

UNITED STATES PONY CLUBS, INC.

# **USPC GUIDELINES FOR CLUB RATINGS:**

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## **D-1 THROUGH C-2**

**2010**

This Guide is designed to assist the local Pony Club and Region in the proper conduct of Club level ratings D-1 through C-2. Direct questions to [instruction@ponyclub.org](mailto:instruction@ponyclub.org) or Chair, D-1 to C-2 Program Committee.

## Introduction

**The Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) (<http://www.ponyclub.org/forms.php#S>) provide the core curriculum for instruction for young riders and horse enthusiasts in Pony Club. The Standards of Proficiency and their related rating-level Test Sheets outline the skills and knowledge required, the test content, and the various types of arenas and areas required for the rating at each rating level, D-1 through A. Only the SOPs themselves define the specific requirements for each rating level within the specific riding disciplines or specialties. The SOPs also define dress and equipment required for each level and discipline. The ratings themselves are based solely on the material, skills, and knowledge outlined in the SOPs. At each level, the rating must cover all sections of the specific rating-level/discipline test sheet, but may not include any other requirements beyond that which are in the Standards of Proficiency. These Standards provide a developmental and progressive path that each member can and should pursue at their own individual pace.**

USPC is a dynamic organization actively pursuing new and diverse opportunities for its members. **It is ESSENTIAL that prior to each scheduled rating, the District Commissioner (DC) and Examiners review this “USPC Guidelines for Club Ratings,” the current SOPs for the levels/disciplines or tracks being tested, and the Test Sheets themselves. The most current guidance available, including the SOPs, Test Sheets and Guidelines can be accessed on the USPC website (<http://www.ponyclub.org/forms.php>). This “USPC Guidelines for Club Level Ratings” should be used in conjunction with the “Examiner Handbook” (<http://www.ponyclub.org/forms.php#E>) for a complete understanding of the rating process and to ensure conduct of a proper, safe and comfortable rating for all candidates. Familiarity with this “Guidelines” is also very helpful to the Pony Club members and their parents/guardians.**

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## I. PHILOSOPHY

**RIDING IS both a sport and a hobby for most of our members.** It is something they do to have fun! Horsemanship encompasses both riding and horse care and management. The USPC curriculum, which is reflected in the Standards of Proficiency, is designed to teach not only the riding or mounted skills to our members, but also the care of the horse and equipment, responsibility and self-reliance, communication skills, and understanding of the physical and mechanical functions of horse and rider. We use the Standards of Proficiency and the respective ratings to provide opportunities for goal setting, to recognize achievement, and to increase enjoyment by encouraging Pony Club members to gain confidence while at the same time, placing them in a safe and appropriate learning environment. **All Pony Club members should be encouraged to progress at a pace and along a rating track that is most comfortable and attainable for them.** Pony Club instructors should be very familiar with the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) in order to base their instruction program on the clear progression of skills described in the Standards. The candidates should have the assistance of an older Pony Club member, instructor or knowledgeable adult in preparing for the rating.

## II. PURPOSE OF THE RATING

**THE PURPOSE OF A RATING** is to measure and define an individual member's current skill level and to recognize achievement. The local club uses the Standards of Proficiency as a basic guide or plan for their instructional programs. As a member progresses through the rating levels, the ratings themselves should be a **positive educational experience.** **They must be carried out by well qualified and well prepared Examiners in an environment that encourages the candidate to "show and tell" what he or she knows.**

### III. POLICY AND GUIDELINES

#### A. DC/ CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

The proper administration and conduct of club level ratings of its USPC members, D-1 through C-2.

Providing an instruction program and ratings that follow USPC Policies, Procedures and Guidelines approved by the Board of Governors of USPC, Inc.

Providing instructional programs based on the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs), and must include the elements of the Standards; however club instruction **does not** have to be limited by/or solely to the Standards.

**Evaluating a member's readiness to rate**, with assistance of qualified instructors, older pony club members or other qualified adults. The Standards of Proficiency describe the specific requirements for each level. **A Pony Club member is ready for the new rating if he or she is able to perform ALL the requirements for that level/discipline test in a supervised situation.**

**The DC can prescribe the use of the rating level "Flow Chart" to assess a candidates readiness to rate to the new level.** The Flow Chart, available for each rating level, is a useful tool for a candidate to prepare for a rating. This is a matrix listing the individual skills required for each level and provides space for instructors or other observers to indicate their assessment of the candidate's readiness to achieve the next rating. These assessments can be done within or outside of the club or region instructional program, depending on club or region expectations and requirements.

**Each club is required to offer club level ratings (D-1 through C-2) to all members at least twice a year.** This can be done within the club, with another nearby club (*with the recommendation of their own DC, and the invitation of the DC and Organizer of the club conducting the rating*), or at a regionally organized rating, (*again with the recommendation of the member's own DC*). Offering tests more often is absolutely appropriate if the number of candidates warrants it. **At no level is it appropriate for a candidate or parent to make arrangements for a testing outside the Club or Region** without full concurrence of their local club DC and Regional Supervisor (RS).

