



E.S.N.Z. SHOWHUNTER

BUILDING and DESIGNING SHOWHUNTER COURSES

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INTRODUCTION

Show Hunter is the discipline in which the horse is judged on its ability to jump correctly over each fence and jump a course with an even, effortless, rhythm. A Show Hunter course does not test the scope of the horses jumping ability.

All courses should be well designed and well built so as to enable the best performance from all horses. The good horses should have the opportunity to jump an excellent round and the lesser horses should be able to jump the course safely and hopefully learn and improve with each performance.

Building a Course

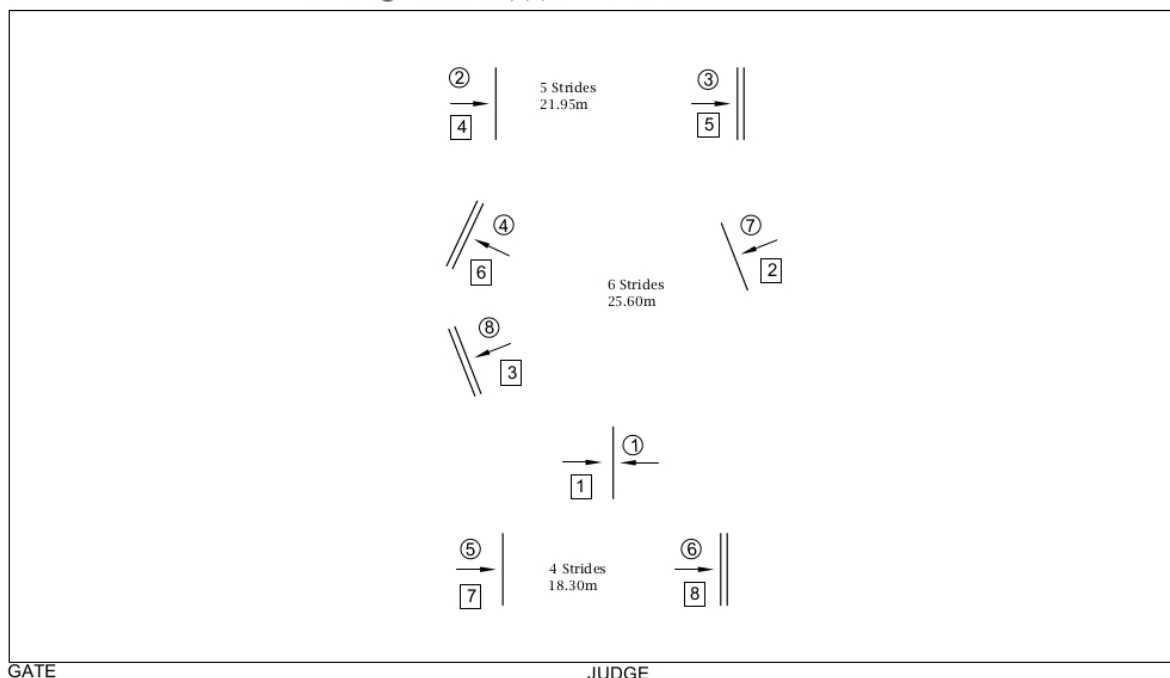
The steps to building a course when a plan has been provided

Size of the Ring

- The recommended minimum size is 40m X 80m but bigger is better. The ring should be twice as long as it is wide.
- The fences will be in the middle third of the ring, allowing one-third at each end for wide, smooth turns.
- The fences will be on the two long sides of the ring, across the diagonals or on the quarter lines NEVER across the short ends of the ring for a hunter course. Fences on the short ends are allowed for equitation and handy hunter courses.

How-To Lay Out the Course

SATURDAY HORSES COURSE **A** Classes: 1,4,9,11 8 fences
COURSE **B** Classes: 2,5,6,10 8 fences



- Put up ring fence marking out the perimeter of the area to be used
- Mark half way of the long side e.g. if ring is 80m long mark at 40m on each side of ring (electric fence standards are good for this)
- Using rails put one where each fence will be built. Do the two long sides first, then fence 1 on the quarter line, then the diagonal line and lastly the single fence on the diagonal. For the fences in the lines each fence will be equidistant from the midway of the ring. The first fence will be on the midway mark
- HINT – it is easier to just put one rail where each fence will go so you can see that you have the fences in the right place with a 'clear road' to each fence and that the ground is suitable. If there is rough ground that needs to be avoided then adjustments will need to be made
- Once the lines have been measured and there is a rail representing each jump then walk the course to ensure the turns are wide angled and smooth and there is a minimum of 4 strides to a fence coming off a turn

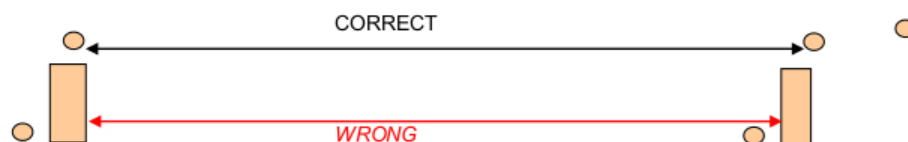
How To Measure the Distance Between Fences

