

## Arena Etiquette and Safety

The first rule of the arena should always be courtesy! Remember that everyone has a living animal underneath and not every movement is always under control. Be prepared for the worst and do not get too wrapped up with your own horse not to notice what is happening around you! Do not expect that every rider sees you and remember that it ***is not*** impolite to yell if you are getting too close or planning to pass. This will announce your intentions and tell other riders what you plan to do. Try to remember that everyone in the arena is there to enjoy their equine companion and to practice their riding skills, so don't be stubborn. It is not worth fighting over someone's mistake. If a mistake is made, it is better to quietly inform the person of the rules.

Common sense must always be used. Be aware of your total environment to avoid collisions. If you are the more experienced rider, always take it upon yourself to stay safe and flow out of harm's way. Show by example so others may learn.

### **Basic Rules for Show Warm-up/Schooling/Lessons:**

- Always check you stirrup length and tighten your girth if necessary before you mount and ideally before you enter the arena
- Never mount or dismount on the track – move to the center or out of the arena
- Close the gates while riding in the arena
- When entering it is polite to start riding on the same rein (direction) as the majority of the horses in the arena
- When entering the arena, be careful not to cut off another rider
- Slower gaits take the inside track. Walk on the inside track. The outside track is always given to horses working the faster gait.
- The international rule is to pass left shoulder to left shoulder when passing head on (in opposite directions) and look where you are going
- Keep one horse's length from any other horse. If you are overtaking traffic in the same direction, pass to the inside with care and plenty of clearance. Better yet, make a large circle back to the inside or cut across the arena to avoid passing

- Never pass between the rail and another rider on the track. Always pass on the inside and pass wide
- Give right of way – be generous giving right of way even if it is not technically the correct right of way.
- When turning, check your “rear view” first.
- Look behind you before stopping suddenly. ***Halting on the track is always unexpected!***
- It is never a social time or an opportunity to hold court when in the arena. It is unfair to make your horse stand in a busy, high traffic area while you socialize and it is dangerous to other riders
- Announce your intentions telling other riders what you plan to do: “Passing on your left”
- Do not circle in front of another rider by cutting them off or pinning them against the wall or another horse
- Take care when using your whip. Other horses may react more enthusiastically than your own. Do not use your whip in a manner that frightens or touches other horses.
- If your horse kicks, put a red ribbon in its tail. Fractious horses should be removed from the arena immediately.
- If you are having difficulty with your horse and must stop, move to the center of the arena out of the way of other riders.
- In an emergency “HALT” or “HOLD HARD” may be called out and the whole arena should halt.
- If someone falls off and a horse gets loose, all riders should dismount. If you’re the closest rider, offer assistance. Help the person catch their horse if it is loose or appoint someone to call for help if there is an injury.
- In case of emergency – know where the nearest phone and emergency number and first aid kit are.
- Upper level riders need more space to complete movements that MAY frighten inexperienced riders or green horses. Give these riders space.
- Do your schooling in a positive manner – do not school if you are angry
- Cue quietly: Voice commands, kissing, smooching to cue your horse should be done quietly and away from other horses to avoid accidentally cueing another’s horse.
- Perform schooling and warm-up routines with a purpose: do not meander around the arena or park yourself in the riding area
- Be polite. Foul language is never tolerated.
- No Smoking
- No talking on cell phones while riding. If you MUST answer your phone, move to the center of the arena.
- No dogs in the arena with horses and riders.
- Be aware of the weather conditions and remember that snow sliding from a roof, hard rain or lightning can affect horses, so be extra careful. In stormy weather at night, remember that electrical outages can happen.

### *Rules specific to the show environment:*

Schooling areas at shows are usually overcrowded, so extra care and attention should be given.

- Instructors and coaches should help from the sidelines rather than inside the arena
- Riders should never stop in the track next to the fence to speak with an instructor or coach
- Horses not entered in the competition do not belong in the warm up area during competition hours. If you are schooling only, pick a time to school when there are few horses in the arena.
- Horses must wear their bridle number at all times in the arena and on the competition grounds
- All USEF rules, including tack rules, apply from the time an entry arrives on the show grounds. If you arrive the day prior to a competition, seek permission to ride in the competition arenas.
- Remember that warm up arenas are for the competitors preparing for the upcoming tests. Others should give these competitors priority.
- Know the dressage arena geometry and understand that the riders follow the test patterns in all levels when they are moving around the arena. The patterns make sense. It's important to think how other riders might be moving in the arena.
- Listen carefully to all judges and ring stewards and be aware of the assigned times and uses for each arena. Sometimes the rules are posted and sometimes only declared.
- Never lunge your horse in a warm up arena. Only lunge in designated areas and give all horses enough room. Never leave lunge equipment on the ground. Understand the rules for lunging at shows. The equipment you use at home might not be permitted at the competition.
- **\*\*\*\*Spectators should stand outside the arena, not inside or alongside the track**

**Before you show, be sure to read the extensive Protocol section of the 2005 USDF Directory.**

### *Additional etiquette for lessons:*

- Know the facility rules for their arenas
- If a lesson is in progress, please ask permission of the instructor to enter the ring. If permission is granted, the right of way must be given to the mounted students
- Wait until the gate area is clear before opening the gate and entering the arena. Always close the gate behind you
- Always listen to and follow your instructor's directions. Additional riders should listen so they know where the lesson riders are going. It is the responsibility of any additional riders to avoid disrupting the lesson.
- Students should always ride on the track (rail) or a circle unless otherwise directed by the instructor or when moving to another open spot

**Always remember that etiquette is a tool for mutual cooperation. All persons at a facility are to remember that the quality of shared space is defined by the example of all who enter it. Polite conversation and a positive flow pattern will avoid many problems.**