**In order to assist members' preparation to rate, the candidates should have a good attendance record at the local club or regional instructional opportunities.** Local clubs may determine their own attendance policies for the upcoming year, usually announced and approved in conjunction with the Club Policies review in the beginning of the year. It is important, however, that local club and regional attendance

and/or participation policies facilitate the candidate's ability to progress and meet club requirements within the context of their academic requirements and in recognition of the social or economic norms of the club and region.

**Although DCs have the authority to conduct a club level rating personally, or designate a club instructor to conduct the rating, the USPC Instruction Council strongly recommends against this practice above the D-1, and occasionally, D-2 level.** Certainly it is often most comfortable for the elementary-school age D-1 candidate to be tested by an adult or older Pony Club member with whom they have a relationship and feel comfortable. **However, beyond the D-1 and, at times D-2 level, it is important for the overall assessment of the club's instruction program to seek 'outside of the club,' pony club experienced, evaluation of candidates at their ratings.**

**DCs or their designated representatives are responsible for selecting Examiners.** (See section III. B, for further discussion)

**The DC must select and contract for a site that is appropriate for the requirements of the rating levels and skills being tested,** to include adequate open space, cross country terrain with obstacles (if testing jumping) that are to the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs), and adequate jumps set to height to meet the requirements of the SOPs. **No enclosed arenas, covered or outdoor, are adequate to test riding in the open or cross country sections of the tests.** Larger pastures or open fields (mowed, with safe footing), or cross country courses are appropriate.

**Ensuring each candidate is fairly and impartially tested on all sections of the test sheet** and has met the Standards of each section, in order to be awarded the new rating.

**The DC is responsible for selecting and/or approving all the officials present for a rating** (or approving of/agreeing to the officials selected if the test is organized by the region or neighboring club). These include but are not limited to the Rating Organizer, Examiner(s) and Impartial Observer (OI).

**Avoid situations that have, or have the appearance of, a conflict of interest.** (See section III. for expanded discussion).

**The DC (strongly recommended), or their designated representative must be present to oversee proceedings and handle any unusual circumstances or conflicts that might disrupt the rating. *DCs, these are your Pony Club members...know what your Examiners expect of them.*** (If a DC's own child or student is a candidate, then it may be more helpful to appoint another club leader to provide oversight to the test proceedings as well as assigning an Impartial Observer.) As much as possible, be available to answer questions from candidates and parents, as well as Examiners.

**Be aware of the nearest Emergency Medical Facility and their phone numbers.**

**Be ready to provide a signed USPC Ratings Certificate, signed at the time of the rating's completion by the examiner/s, and District Commissioner (can be done ahead of time), recognizing the member's accomplishment of the new rating level.** Make sure you get the Examiner's signature on the test sheet and the Certificate prior to their departure from the site. It is a very powerful and important experience for the candidate to receive their certificate immediately upon completion of the test.

## **B. SCHEDULING CLUB RATINGS:**

**Proper and timely scheduling of ratings is essential to the overall success of a club's Rating Program.** The kids can work toward the goal and have a target time frame; and the more notice parents have the better able they are to schedule family availability.

- **At the club's earliest meetings in the year, have a tentative schedule of ratings (at least two opportunities for your members during the year).** Example: Spring (April) and Fall (October). In some regions, group C-1 and/or C-2 ratings are organized for several or all of the clubs within the region to participate. Regional officials or club officials may organize these ratings, but the DC is still responsible for the preparation and recommendation of the candidate(s) to attend the rating. It is always recommended that the DC attend a rating where one of their members is testing.
- **The DC or Rating Organizer should find a test site and required officials at the earliest opportunity. Not only are Examiners necessary, consider using a method most often seen at the National-level ratings—the presence of an Impartial Observer (IO).** The IO is formally designated by the DC to serve as the liaison between the candidates, their support team (parents, guardians, coaches), and the Examiner(s). The IO must not be a parent or instructor, etc. of a Candidate testing that day. See the Examiner Handbook, Impartial Observer, <http://www.ponyclub.org/forms.php#E> for a more complete description of an IO.
- **At least 60 days, preferably more, prior to the testing date, the DC and Organizer should determine the number of candidates, choose a site and secure examiners (one for every three candidates as a general rule). It is preferable to select an examiner from another club, and an examiner well experienced, or apprenticed, at the levels being rated.**