- In Show Hunter the lines are always vertical to oxer
- Place the end of the tape measure on the 'backside' (i.e. the landing side) of the rail of the vertical then walk to the rail, which is the front rail of the oxer, and place the tape on the 'frontside' of the rail (i.e. the take-off side)

Vertical to Oxer

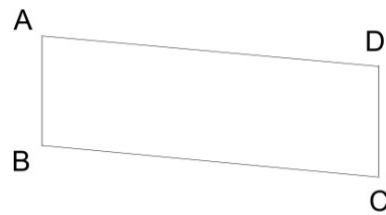
Measure from the backside of the top rail on the vertical to the frontside of the front rail on the oxer (inside to inside)

Do not measure from fill to fill because that shortens the distance

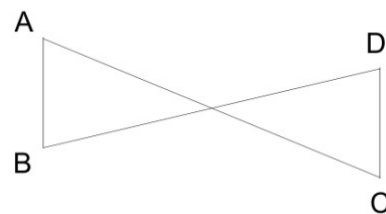


- Measure both ends of the rails, the measurement between the ends of each rail must be the same.

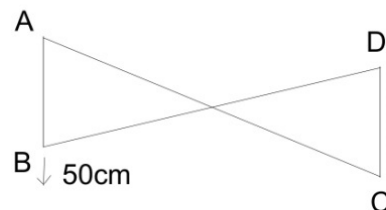
Then measure diagonally, the right corner of one pole to the left corner of the other pole and then left to right. This measurement should be the same on both cross measurements.
The following is how to 'square' a line.



A to D is 30m, B to C is 30m
but the line isn't 'square'
so measure diagonally between the rails



A to C is 32m, B to D is 31m
To square the line move AB rail half the
difference of the measurements
i.e. 50cm



The line is now square.
The distance from A to D
and B to C will still be 30m



- When measuring distances between fences you need to allow an extra stride (half a stride for the distance the horse lands away from the first fence and half a stride for the distance it takes off from at the second fence)

The example illustrated below is a 5 stride line for horses measured at 21.96m (72') 18.3m (60') for the 5 strides the horse will take between the fences plus 1.83m (6') for the distance it will land out from the first fence plus 1.83m (6') from take-off spot to second fence. Total distance = 21.96m (72')



Building the Fences

- Put a jump stand at each end of the rail on the ground. HINT – for an oxer fence this will be the front rail of the oxer. The back rail of the oxer will be at the maximum height for the class and the front rail 10-15cm lower so that the oxer is ascending. Only use one rail on the back of the oxer.
- The oxers will also need a pair of back stands with break-away cups
- Every fence needs a ground line, approx 30cm out from the front rail, usually a rail but can be a flower box etc
- Usually 4 rails for a vertical, 5 rails for an oxer but less rails are required depending on the fill that is used. Rails of a single colour are desirable but if you need to use coloured rails use the less bright ones e.g. black and white rather than purple and orange
- Set the top rail of the vertical and the back rail of the oxer to the height of the first class. The width of an oxer must be commensurate to its height. Show hunter fences are not built to test the scope of a horse so oxers are not built as wide as in Jumping course.
- The first fence should be 5cm lower than the maximum height of the class
- Next put in any fill e.g. hen coops, walls, ladder type fills, brush boxes
- If planks or hanging fill is used they must have at least one faultable rail above them
- Then fill any gaps with rails
- Lastly the fences can be 'dressed' using potted plants or artificial plants
- Always have the first fence simple and inviting and jumping towards the gate

Practice Fences

- It is usual to provide a vertical and an oxer fence in the warm-up ring.
- Each fence must have a ground line
- Breakaway cups must be used on at least one side of the back rail of the oxer
- Practice fences must be flagged to indicate the direction they are to be jumped (red flag on the right, white flag on the left) Practice fences cannot be more than 10cm higher or wider than the fences of the current class in the competition ring

On The Day of Competition

Before the Warm-Up Rounds

- Often there will be warm-up rounds and before these start the person in charge of the course should re-measure the lines to ensure they are correct and that the height of the fences is correct for the first class on the programme.
- The course plan needs to be posted at the gate into the ring before the warm-ups.

Before the First Class

- The course plan needs to be posted at the gate into the ring 1 hour before the first class starts.
- If there have been warm-up rounds walk round the course to check that each fence is correct. Sometimes during warm-ups someone will put a rail up after it has come down but will use the ground rail by mistake. Also fill may have been pushed further under the fence than it should be by a horse that has a refusal.
- Introduce yourself to the judge and check that they are okay with the course.

During the Class

- It is a good idea to watch all the rounds in the first class so you can get a good idea of how the course is riding. If you notice something that needs changing then you must wait to do it when the class has finished

After the Class

- Make any adjustments that are required
- Have a quick word with the judge that they are happy with the course. If they consider that there is a problem then it will need to be rectified

Helpful Hints

- If possible, have the first fence riding towards the in/out gate. It should be a vertical that is well built.
- Have the height of the first fence 5cm lower than the maximum height for the class. It is good to have the vertical at the start of a line 5cm lower too. At least 50% of the fences must be the maximum height for the class.
- Don't have the fill behind the front rail of a fence as it acts as a false ground line and draws the horse into the fence.
- If possible have the fences in a line of the same colour
- Build the course in the middle third of the ring allowing ample room at each end for the turns. You should be able to drive a vehicle around the course.

