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# COMPETITION

## **Competitions**

It may be helpful for you to contact your local governing drill team associations to help you get started with competitions. People with many years of drill experience are involved with the drill associations. In California you can contact the California State Horsemen's Association, [californiastatehorsemen.org](http://californiastatehorsemen.org) (209)227-7110, or contact Jill Kraut, head of the CSHA Drill Team Committee, at [jskraut@ca.rr.com](mailto:jskraut@ca.rr.com)

Do not wait for your team to be perfect before going to a competition. The sooner you get your feet wet the faster you will learn. Even after competing for many years you will still learn something from each competition. Competing elevates the abilities of your team regardless of your current skill level.

## **Pre-Competition**

1. Go to watch competitions, performances, and watch videos of other teams whenever possible.
2. Volunteer to assist at a drill competition as a judge's clerk or office staff. You will learn how a competition functions and what judges are looking for. It will be unlikely that you will get that chance once you start competing.
3. Get the rules for the competitions you will be entering and *read* them. Get the judges sheets and look at the scoring for each section.
4. Understand the division required age brackets if applicable.
5. Inspect tack for safety and replace or repair as necessary. One person's tack failure can endanger others in a team environment.
6. Obtain the arena size and gate/seating configuration of the arena in which you will be competing, so you are not surprised that the crowd is on the opposite side of what you practiced with, or that the gate is offset from center.
7. Check availability of wash racks if you plan to bathe horse's onsite. Wash racks tend to get very busy in afternoons after practices.
8. Examine the practice, meeting, and competition schedule and plan your day's schedule on it. Know how long it will take your team to get ready to compete. When will you have time to eat during the competition if needed. What time will you access to a warm-up arena
9. Make sure you travel with ample water and nourishment for team if unavailable at facility.
10. Understand what you must turn in prior to the competition which may include:
  1. Liability releases
  2. Announcers scripts
  3. Short program required maneuver explanation sheets
  4. Music – CD's for each division with only track for that division on it.
  5. Judges cassettes if judges will be recording comments
  6. Team photos suitable for media distribution
11. Plan your team travel logistics well in advance. Make hotel reservations if staying the night. Contact a local hotel for a group rate if you will be booking multiple rooms to get the best rates.

12. Make your stall reservations with the show staff or facility as indicated by the competition information. Obtain stall assignments if pre-assigned.
13. Find out if your trailers will be parked in an accessible area to your stalls or if you will need to book additional stalls for tack, feed and changing.
14. Determine if shavings and feed can be brought in from outside or must be purchased from the facility.
15. If you are traveling out of state or for certain facilities within your state you may need documentation of Coggins tests, health certificates etc.
16. Understand time limits for each division at each competition. CSHA Competitions: Long programs are allowed 8 – 10 minutes to complete a long freestyle program. Short programs are allowed 4-6 minutes. Time will be taken from first horse in to the last horse out of the arena. Quad teams competing in CSHA have a four to six-minute limit. Penalties for ending outside of the parameters are stiff.

## **Competition**

1. Set team goals that are realistic to your team's current skill level. If you accomplish your team goal your team wins regardless of placement. Competitions should serve as a benchmark to test your team's skill level. Champions are crowned to give participants role models and goals to work towards. Losses in placing or failure to reach an established team goal should be viewed as unavoidable and treated as a learning experience. While losing is never as joyful as winning, focus on evaluating your team's performance in relation to the goal, rather than on the win or loss. Ask questions like; How did we really do? What can we do different in our preparation? What will we try to do differently next competition to improve?
2. It is advisable to have the team travel in a caravan to the competition or have a vehicle follow up to help anyone that has trouble on the road.
3. Make sure everyone has the facility address and directions in case people do get separated.
4. Travel with hoses both for bathing and washing.
5. Bring water buckets for every horse.
6. Make sure everyone on the team has the team competition schedule. What time are riders expected to arrive at barns? What time will the horses need to be fed according to your ride times and everything else on your day's plan.
7. Use your practice time in an arena wisely. Prior to your practice slot, walk over to the arena and scope it out with your team. Identify your center points and it can help to have the team ride through the drill in their head while looking at the arena. Warm-up horses in a warm-up ring if available prior to your time slot. When your time slot comes up allow just enough time for riders to let their horses experience the arena then get down to work.
8. Care of your equine partner should be a priority. Cool, water and feed and attend your horse's needs.
9. After practice and cooling off your horses try to get to the wash racks if you will be using them. Be courteous to others, wash your horse, rinse it, and get it out of the wash rack.



10. Take care of spot cleaning and general grooming early on the day of competition.
11. Hair and makeup can take longer than expected sometimes. Have additional supplies on hand to handle issues that may arise.
12. Clean and inspect tack before every competition.
13. Walk through your drill on the ground prior to mounting will settle jitters and focus team on drill.
14. Be mounted and ready to ride in plenty of time if competition runs ahead of schedule.
15. A courtesy lap is usually granted just prior to your ride while the announcer reads your script. This is not time to warm-up your horses just time to re-familiarize them with the arena.
16. Show good sportsmanship towards other competitors, spectators, judges, and show staff.
17. All riders must attend awards mounted in full competition attire.
18. Specify who will accept awards on behalf of the team during awards.
19. Congratulate champions or hopefully accept other's congratulations graciously. You will probably want to practice a team salute prior to awards.
20. Most of all have fun!

## **Post Competition**

1. Integrity, fairness and respect are the principles of sportsmanship. With them, the spirit of competition thrives, fueled by honest rivalry, and a graceful acceptance of results. Sportsmanship demands that we win with dignity and maintain grace and poise in the face of defeat. Lack of sportsmanship will quickly earn you and your team a bad reputation in this close-knit sport. Trash talking other teams or judges is usually based from ignorance not reality.
2. Make sure you leave your barn and trailer area clean of litter when you depart the competition. Take care of manure as requested by show or facility staff.
3. Review and analyze judges score sheets closely to reduce deductions in the future.
4. Try to analyze your actual performance in a non-emotional technical frame of mind. This may be best to do a week or so after the competition not in the hour after.
5. Share judge's evaluations with the entire team and identify areas you can work on to improve your future scores.
6. Usually teams that are competing have little time to watch other team's performances. If videos are available, take time to watch them. If there is not a video of the entire competition often teams will post their own team videos on-line and you can watch them there.
7. Establish goals for the next competition based on your acquired knowledge from the recent competition.