- **The exact date and location of the rating should be announced at least 60 days prior to the testing date. This provides time for families and candidates to plan ahead.**
- **Within 30 days of the rating a general schedule of events should be provided, to include location, directions, and start time.**  
Candidates and their families must be informed of required attire (which is clearly outlined in the Standards of Proficiency), what to bring, meal arrangements, costs (if any), and all other pertinent information. **Supply each candidate with a copy of the particular Standards of Proficiency and Test Sheets on which the candidate will be rated.**
- **Recommended time frames by phase, for each rating level, D-1 through C-2 are included in this guide based on the traditional track SOPs (Section X.) These times can be adjusted or modified based on the level and type or discipline being examined and number of candidates. NOTE: Any schedule at a rating is tentative and flexibility must be advised and briefed to the participants. Many things can make one section go faster or slower than expected.** Number of candidates being rated in a group, the behavior of horses, and weather can have an effect on the flow of the schedule. **However, at all times the Examiner must provide a facilitating educational environment, while NOT allowing the rating to deteriorate into a lesson *teaching* the Standards.** Every reasonable effort must be made to keep the rating on track while allowing the candidate adequate time to demonstrate the skill required, if possible.
- **The Schedule must begin with a Briefing covering all pertinent information about the conduct of the day,** to include but not limited to facility issues, introduction of the Examiners and IO, general schedule and flow of events for the day, and other pertinent information. Candidates and their parents should attend. Then the parents should be advised of a good location from where they can watch, without interference or interruption.

### **C. SELECTING EXAMINERS:**

**Particularly above the D-1, and sometimes D-2 levels, it is strongly recommended to choose appropriate and knowledgeable Examiners from the local region or neighboring club, NOT someone from within your own club.** Allow your instructors and older, upper-level members to be the mentors and teachers to your members, not their Examiners.

**Ensure your selected Examiner(s) has been trained by and apprenticed with an experienced Examiner, attended a Standards and Ratings (S&R) Clinic, and has scribed for or “shadowed” an experienced Examiner before allowing that Examiner to rate in your club.**

**Do not select a member’s regular instructor as their Examiner.** Older siblings should not rate younger ones, nor should parents or coaches/instructors rate their own children, even if they are qualified Examiners. There is, as a minimum, the appearance of bias when an instructor is judging their own work; or feels that a student isn’t doing what they have told them to do. Also, choosing someone outside your club to be the Examiner better prepares your members for future upper-level ratings, while providing a less biased assessment.

**DCs should network with other DCs and RSs in the surrounding area to find the best Examiners.**

**Ensure the Examiners you select do not present a conflict of interest or an appearance of bias.**

**If possible, select someone who has attended a recent Standards and Ratings Clinic (within a one to two year window is recommended).** You can require attendance at an S&R Clinic, especially for those who have not recently grown up through, or recently participated in the Pony Club instructional programs and the rating system, or have not recently attended an S&R clinic.

**NOTE: WITH THE CHANGES AND EVOLUTION OF THE STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY, AND REGULAR ANNUAL REVIEWS/UPDATES, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL EXAMINERS, EVEN GRADUATES OF THE USPC PROGRAM, TO REMAIN CURRENT BY ATTENDING A STANDARDS AND RATINGS CLINIC, AND BY REVIEWING ALL SOPS AND TEST SHEETS PRIOR TO EACH RATING.**

**Ensure the Examiner has read these guidelines entirely, paying particular attention to the sections for Examiners.**

**The DC must ensure that the Examiner selected is capable of recognizing when the candidate does not meet standards, and is able to tell the candidate when they do not meet standards and WHY.** Ensure the Examiners are familiar with and understand the Basic Balanced Position (BBP). The candidate, their safety, nor the organization as a whole, is well served if the Examiner is not capable of turning the candidate down for the new rating when necessary, or is unable to provide clear explanations of why the candidate has not demonstrated the Standard.

**Compensation for the Examiner is at the discretion of the DC and club policy, but as a minimum, reimbursement for all travel expenses and appropriate meals during the testing period should be offered. Treat Examiners with respect and**

**consideration, and provide them with a quiet place to eat lunch and for writing up test sheets.** While some Pony Club Examiners may waive compensation, it should not be expected of them.

Provide Examiners, well ahead of the test, with a copy of the Standards being tested, test sheets, time schedule, this “Guidelines”, and any necessary tools such as a tape measure. Ask how *they* interpret certain skill or requirement to ensure you are “on the same page.”

Discuss with the Examiners any local conditions of which they need to be aware.

Inform the Examiner if any candidate has a learning, physical or other disability, if this information is known by the DC by reason of disclosure to the DC by candidate or candidate’s parent or other legal guardian, and with their written permission.