From SH Rules

K Show Hunter Courses

4.Vertical Fences

4.1 These can be any upright and may be jumped from both directions.

4.2 Planks or hanging fill may be used, but must have at least one or two faultable rails above the planks or hanging fill.

5 Oxer Fences

5.1 May only be ascending with the back rail 10 -15cm higher than the front rail.

5.2 Front element can be of rails, plank or hanging fill. If a plank or hanging fill is used then at least one or two faultable rails above the planks or hanging fill must be used.

- 5.3 Back rail must be only a single horizontal rail, not a plank or gate.
- 5.4 Width must be commensurate to height.
- 5.5 An oxer can only be jumped in one direction.
- 5.6 An oxer is more conducive to a horse using its knees well. As a rule the horse jumps into a line over a vertical and out over an oxer.
- 5.7 Triple bars, Swedish oxers, fan jumps, hogsback and treble combinations of three fences related by one or two strides are not allowed in a Show Hunter course.
- 5.8 At least one side of the back rail of an oxer must have a breakaway cup.

Height of Fences

The height of fences is governed by the Show Hunter rules:

- Introductory Ponies – maximum 80cm
- Introductory Horses – maximum 90cm
- There are no minimum heights for the Introductory level
- HOYQ (recognised) classes for Horses
- Amateur Hunter: 85cm – 1m
- Junior Hunter: 85cm – 1m
- Open Hunter: 85cm – 1.20m
- 4 year old Hunter: 85cm – 1m
- 5 year old Hunter: 85cm – 1.05m
- 6 year old Hunter: 85cm – 1.10m
- 7 year old Hunter: 85cm – 1.15m
- Junior and Amateur series classes: 90 – 1m
- Open Horse series class: 1.10m up to 31st December, from 1st January 1.10m to 1.15m
- Handy Hunter: 85cm -1.20m
- Series Equitation Junior & Adult: 1m maximum
- HOYQ (recognised) Series classes and Handy Hunter for Ponies
- Category A: 70cm maximum. 3.05m stride (10')
- Category B: 80cm maximum. 3.20m stride (10'6")
- Category C: 1m maximum. 3.35m stride (11')
- Pony Rider Series equitation: 80cm maximum on Cat C stride
- 12 years & under Series Equitation: 70cm maximum on Cat A stride

Striding Chart

Lines	Cat A feet	Cat A metres	Cat B feet	Cat B metres	Cat C feet	Cat C metres	Horse feet	Horse metres
1 stride	20'	6.10m	21'	6.40m	22'	6.70m	24'	7.30m
2 strides	30'	9.15m	31'6"	9.60m	33'	10.05m	36'	10.95m
3 strides	40'	12.20m	42'	12.80m	44'	13.40m	48'	14.65m
4 strides	50'	15.25m	52'6"	16.00m	55'	16.75m	60'	18.30m
5 strides	60'	18.30m	63'	19.20m	66'	20.10m	72'	21.95m
6 strides	70'	21.35m	73'6"	22.40m	77'	23.50m	84'	25.60m
7 strides	80'	24.40m	84'	25.60m	88'	26.80m	96'	29.25m

COURSE DESIGNING for HUNTERS

Hunters are meant to be scored by the judges, not the course, to get the result. The course designer has the job of setting the stage to allow the athletes to show themselves off and create a fair competition.

It is the job of the course designer to design a course of jumps that will allow the good horses to jump an excellent round but still allow the lesser horses to jump around safely and be a positive learning experience for both horse and rider.

Skills of a Course Designer

- Have a good understanding of show hunter
- Know the show hunter rules and series conditions
- Present safe and sensible courses for competitors
- Set correct distances between fences
- Build fences safely and correctly
- Be able to recognise and correct errors
- Learn from their mistakes and be able to admit that they have made a mistake
- Be able to communicate with judges, officials and ring crew
- Be able to communicate with riders and listen and understand their concerns
- Never become complacent and take every opportunity to learn from fellow course designers
- Recognise that they are part of a team producing the show and work with them not against them

