



CONFORMATION

Advanced Achievement Badge

Learning Objectives

To know and understand various equestrian terms used for describing a horse's conformation.

Syllabus

- 1 Overall impression
- 2 Head
- 3 Neck
- 4 Shoulder
- 5 Chest
- 6 Withers
- 7 Forelegs
- 8 Back
- 9 Depth of girth & Rib cage
- 10 Hindquarters
- 11 Hind legs
- 12 Action

Teaching Ideas and Resources

- 1 Body and legs should fit in a square box; no individual part should catch the eye. The horse should appear symmetrical. Horse could be light weight, middle weight, or heavy weight. Show an understanding of the difference.
Find a photograph of a horse with good conformation

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- 2** Ideally in proportion to body, could be big, roman nose, dished or plain. Head should be well set onto the neck.
Draw heads with each of these descriptions
- 3** Ideally in proportion to body and well set on. Strong enough to support the size of the head. Could be set on badly, be bull or ewe, too long or too short.
Discuss why it is unfavourable to have the faults listed above.
- 4** Ideally sloping, at approx. 45 degrees or unfortunately upright.
Take a long ruler or marker and show what a sloping or upright shoulder looks like on a horse
- 5** Ideally broad – 2 hands width. Could be narrow or pigeon chested. Put a hand between the top of the front legs to help measure how wide the chest is.
- 6** Ideally well defined. Could be too high or flat.
Gently rock a saddle from side to side, with flat withers it will slip off the sides.
Talk of difficulty of fitting saddle to high withers
- 7** Ideally straight from front and side, hoof pastern angle 45 degree angle. Could be over or back at the knee, knock kneed or have a broken back or broken forward hoof pastern axis.
Hold a piece of string tied to a pebble like a plumb line to establish which horse has straight legs. Make two paper triangles with 45 or 50 degree angle, hold it against a hoof pastern line to establish the hoof pastern axis
- 8** Ideally short and strong, depending on the horse's gender.
Could be too long, sway backed or roach backed.
Count the number of hands widths behind the saddles of each horse in the ride to establish which has the longest back
- 9** Ideally the measurement from the withers to girth should be the same as the length of the legs. The ribs well rounded and not slab sided. The horse should not appear over topped or showing too much daylight.
Visually check the depth of girth then measure and compare with limbs.
- 10** Ideally rounded, could be goose or sloping or with tail set on too low.
When viewed from behind should be level & symmetrical.
Discuss which horse has the most pleasing hindquarters

- 11** Ideally hindlegs have straight lines from behind and from hock down with good foot pastern axis. (50 degrees)
- Could be cow hocked, wide behind, sickle hocked or too upright & straight.
- Trace or draw the diagram of each of the faults named.
- Look for the horse/pony that has the best hind leg in the yard/rally
- 12** Ideally horse should move with all four legs moving in a straight-line forward.
- Could be on 3 tracks, dishing, plaiting or too close behind. Movement should be symmetrical.
- Trot up three horses or ponies, discuss action of each.

Recommended Reading

- ▶ 14th Edition The Pony Club Manual

Questions

- 1** Is it good if one point of conformation catches the eye?
- 2** Show diagrams of roman nose, dished face and plain head, ask for the correct descriptions of each.
- 3** Why is it unfavourable to have a ewe neck or a bull neck.
- 4** Take a ruler or marker and indicate the angles of an upright and sloping shoulder. Discuss what is ideal
- 5** Identify whether the horse shown has a broad, normal or pigeon chest. Discuss possible advantages / disadvantages.
- 6** Describe what type of wither the horse you usually ride has.
- 7** Show where you would hold a plumb line to decide whether the horse has straight legs.
- 8** Name two descriptions of back conformation.
- 9** Identify if the body of the horse is in a correct proportion to the limbs.
- 10** What is a tail that is set on too low.
- 11** What do cow hocks look like?
- 12** Which horse or pony in the yard or at a rally has good conformation &/ or correct action?

Answers

- 1** Generally no, horse should appear symmetric.
- 2** As diagrams

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- 3** Ewe neck horses find it more difficult to use their backs correctly, bull necked horse often work on their forehands and pull.
- 4** The answer should suggest that a sloping shoulder is generally preferable.
- 5** Answer will depend on the horse shown
- 6** Knowing the named horse will make it easier to know whether the answer is correct.
- 7** Against the side of the leg running through the middle of the knee, or from the point on the shoulder down to the centre of the hoof – the toe clip.
- 8** Short, strong, long, sway and roach could be mentioned.
- 9** Could be over topped, showing too much daylight or herring gutted.
- 10** A tail that is not pleasing to the eye as it appears too low for a symmetrical picture. Can make for a cramped hindleg action.
- 11** The hocks are close together, almost with the point of hock point towards the other hock. As a result the toes turn out and the horse is likely to brush.