**Examiners may be adults or active Pony Club members. Using older, ‘upper-level’ Pony Club members as Examiners is particularly successful for the D-level ratings,** because they generally have a very positive relationship with the elementary-school age D candidates. Older Pony Club members from outside your own club provide role models for younger members; they are most often the most knowledgeable and current on the Standards; and they prepare the younger members for interaction with the “outside examiner” they will be meeting in the future. Using the older Pony Club member also provides those older members with the important instructor and leadership opportunity Pony Club is required to offer. **However, there are a few very important “rules of thumb” to consider when utilizing older and/or upper-level Pony Club members as Examiners:**

- **Ensure there is an appropriate age difference between the Examiner and the candidates (three years or more is recommended).** While asking a 13 or 14 year old C-1 to rate a 7-year old D-1 may be a very positive experience for both members, the same 13 or 14 year old C-1 may have a less-successful experience if asked to rate a 12 or 13 year old D-1. It becomes increasingly more important to have both a substantial age difference (and real gap in rating levels between Examiner and Candidate), as the rating level being tested increases.
- **Ensure an appropriate rating level difference between the Examiner and the candidates.** In general, D-level members are not ready to serve as Examiners under any circumstances. At the same time, most C-1s also are NOT ready to rate above the D-1. A *minimum* of a 2-rating-levels difference, as well as a measureable age difference, is a good rule of thumb.
- **Ensure your selected member Examiner has been trained by an experienced Examiner, has attended an S&R Clinic, and has scribed for or “shadowed” experienced Examiners before being allowed to rate.**

- An active Pony Club member, having attained the National-level ratings (usually B and above), if well trained and mentored as an Examiner, can be an excellent C-1 and sometimes, C-2 Examiner. **Their experience as an Examiner at multiple ratings and attendance at an S&R clinic presented by a National Examiner (NE), prior to rating C-1 and C-2, is essential.**
- **Ensure proper oversight of Pony Club member Examiners.** While it is never appropriate to leave any Examiner, adult or junior, without supervision, it is especially important to ensure that Pony Club member Examiners have the visible support and appropriate guidance of the DC or the DC-representative during the conduct of the rating. **A team of Examiners (two or three for a group of 3 or more candidates), much like in a National Testing situation, is beneficial. (See Section VII.)**
- **Ensure proper compensation for the Examiner.** Though payment for services for active Pony Club members is not normally done, transportation and food costs should be compensated or provided as a minimum. Some clubs offer coupons for local area discounts, or clinics, or other ‘exchanges.’ **All financial/compensatory arrangements should be agreed upon at the time the Examiner is first scheduled to do the test.**

#### **D. CONDUCTING THE RATING - GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

**Because D-1 is an introductory level, there should be a “no fail” approach to the D-1 test.** A child may join your club at any age and readiness level, as outlined in club policies; **however ensure the new member can meet the minimum D-1 Standards of Proficiency, prior to administering the test.** The child may receive his/her Pony Club pin prior to testing in order to feel more a part of the organization. **Administer the initial Pony Club rating(s), in a quick and timely manner in accordance with the SOPs, insuring the member understands and is ready for the rating process.**

**EACH MEMBER MUST TAKE EACH RATING LEVEL TEST AND PASS ALL SECTIONS IN ORDER TO BE AWARDED THAT RATING LEVEL, AND EACH RATING LEVEL MUST BE ACHIEVED BEFORE TESTING TO THE SUBSEQUENT OR NEXT HIGHER RATING LEVEL WITHIN A SELECTED TRACK.**

**(Effective 4/1/10), it is recommended that you test Section I, Horse Management Test Sheet, first, (whether your Club is using the Alternative Progression tracks or not), as it keeps the option open to do so, AND at every rating level the Horse Management section must be passed/achieved prior to achieving mounted ratings at the same rating level.**

**(EFFECTIVE 4/1/10) IF FOLLOWING THE ALTERNATIVE RATING PROGRESSION TRACKS IN YOUR CLUB, THE FOLLOWING APPLIES:**

- **Clubs/Members wanting to follow any of the three (3) Alternative Rating Progression tracks (Horse Management, Flat Riding, or Jumping), must still pass ALL sections of the D-1 Rating test prior to following an alternative track.**
- **At every Rating Level, D-2 to C-2, the Horse Management Test Section must be completed with a “Meets Standards” (MS, or above) in order to take/be awarded the equivalent rating level in Flat Riding or Jumping. Passing (meeting Standards) in the Flat Riding Test Section at each level must be achieved in order to take/achieve the equivalent Jumping level rating.**
- **When using the Alternative Ratings Progression option in your club, test Section I, the Horse Management (HM) Test Sheet FIRST, at each rating level, (D-2, D-3, etc.) as the entire HM portion must meet standards (MS) for subsequent tracks of that rating level (Flat, Jumping) to be taken/awarded. Always complete the “Flat Test Sheet” of the rating level being tested prior to moving on to the “Jumping Test Sheet” of that rating level.**
- **A member can progress through the rating levels of Horse Management alternative track only, or Horse Management and Flat alternative tracks only, without pursuing the Jumping track if desired and an option within your Club.**
- **A member may follow the Alternative Rating Progression tracks at the Club Level in Horse Management, Flat Riding, or the complete Rating level as before by including the Jumping track. Testing must follow the guidelines above. An example: a member could hold a C-1 rating in Horse Management, a D-3 Level in Flat Riding, *and* a complete D-2 rating (having achieved a MS on the Horse Management, Flat and Jumping Sections of the D-2 Test Sheets).**
- (Effective 4/1/10) For further information on Alternate Ratings Progression go to the Forms page of USPC web site and click on Alternative Ratings Progression Information. (<http://www.ponyclub.org/forms.php>)