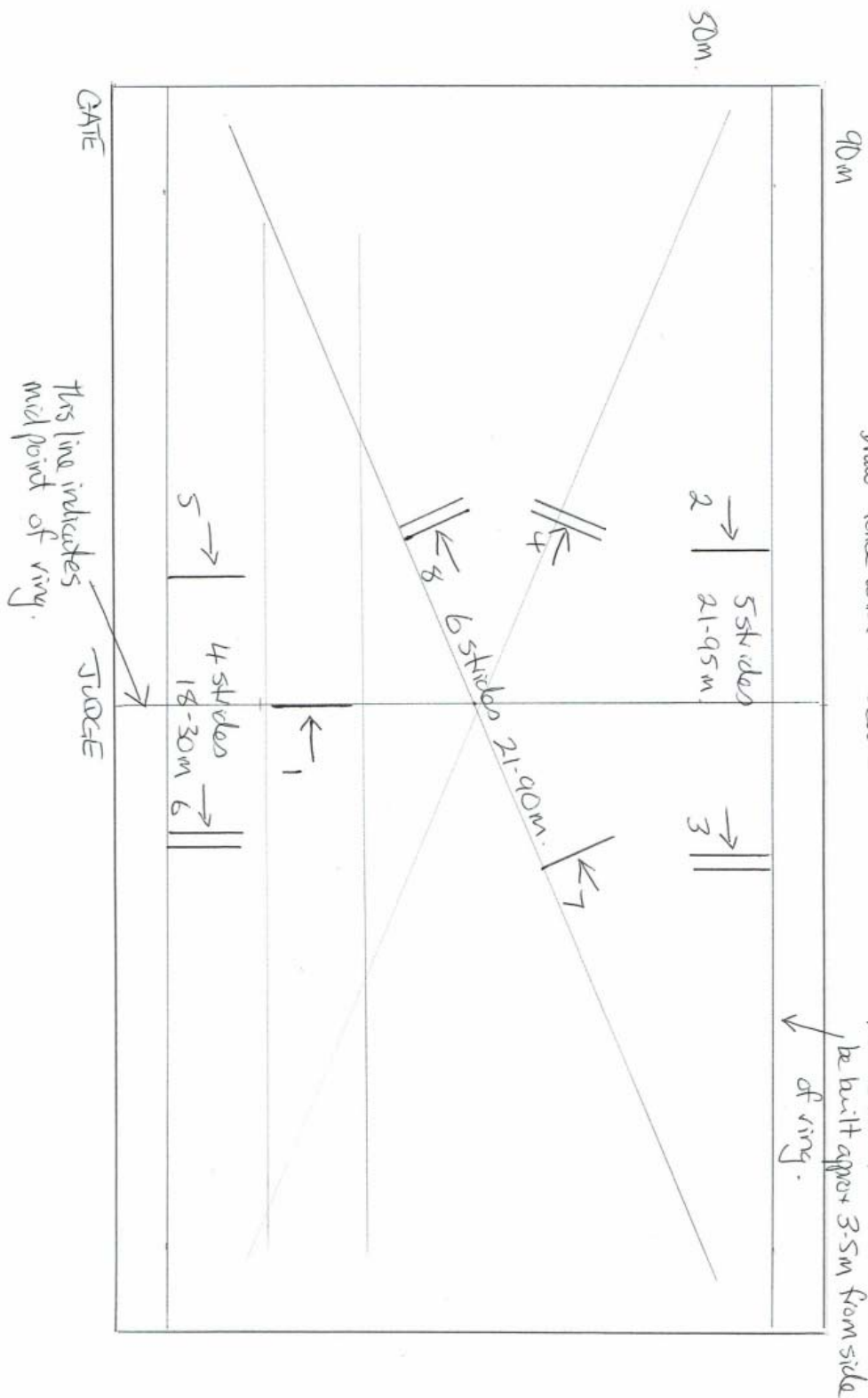
Designing a Hunter Course

The first step is to draw a course plan to scale for which you will need to know:

- size of the ring
- ring surface, is it sand or grass. If it is grass are there rough patches that need to be avoided
- where the in/out gate will be
- which side of the ring the judge will be sited

SCALE : 1 cm = 3.65 m (1 stride for horses).
 Draw fence with to scale.

this line indicates that fences will
 be built approx 3.5m from side
 of ring.



- Do the two outside lines first
- Next put in fence 1
- Then the diagonal line
- Lastly the single oxer on the diagonal

By drawing to scale you will ensure that every fence has a clear 'road' to and away from it.

Turns

- Turns should be wide and gentle – no turn should be less than 180 degrees and most should be more
- Turns should allow plenty of time to do a lead change before arriving at the next jump
- Each course should have a minimum of one lead change preferably two

Distances

- Refer to the chart in Part 1, the majority of the time you will use these distances.
- Distances may be shortened when – there is muddy footing, small rings, line is on an uphill slope
- Distances may be lengthened when - line is on a downhill slope, fences 1.10m and above and the judge and competitors must be made aware of this change.

Important – when you are altering the distance for 1.10m and above it is the landing and take-off distances that change not the stride of the horse.

One and Two Stride Combinations

- A combination should not be earlier than fence 4 in a course
- Avoid using one stride combinations as they make a horse 'quick' but they are allowed
- Two stride combination will be vertical to oxer
- A combination can be used as the second and third fences of a three stride line usually a line of this sort will be 4 strides to 2 strides
- When building a combination use the most solid fill in the first fence

Bending Line

A bending line is a gradual curve from one jump to the other and is best built as an outside line. The fewer the strides in a bending line the more difficult it is. e.g. 6 strides is tough and 7 strides is easier.

Broken lines

A broken line is one in which there is a distinct turn between fences. These are not to be used in hunter course but can be used in Handy Hunter and Equitation courses.

