



Article Side

Hunter, Jumper or Equitation by [Emily Heggan](#)

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When you go to an English show, there are three types of classes you can choose from: hunter, jumper and equitation. Each one is different and you should decide which one you and your horse will have the best possible chance of showing off your skills.

All three classes are quite different and require a certain type of horse and rider. You should learn about each one before jumping off into the ring. Before you even enter the ring you should be 100% prepared for what the class and know what may be asked of you and your horse. If you do not know anything about the particular class, then it will only make things worse. Let's take a look at the three types of classes to see which one you and your horse will shine in.

Hunter Classes

In a hunter class your horse is being judged and not you. The judge looks for certain criteria in your horse. They watch to see how the horse moves, behaves and if he is a suitable mount for the rider. They also look to see if he is obedient, well mannered and going around the ring in a nice steady even pace.

He should not rush to or from a fence or in the lines. His jumping ability and form over fences is also being judged. A big No-No in the hunter world is a refusal or a run-out. Your horse should be able to jump over natural looking obstacles that are usually made of brush and look like jumps you might find out fox hunting.

A hunter horse should move in a nice forward straight line and not jump a fence with his head up in the air. He should look like a safe horse to ride and be a pleasurable mount. The judge will also note down how your horse approaches the fence.

The horse should approach the fence in a straight line and not zig zag all over the place. The judge will also be looking to see how the horse suits the rider. He should not be too big or too small for the rider and the rider should be able to control the horse easily. Your riding style won't be penalized unless you do something that interferes with the horse's performance.

Ideal Hunter Horse

- Round and on the bit

- Tight knees

- Even and steady pace "not rushing the fences or lines"

- Good round form over fences

- Happy expression

Equitation Classes

In this type of class, the rider is being judged. An equitation rider has a solid leg "the leg is around the horse and not swinging. The rider's seat is secure and they have a good upright position; not too far forward and not too far back.

Their hands are steady and their arms have a nice bend. While most riders know the basic equitation position, judging equitation is much more than judging a beauty pageant; it's scoring that indescribable connection between a horse and a rider.

Equitation is judged based on the rider's ability to establish and maintain an even pace around the course of jumps. Emphasis is placed on hands, seat and the ability to communicate subtly. One of the most important things in equitation is the rider's leg. If the rider does not have a good leg position then it can throw the rest of their position off. A rider who has a good position, quiet hands, heels down and strong legs will place higher than a rider who is all over the place.

Sometimes things don't always go as smoothly or as planned in both rings. In the hunter ring, if the horse knocks a rail down or hits the rail with its legs, points are automatically deducted from the overall score and it is considered the horse's mistake. In equitation, however, most of the mistakes are due to the rider's cues and are considered the rider's fault.

A rider can perform well and have a good round, but sometimes a horse's sloppiness or laziness, can contribute to a rail down or a refusal. Sometimes a rider can get ahead or get left behind a horse's motion and therefore cause a rail to come down. It is the judge's responsibility to decide whether or not it was the horse or rider's fault for the mistake.

Ideal Equitation Rider

- Secure leg and seat

- Good posture

- Steady hands

- Guides horse through the course well

- Makes ride look effortless

- Clear and precise directions to the horse

Jumper Classes

In jumper classes, the only thing that counts is your time and faults. In these classes you will see riders taking tight turns and going fast. The fastest time and clean round wins the class. Faults are when a horse knocks down a rail and can result in you not going into the jump-off. This is where riders who have a clean round go to compete against each other in a shortened course with a shortened time.

Jumper horses are very athletic and nimble and are supposed to jump anything put in front of them. Jumper riders must also be bold and clever and think of the shortest route possible around a set course. Jumper courses usually consist of anywhere from 10 to 13 jumps but may have a total of 15 jumping efforts. Jumping efforts are jumps that are in a line such as a 1 stride line or a triple line. They are counting as one jump but each individual jump is considered a jumping effort.

The fences in jumper classes are brightly colored and can be all types of shapes. They could be like a stone or brick wall or have water under it. Jumper fences could also be very airy and not solid, like what you would see in a hunter or equitation class.

Jumper fences also have different standards and some could be made out of the sponsor's logo such as a whale or a butterfly. Jumper fences are made to be bright and intimidating to both horse and rider. The key to jumper classes is to go clean and fast.

Deciding what classes to go into before you go to a show will make your show day less stressful. Decide what class you and your horse will perform the best in and go from there.

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