**THE LOWER LEVEL D RATINGS (D-1 AND D-2) SHOULD BE A POSITIVE TEACHING/LEARNING EXPERIENCE. Ensure your candidates have been observed achieving the minimum Standards of Proficiency of each rating level so they are able to be passed at these levels. “Failure” at these levels is counterproductive to building confidence in our young members. Use of the Flow Charts and having a very knowledgeable and personable instructor reviewing the**

candidates' readiness to rate prior to testing provides the correct atmosphere for a successful testing day. Have a mentoring Examiner testing your members at this level.

**Multiple D Level ratings may be taken on a single rating day.** This is most often recommended or done for older joining, or re-joining, members that have more advanced skills and knowledge levels at the time they become members. We want to make their transition to Pony Club a smooth and positive one, thus facilitating rapid advancement, and greater interaction with their own age and skill peer group. **However, all aspects of each level of the Standards of Proficiency must be demonstrated in order to move on to the next.**

**Three (3), six (6), and nine (9) months horse management record-keeping is required for all members, at particular rating levels, prior to testing and receiving the appropriate rating.** However, as long as required record keeping can be provided, and compiled in an appropriate record book, membership for that amount of time is not necessary in order to rate, as long as all skill and knowledge requirements appropriate to the level are present, and records/record book is provided.

**AT THE C-1 LEVEL AND ABOVE, ONLY ONE RATING SHOULD BE TAKEN AT A SINGLE RATING/ON A SINGLE RATING DAY IF ALL SECTIONS OF BOTH HORSE MANAGEMENT AND MOUNTED REQUIREMENTS OF THAT RATING LEVEL ARE TO BE TESTED.** Even for the older new member only one complete rating (all areas of the level) at the C-1 and above should be taken in a single rating day. An appropriate and thorough rating at the C-1 level and above is adequately tiring to both mount and member to preclude multiple ratings in that day, and to require adherence to this rule.

**The C-1 and C-2 Rating levels are more in depth than the D levels, and the requirement exists for the candidate to demonstrate more independence and self reliance in the Testing environment.** A clear distinction between the BBP (basic balanced position) of the C-1 and the C-2 must be demonstrated in all mounted requirements. It is important that DCs select experienced well trained examiners for these levels so any candidate that moves on to the National levels is prepared properly to do so.

**Whenever possible, complete the test in one day. If it is necessary to conduct a test over more than one day due to unforeseen weather or footing conditions, all requirements must be completed within 30 days of the original test date.**

**The rating test should be educational, but not deteriorate into a lesson on the topic/skill being addressed, and must be limited to the requirements listed on the Standards of Proficiency for that rating. ALL portions of the Test sheet must be completed, and riding must take place in the areas/venues (i.e. riding in the open, over terrain, etc.) required by the particular SOP being tested in order for the test to be completed.**

**At subsequent testings candidates are responsible for, and can be tested on, the requirements of any previous level achieved.**

**Appropriate pace (speed of mount) for each rating level if required is stated in the Standards, and adequate open space must be provided in the testing environment to safely test pace.** The examiner should be provided with a stop watch, know how to use it and how to measure pace, before the start of the test. Excessive time should not be spent on this in order to not over-tire the mounts.

**Be sure that examiners, candidates, parents and other spectators understand that there will be no unauthorized assistance,** misuse of equipment, carelessness while working with horses or ponies, or unsportsmanlike behavior. Candidates are expected to show courtesy to one another, to examiners, and to their mounts. **Unauthorized assistance includes but is not limited to** individuals not being tested providing answers to the candidates while they are interacting with the examiners, or assistance or coaching from others at the testing site not officially involved in the rating once the test has begun. **Assistance can be given in such areas as holding horses while being wrapped or the candidate is setting a course, and for providing water to riders. This is best done by a Pony Club buddy or helper that comes to the test, or other neutral party, rather than a parent.** If in doubt whether an action is or is not unauthorized assistance at any time during the rating day, the IO should be consulted, and will assist with the matter.

**Oral examination or demonstration must be used for the Horse Management sections at all rating levels.** Orals should be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in very small groups of two or three at the D and C levels. Care must be taken to see that candidates are afforded every opportunity to express what they know, thereby gaining confidence in a testing situation. ***This is a time for the candidates to show what they know, not the examiner!*** Care must be taken to allow the quieter/shy child to demonstrate knowledge, and not be expected to exceed Standards in order to answer a question already addressed by others in a small group. Rotating through your candidates, each giving a portion of the answer is an effective approach. Do not always call on the same individual to answer first or last.