First Fence

- A vertical with an easy approach, straight and nothing in the way of the approach and be inviting for the horse to jump
- When you have an A and a B course try to have the first fences starting on opposite leads
- It is preferable for green horses and young riders to have the first fence jumping towards the in/out gate
- Try to have the last fence at the end of the ring where the in/out gate is as this saves time during a day when there are large numbers

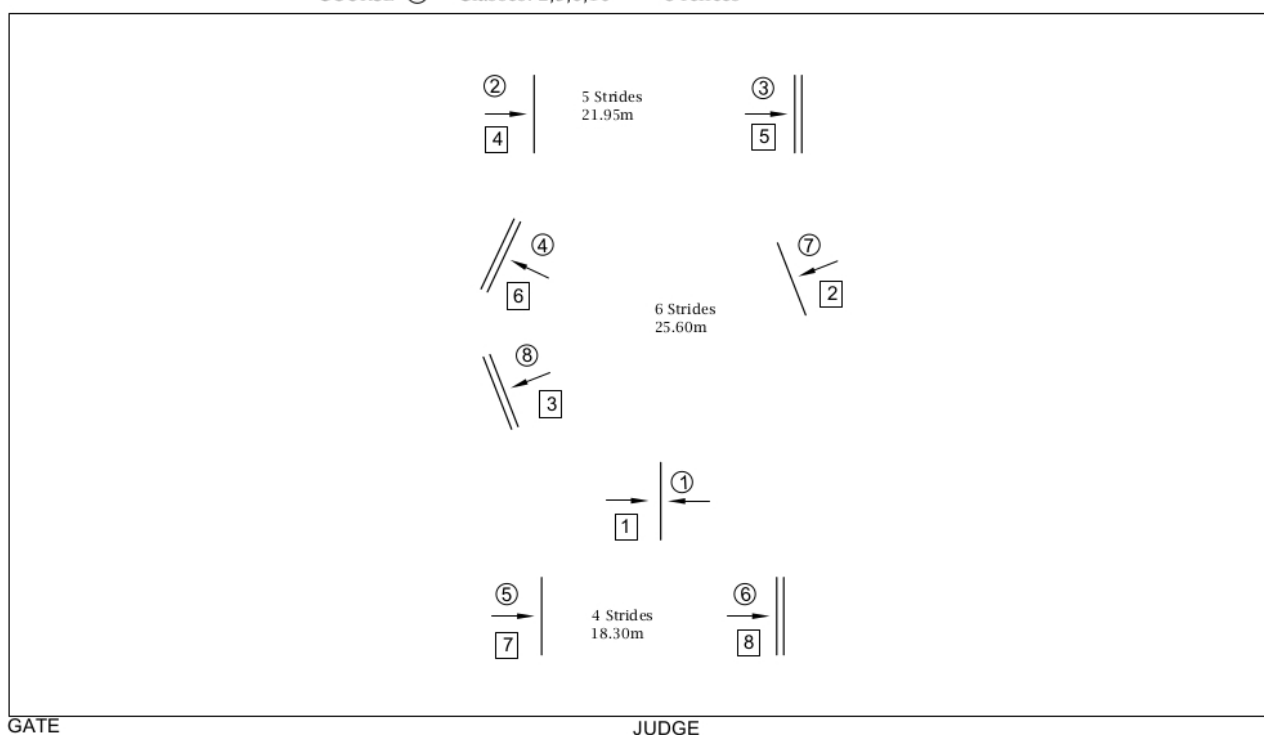
Course Plans

As the course designer you will need to provide course plans for the riders to be posted at the in/out gate and a copy of the plans for the judge. Ensure that the gate plan and the judges plan are the same.

Gate Plans

- Know where the plan will be posted in relation to the ring so that the plan can be drawn in such a way so that when riders look at the plan it matches the layout of the fences in the ring from where they are standing to read the course plan
- Make it clear which is course A & B – use different coloured pens or a highlighter or define the jump numbers differently (e.g. a circle round jump numbers for Course A and a square for jumps in Course B)
- It will need to show which course each class will jump
- It is helpful to put how many fences in each course
- A vertical is shown as a single line and an oxer by two parallel lines
- Number each fence
- Each fence must have an arrow to indicate which direction it is to be jumped
- Distance between fences in a line (you can also put the number of strides)
- Show the gate position
- Show the judges position
- If possible laminate the plan or put in a plastic sleeve

SATURDAY HORSES COURSE A Classes: 1,4,9,11 8 fences
 COURSE B Classes: 2,5,6,10 8 fences



Judges Plan

Must show the same as above and if possible match judges copy to ring layout

Level of Competition

The course should be designed to be appropriate to the level of competition

For Introductory classes use 4, 5 and 6 stride lines with a maximum of 8 fences

For HOYQ (recognised) classes use as for Intro level but can also use 7 stride line, bending line, combinations.

Even for HOYQ classes keep in mind the level of class (e.g. is it a class that is restricted to less experienced horses) and the time of the season (e.g. is it a show that is in the first month of the season).

If it is a Series class, in which case you may wish to have up to 10 fences.

REMEMBER – KEEP IT SIMPLE

Hunters are meant to be scored by the judges, not the course, to get the result. The course designer has the job of setting the stage to allow the athletes to show themselves off and create a fair competition.

It is the job of the course designer to design a course of jumps that will allow the good horses to jump an excellent round but still allow the lesser horses to jump around safely and be a positive learning experience for both horse and rider.

