centre

- An absolute minimum of 5 members, ready to join up and commit
- A venue such as a riding or equestrian school who wishes their clients to have access to Pony Club activities and training
- The venue must meet the minimum safety requirements as per our risk assessment guidelines. The venue will be inspected for compliance before it is accepted as a Centre, and will be re-inspected each year
- Those clients, who become Pony Club members, will be able to use the venue's horses or ponies for pony club rallies. The rallies will be held at the venue, and at a time agreed with the owner of the venue and ponies. The venue may charge members for the use of the animal for the agreed time period
- The time and opportunity to hold a monthly (or near monthly) rally. Rallies may be mounted, or un-mounted, but at least one rally per quarter must be mounted
- The ability to make a clear distinction between activities of the riding yard, and activities of the Pony Club, ie a separation of activities
- An adult volunteer nominated by the venue (but not the owner of the yard nor a person financially involved in the activities of the yard) who will be the liaison person between the yard and the South African Pony Club, and will represent the yard's interests. This person will keep membership records, and collect membership levies, rally fees, etc and pay them over to the SAPC as instructed. Finances are run through the Regional Bank Account. The volunteer, in conjunction with the regional representative, will draw up a simple set of accounts (income and expenditure) relating to the affairs of the Centre at the end of each year
- Pony Club will appoint a person or persons to assist in the planning of rallies, guiding of training, and to examine members for their badges and tests. This person will liaise with the person described in the point above, and will represent the interests of the Pony Club and the members
- An instructor will be required to undertake the training of members. This person may be any of the persons holding the above positions if suitably qualified, or may be appointed by the Pony Club on an ad hoc basis. The instructor may be the riding school's own instructor. The instructor may be appointed for the entire year, or asked to train only at one or more rallies, in which case multiple instructors would be required
- It is accepted and agreed that Centre members are not able, or allowed by the venue, to transport their mounts to any venue other than the one where the Centre is based. The members will thus not be able to participate in any regional mounted events (although they can participate in un-mounted events)
- Those wishing to start a Centre must complete the application forms available on the Pony Club website, and submit them to the regional pony club committee for approval

What if your potential members do want to participate in the regional mounted events, and can obtain permission from the riding or equestrian school to transport the school's ponies away from the venue? The next option may be suitable.

What you need to start a Centre Plus

All the requirements and procedures are identical to those of starting and running a Centre. The additional aspect is that the members will, ON OCCASION, be able or be allowed (by the school) to transport their mounts to Regional events. They could then participate in Regional Clinics and the Inter-Branch Mounted Games and the annual Inter-Branch and Inter-Regional Competition. The venue may charge members for the hire or use of the ponies, and for the costs of transporting such ponies, in order to enable their participation in the regional event.

Once you have decided which Pony Club vehicle suits you best, please fill in the 'New Branch/Centre Application' form, and submit to the region under which you fall, or if we do not have an office in your region then submit to the National office.

Once you are a Start – Up

You will receive guidelines on running a branch or centre or centre plus, including rally ideas; and also receive all the administration documents you will require – constitution, codes of conduct, procedures, incident reports, risk assessment report, branding guidelines, and of course access to the training material. You will receive training on how to navigate the website and load members' achievements and attendance records. Most importantly, you will join the family of Pony Club fans and volunteers! We look forward to welcoming you.