All candidates, but especially lower level Ds, need a relaxed test atmosphere for the oral portions of the ratings. **Oral questioning can take place in a quiet room or under a tree, although many questions can be asked while the horse is present and the Pony Club member is demonstrating skills.**

**Organizers and Examiners should be prepared to adjust to different conditions that may exist at the time of a testing.** Under no circumstances should children be kept mounted for long periods; riders should dismount or take breaks, if appropriate due to extreme temperatures, while others are performing individual skills. There should always be plenty of water available for both riders **and** horses. **If weather or footing conditions become un-safe the test must be suspended and continued at a later time/date (within 30 days).**

Provide lunch and refreshments for the Examiners and other officials, and fluids for candidates and their mounts. Inform parents of meal arrangements for candidates prior to testing.

Make sure, after the test, that the landowner (and anyone else involved) was thanked and the property left as it was found.

#### **E. SHARING OF MOUNTS AND USE OF MULTIPLE MOUNTS:**

**All Pony Club members should be tested riding a safe and reliable mount.** Any candidate's, their parent's, or DC's concerns about a particular horse or pony should be discussed with the DC, Organizer or the Examiner well before the rating test. The borrowing and, or sharing of suitable mounts is allowed at the D-1 through D-3 level only, but *only* if the rider is familiar with the mount and has ridden it, *prior to the testing*, on the flat and/or over fences safely and successfully at the level being tested. **If a mount is deemed to be unsafe by the Organizer, DC or Examiner on site during the test, and is posing immediate danger to the rider or others, the person in charge (normally the DC on site with the concurrence of the Examiner) must stop the candidate's testing immediately.**

**At the C-1 and C-2 levels, a mount may not be shared for any mounted portion of the test by two or more candidates at the same testing.** The exchange of mounts for testing purposes is not allowed at this level.

A candidate may not exchange or change mounts during a Test, if they are not meeting Standards, in order to have a "better opportunity" of passing or meeting Standards.

**If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a rating is not completed in the same day (weather stops the rating, the candidate does not meet Standard that day in a section(s) of the test sheet, etc.), the candidate is expected to complete the rating on the same mount they rode when the rating began. If for reasons of lameness or similar circumstance, the candidate is unable to complete the rating on the same mount within the 30 days allowed, the candidate may use a substitute mount with the DC's approval.**

**A C-1 and C-2 candidate may use more than one mount at their rating for single phases of the test (riding on the flat, jumping, longeing) due to soundness or safety issues, with prior arrangement with the DC. Once a phase begins with a mount, the entire phase must be completed with that mount.**

#### IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXAMINERS

EXAMINERS MUST READ AND BE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY AND TEST SHEETS FOR THE LEVELS BEING EXAMINED, THE CONTENTS OF THESE GUIDELINES, AND BE FAMILIAR WITH THE EXAMINER HANDBOOK AND MANUALS AND TEXTS STUDIED BY CANDIDATES.

**The Examiner should be sensitive to young people, and able to conduct the test in a positive, educational framework. Attendance at a local USPC Standards and Ratings Clinic, whenever possible, is highly recommended, and may be required by the DC of the candidate's club.**

**The Examiner must be capable of knowing what meets Standards and what does not, know how to encourage improvement, how to tell a candidate when they do not meet Standards, and be able to explain why.**

**The Examiner must avoid making comments about readiness to take future ratings beyond the one being tested on that day. Even if a candidate exceeds Standards, THE EXAMINER SHOULD NOT MAKE A STATEMENT REGARDING THEIR ABILITY TO PASS A FUTURE RATING.**

**Testings can be stressful for candidates (and their parents), and Examiners should empathize with candidates' diverse personalities. The Examiner should set the tone of the testing as a learning situation, drawing the best from each candidate, but must not turn the testing situation into a "lesson."**

**Outgoing, confident candidates should not be allowed to intimidate those who are less confident or shy; rather, each candidate must be encouraged to demonstrate what he or she *does* know.** Ensure the testing atmosphere does not turn into a competition between candidates. Control the discussion so very shy candidates have the opportunity to tell/show what they know without the more outgoing child providing the obvious answers, leaving the quiet child without a response or few alternative answers (although they may have known all the answers already provided). The Examiner must not put a candidate in a position to have to exceed Standards in order to answer the question. No candidate is required at any time to exceed Standards.