COURSE DESIGNING FOR EQUITATION

Equitation courses resemble a hunter course but are more technical in order to test a rider's skill and form as in equitation it is the rider who is judged.

Usually it is best to design a course that does not require too many changes from the hunter course as normally there will not be many helpers to make the changes and most show organisers will not have allowed for time- consuming changes.

Designing the Equitation Course

The first step is to study the course that you have designed for the hunter classes and work out how you can use it for an equitation course.

It is important to design the course to be appropriate to the level of competition.

First Fence

Can be: a single vertical (easiest)
a single oxer (more difficult)
a line of two fences (most difficult)

The difficulty of all of these is increased if the jump is riding away from the gate.

Turns

- Turns should be challenging but sensible and safe
- Turns should test a riders ability to properly and effectively control their horse and ride the most efficient track possible
- Turns should never require a rider to be rough on their horse's mouth or require the rider to turn the horse in the air over a fence
- The course can require a horse to jump the first fence of a line then turn out of the line to jump another fence but the line should be 4 strides or more
- A roll-back turn is allowed

Combinations

- 1 or 2 stride combinations are allowed but are best kept for the higher level of competition

Combinations **CANNOT** be used in either of the Pony Rider Series Equitation classes. For these classes all lines must be 4 strides or more. This is because the classes are jumped at the Category C and Category A striding but ponies of all categories can compete in these classes. Having lines of 4 strides or more allows the smaller ponies to be able to add a stride in the lines and therefore jump safely. On the course plan only put the distance between fences not the strides. This extremely important for ponies as you will have ponies from different categories in the same class.

Trot Fences

- Always use a vertical for a trot fence
- The trot fence must be set at a lower height than the rest of the course, usually at least 10cm lower
(Pony Riders series class 70cm maximum, 12 & under series 60cm and Adults & Juniors

90cm)

- Indicate on the course plan whether it is to be sitting or rising trot
- Usually a marker will be placed to indicate where the trot is required to begin
- The closer to the fence that the trot is required the more difficult

Halts

- A marker will indicate where a halt is required
- The difficulty of a halt is increased depending on where in the course it is placed
 - Halfway on a basic turn from one fence to another (easiest)
 - After a fence before making the turn (more difficult)
 - After the turn has been made and the next fence is sighted (more difficult)
 - In a line, which should be at least 7 strides (most difficult and should only be used in the highest level of competition)
- At the lower level it is best to have the horse come back to trot before the halt and then from the halt have a trot fence

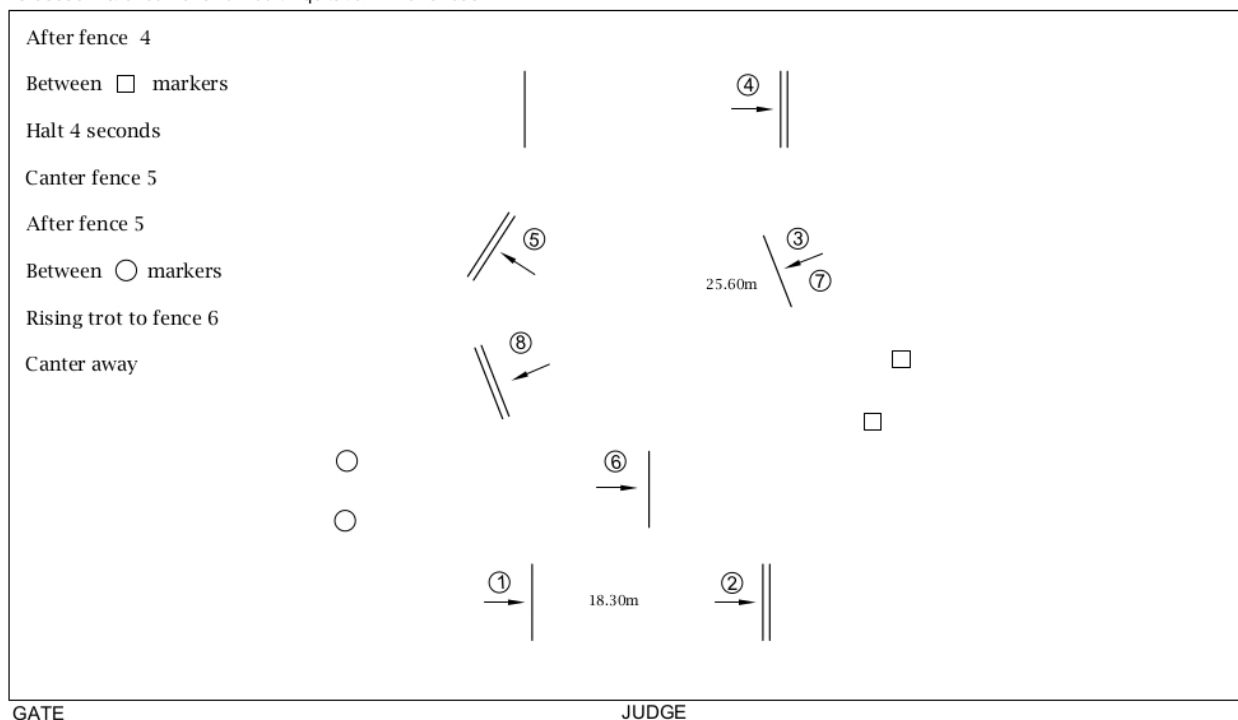
Broken Lines

- These can be used in equitation but are best kept for the higher levels
- They should be a minimum of 6 strides, so the horse will land, take 3 strides, turn, take 3 strides, then jump
- If the line is an odd number e.g. a 7 seven stride line will ride: land, 3 strides, turn, 4 strides, jump or 4 strides, turn, 3 strides, jump which is the more difficult option.

