

# THE RIDER POSITION

1 – Poor    2 – Fair    3 – Average    4 – Above Average    5 – Excellent

Position Point	Description	Score/comments
<b>Alignment (flat work)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Straight-line from ear to hip to heel that is perpendicular to the ground</li> <li>• Straight-line across top of shoulders</li> <li>• Alignment across waistline</li> <li>• Straight-line from elbow to bit</li> </ul>	
<b>Alignment (jumping)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoulder – knee – toe</li> <li>• Hip over heel</li> <li>• Base of support strong and stable/effective</li> </ul>	
<b>Elasticity in joints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring in the ankle (not held stiff or jammed down)</li> <li>• Heel lower than toe, but moveable</li> <li>• Spring in all joints that gives the look of stillness</li> <li>• Supple hips and pelvis</li> </ul>	
<b>Appropriate relaxation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body appears to have movement with the horse on the flat and over fences</li> <li>• Body appears to be comfortable</li> <li>• Eyes appear soft</li> </ul>	
<b>Muscle tone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body is not too stiff</li> <li>• Body is not too floppy</li> <li>• Body appears to have the strength to apply a half-halt and follow the horse.</li> </ul>	
<b>Base of support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Supportive</li> <li>• Effective</li> </ul>	

# THE HORSE

Goals	Score	Comments
Correct route		
Correct bend through body for desired route		
Muscle motion – appropriate relaxation or suppleness		
Energy		
Level of poll		
Rhythm/Relaxation		
Looseness		
Connection		

## **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE HORSE (in this order)**

1. **Correct route**—Assume the rider rides on the perimeter of the arena and uses corners unless doing a specific figure/movement. If doing a figure/movement, it needs to be correct (i.e. round circles). Losing route means that the horse has lost balance somewhere in his body or the rider is riding inaccurately.
  - Did you intend to miss that corner?
  - Did you want the hind end to move to the inside?
  - Is that the counter bend that you want?
2. **Correct bend through the body** is based on the figure being ridden. The horse needs to have equal weight on both sides of the line of the figure.
  - Is the head to one side? If so, there is a problem in another part of his body.
  - Does the shoulder move in or out further on one side or look heavier or tighter?
  - Does the hindquarter move in or out further on one side or look heavier or tighter?
3. **Muscle movement/motion**—Based on the level of suppleness of the horse.
  - Muscles & joints should show movement.
  - The most frequently tightened joint is the shoulder. Look for the line along the shoulder blade to show a wrinkle, looseness or movement, and the muscle moving over the bone.
  - Look for muscle groups to be elastic and moving. Often when this is lacking, you can help the rider determine where the stiffness/ tightness might be.

**NOTE: Often muscle groups tighten during changes in the ride: turns, leaving a figure and starting a straight line, transitions and lateral work.**

4. **Energy**—From the hind leg moving forward toward to the rein contact
  - Hind leg shows energy
  - Hocks become more active
  - Hind leg steps under the horse. In lateral work the inside hind leg steps toward the center of the horse or in the direction of the movement.
  - While the above is happening, the horse maintains the same rhythm, tempo and lightness in the front-end.

**NOTE: If engagement is asked for too early, the horse's front end often tightens up.**

5. **Level of poll**—Poll should be the highest point, but often in warm-up and in some aspects of the work, it can be lowered or deep.
  - The level of the poll changes during the ride, but always needs to have energy going forward to the poll. The energy must not look like it is going into the ground.
  - This look usually changes as the horse gets loosened up and becomes more engaged.
  - The horse's face always needs to be in front of the vertical unless the rider has a specific reason for riding the poll over deep or low.