The Examiner should request details about the facility and equipment available, and of any learning or physical disabilities of candidates. **If a disability exists that limits performance, but the candidate can ride safely and still MEET the requirements of the Standard, he or she should pass the test.**

**There is a range from ADEQUATE (Meets Standards) TO SUPERIOR (Exceeds Standards), and anyone within that range should pass the rating.**

**The Examiners must ensure they have all necessary equipment, Standards of Proficiency, and Test Sheets with them and information about the facility prior to starting the rating.**

**For rating jumping skills and riding in the open (when required by the SOP being tested):**

- **Examiners must know what jump equipment will be made available, how large the arena or jump space is, and have jump courses in mind or ensure they will be set. The Examiner must inspect any courses already set, measuring jumps used to ensure they are within Standards.**
- **The Examiner must have a tape measure, check all striding and check jump heights to insure they meet the Standards of Proficiency being tested.**
- **At the club level tests D-1 through C-2, Examiners must adjust the striding of ground poles, the grid, combinations and related distances on course to meet the striding of the mount being used, and may not require/expect the candidate to adjust their mount's stride to the course or grid already set. The Examiner may need to organize the candidates order of go to maximize each setting before changing it for the next mount(s).**
- **The Examiner must provide adequate warm-up and lower warm-up fences, prior to requiring jumping to height, both in the arena and in the open.**
- **Examiners must inspect the terrain to be covered in the open and measure jump heights prior to proceeding on course. All obstacles on the cross country course should be at required heights (as close as possible) according to the requirements of the SOP being tested, but not exceed the Standards. Lower warm-up fences may be taken first.**

Although Examiners may suggest a particular exercise as an explanation or aid to perform to Standard better, **ONLY THE REQUIREMENTS LISTED ON THE TEST SHEET MAY BE TESTED.**

**Examiners must complete Test Sheets and make clear and descriptive written comments**, especially for those sections where the candidate did not meet the Standards (DNMS) prior to leaving the test site. Comments should be specific and encouraging, with suggestions for correcting any problems. Even when a candidate does not meet the Standard, the Examiner's comments should be as positive and encouraging as possible.

**Candidates must be notified individually of test results to avoid uncomfortable situations among candidates, parents and examiners. In addition to continuous feedback during a test, a complete critique with each candidate should follow the test, with parents invited to listen IF THE CANDIDATE AGREES.**

**Examiners must dress appropriately**, either in appropriately clean casual riding attire, shirt with collar and sleeves, tucked in with a belt, and boots shined, or in appropriate paddock boots, khakis or slacks, shirt with collar and sleeves, and tucked in, with a belt (if pants have belt loops). **Examiners must keep in mind they are representing Pony Club Standards as much as the candidate is expected to.** The Examiner must not use profanity, or slang that could be found offensive to the candidates or their parents.

## V. EXPANDED INFORMATION ON TESTING NEW AND CONTINUING MEMBERS

A new Pony Club member who is young and inexperienced may become a D-1 and then take two to four years to achieve all aspects of the D-2 and D-3 ratings. An older, more experienced rider who joins Pony Club may be capable of passing several rating levels at his or her first testing (D-1 to D-3). However, the D-1 to C-2 Program Committee strongly suggests that a new Pony Club member, unless quite mature and both knowledgeable and skilled, be rated no higher than D-2 or D-3 (depending on age and skill levels) for the first several months, so that he or she can gain a broad experience of Pony Club.

Pony Club ratings however, reflect more than just riding skills, both on the flat and over fences. The Ratings also indicate a member's horse management knowledge, the member's communication skills, ability to analyze and discuss various aspects of horsemanship, and the member's leadership skills and maturity.

Pony Club has a culture of responsibility in horsemanship and horse management that is a core value for Pony Club. Opportunity and Achievement are key principles as well. Effective 1 April, 2010, the Pony Club member with concurrence of their Club, may pursue ratings in areas of strength beginning with Horse Management. The Leadership throughout USPC wants to facilitate fun and personal growth wherever possible, through the development of good horsemanship and riding skills. As of April, 2010, once a member has achieved a "Meets Standards" on all aspects the Horse Management Test at a given rating level, they may pursue the next level of Horse Management skills, and take that next level test. This is true for the Flat Riding and Jumping skills as well, as long as the Horse Management skills (and Rating Test) at a given level are completed prior to taking the Flat Riding skills test at that same level, and The Flat skills test at a given rating level is taken and achieved before the Jumping skills test for the same level. Pony Club wants to encourage success and accomplishment for their members with Horse Management skills leading, and Flat Riding skills preceding Jumping skills of any given level. For further information, go to the Pony Club website or contact a member of the D-1 to C-2 Committee for further information.

Sometimes, though more rare, the candidate having achieved the D-1 while young, is unable to test again in a timely manner, (lameness or illness of their own horse), moving to a new state or town, a period of time away from Pony Club though still riding, etc., prevents their

participation in a normal testing cycle. If the candidate is later ready to test both D-2 and D-3, this is possible at the next rating. Again, DCs want to facilitate growth and achievement for the candidates where and when they are ready, and possibilities exist.