Hints

- A fence can be built on the end of the ring
- Don't add too many 'extra tests' to the plan as this makes it very difficult for the judge
- The actual track should be the main test for the rider in an equitation course

Classes 7 & 8 Junior and Adult Equitation 8 fences



The following are the Series Conditions for Equitation Courses for 2020-21 season

Courses will consist of 7 -10 fences, typical of the vertical and ascending oxers that are found in a Showhunter course.

A series equitation course should include two or more related distances that may be jumped using a roll back turn or as a related line, at least one single oxe from a non-related line and a single vertical. A vertical may be jumped more than once and may be jumped from both directions providing there are ground lines on each take-off side.

An oxe may be jumped more than once but may only be jumped in the direction of the ascending back rail.

A Series Equitation course may include one or more of the rider tests as follows:

- Simple
 - Roll back turn
 - Sitting trot
 - Halt on course but not in a line. Place to halt is designated by the course builder and/or judge
 - Trotting a single fence (max height 90cm for horses, 70cm for pony rider, 60cm for 12& under)
 - Simple change of lead
- Medium
 - Trotting a fence into or out of a line in a related distance (max as above)
 - Ride without stirrups
 - Figure of eight
 - More forward canter to a single fence
- Advanced
 - Rein back
 - Flying lead change
 - Hand gallop
 - Halt in a line, but line not to be shorter than 7 strides. Place to halt is designated by the course builder and/or judge
 - Counter canter
 - Jump without stirrups

Courses for ponies must not include lines or related distances of less than 4 strides.

The course for the 12 & under equitation should be simpler than that for the Pony Rider Series Equ.

Note – a trot fence should be a single vertical.

COURSE DESIGNING FOR HANDY HUNTER

Handy Hunter classes are relatively new to NZ Show Hunter and as such there are no hard and fast rules at present. There are only guidelines to the types of fences and courses.

A handy hunter is required to show 'handiness', which is defined as : time and ground saving movement incorporating promptness, tighter corners, roll back turns, jumping fences on angles or using clever approaches without adversely affecting performance.

The judge will want to see a horse that can handle tighter turns easily and take some options while being responsive. Horses that show adaptability for additional elements should be rewarded, if it is done well e.g. cantering straight to the first fence without circling, easily coming down to walk at the end of the round without circling.

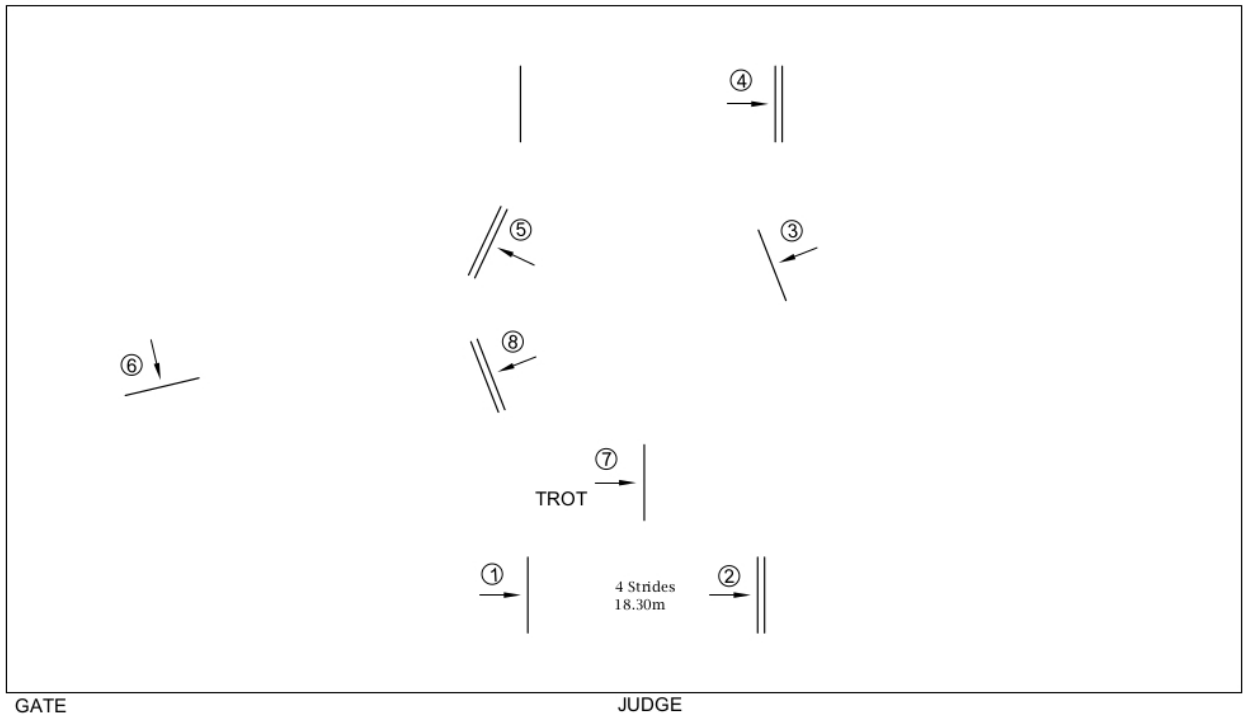
So this is what the judge will be looking for and the course needs to be designed so that a rider can show this 'handiness' but equally if the rider and horse are inexperienced at handy hunter then the course will allow them to jump round safely by riding a longer track.

The Handy Hunter course could include any of the following:

- At least two changes of direction
- At least one related line
- Trot fence – at a lower height than the class height
- Bending line
- Rollback turn
- Inside turn
- Halt
- Halt and reinback
- Narrow/skinny fence
- A fence across the end of the ring, usually a vertical
- Hand Gallop a jump

Points To Remember

- Ground lines are optional in handy hunter
- No course can require riders to trot or canter through the gate. If a rider wants to canter directly to the first fence they must walk into the ring and then pick up the canter
- A handy hunter course is not the same as an equitation course. There are definite differences.
- Regardless of the turns and tracks, a handy hunter must be allowed to jump freely without interference from the rider.(i.e. the course cannot force a rider to have to override or hand ride a horse over the jumps or in any way to interfere with the arc of a horse's jump)



Sample Course Plans

Course Plans

The course plan that is posted at the gate must show:

- the in/out gate
- the judges box
- an arrow indicating the direction of travel to the jump
- indicate whether the jump is a vertical or an over
- the distance between the fences in a line

Note: on the following course plans the number of strides between fences has been used to simplify the presentation. On the actual course plan you need to put the distance but you can also put the strides.

GATE Course A Course B

A plan using 6 fences that can be jumped as two courses

GATE

A plan using 7 fences

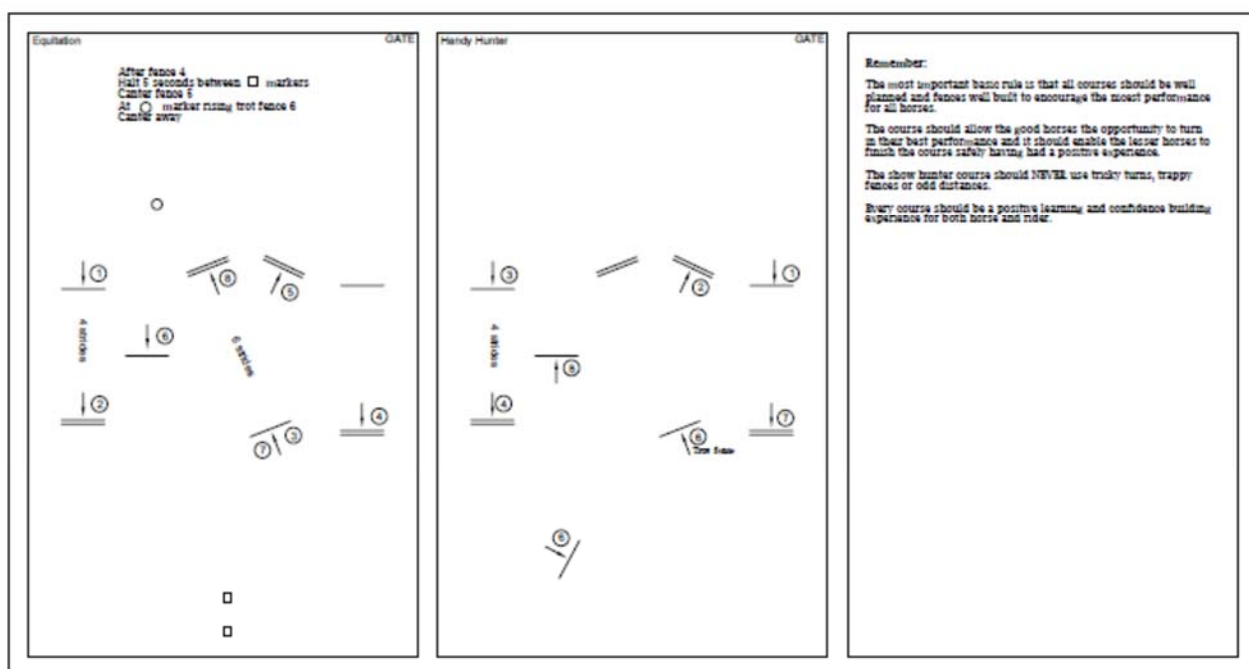
GATE Course C Course D

A plan using 8 fences that can be jumped as two courses

The next three course plans are the same course that can be used for:

- a Hunter course that rides as two courses
- an Equitation course
- a Handy Hunter course

Course E Course F GATE



Fences Before and After Decorating













Example of a Special Handy Hunter Fence



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