**It is important however, for DCs to be honest with both the candidate and parent when they *and* their instructor or other valid evaluators, feel the candidate is in fact not ready to be successful at the next rating level(s). Resisting the temptation to “push” a child is difficult for most parents at some point, and the DC is responsible to insure “safety first”, at all times.** However, if the candidate and parent are intent on rating, as long as it does not pose an immediate safety hazard, it is recommended that the DC allow the candidate to rate. It becomes absolutely essential in this case, as always, that you have Examiners that fully understand the Standards and are willing to determine, and state the facts with explanation, whether the candidate does or does not meet Standards on that day.

## **VI. RIDING GROUPS AND USE OF MULTIPLE EXAMINERS**

**The ratio of Examiner to candidate, especially at the lowest test levels of D-1 and D-2, is very dependent on the age of your candidates and the examiners experience.** One Examiner to every one or two candidates if very young is appropriate. Not allowing the riding group to be more than four (with two or three examiners) with candidates of a very young age promotes safety.

A ratio of 1 Examiner to every 3 to 4 candidates is a rule of thumb, beyond the youngest candidates. **However, it is preferable for up to 6, (or even 8 candidates at the C levels) to ride together while all 2 or 3 assigned Examiners work together testing these candidates.** The Examiners should confer on the candidates and their performance of the required skills. This helps the Examiners see the relative success of the candidates, which do meet and which do not meet Standards. Each Examiner brings their own observations to the analyses of the candidates’ performances. Riding with others also provides the candidates (and their families) with a better understanding of their performance relative to the Standards. **The Examiners come to a consensus of the candidate’s performance in a similar fashion as do the National Examiners (NEs) at a National level rating. Finally, it helps the parents understand their own child’s performance relative to the group, and helps prevent the perception, of “the easy” versus “the hard” Examiner if the candidates were in 2 or 3 separate rating groups with only one examiner.** (This is especially true when you have two or more of the same level tests going on independently of each other with just one examiner each, at the same facility, at the same time.)

## **VII. RETESTING SECTIONS OF A RATING**

**Re-testing of a limited number of section(s) in which the candidate did not meet Standards on the original day of the rating, is available under set circumstances ONLY. Approval to re-test is not automatic or appropriate in all cases.**

If a candidate does not meet Standards (DNMS) in any part of one (or more) section(s) of the test (the number of un-mounted and mounted sections allowed for re-testing is specifically designated on each test sheet at each rating level), **re-testing on these sections may be appropriate**. The allowed number of sections to be re-tested is stated in each SOP, and on each test sheet, and re-testing is strictly limited to that number. **RETESTING IS ONLY APPROPRIATE IF THE CANDIDATE HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR RE-TESTING BY THE EXAMINER. A RE-TEST MAY BE SCHEDULED ON SECTIONS NOT PASSED UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

- **ONLY THE ORIGINAL EXAMINER MAY RECOMMEND RE-TESTING SECTIONS NOT MET, AND MUST RECOMMEND RE-TESTING TO THE CANDIDATE'S DC, AT THE TIME OF THE ORIGINAL TESTING. THE EXAMINER MUST INDICATE THEIR RECOMMENDATION ON THE ORIGINAL TEST SHEET.**
- **The DC must approve and schedule the re-test. The re-test, if at all possible, should be with the original Examiners, and MUST be completed within 30 days of the date of the original rating.**

**Re-testing sections of the test sheet is not automatic, and is not necessarily appropriate in all circumstances. It is only appropriate in cases where a small amount of correction is needed on the part of the candidate, which can be reasonably expected to be accomplished in the short span of 30 days or less.** The re-test must be completed in one day. Failure to meet Standards in any part of the re-test will require the candidate to take the entire test again, when next scheduled by the club, or available with another club (with approval of both DCs). If the re-test is not completed within a month, the entire test must be taken again at a later date.

**ALL BLOCKS OR AREAS OF THE RIDING SECTIONS OF THE TESTS, (Riding on the Flat, Jumping, and Riding in the Open, etc.), TO INCLUDE DISCUSSION SECTIONS, are considered mounted sections.**

**If a candidate takes a portion of the test over again with a different Examiner, BOTH Examiners must sign the original test sheet before the candidate is considered to have passed.** The DC must maintain accountability and control of the test sheet, until the rating is complete. Normally, any test or re-test must take place within the Pony Club member's own Region. The DC decides whether or not a Pony Club member may be tested or re-tested with another club. If re-testing requires riding in a group, re-testing at another club's rating can be helpful.

**It is important that DCs or Instructors do not provide unnecessary road-blocks or obstacles to the availability of re-testing opportunities. We want to facilitate growth and success when possible; have your Examiners recommend re-testing when the candidate's ability to meet standards on the second try is a realistic expectation.**

## VIII. TESTING OPPORTUNITIES: SUGGESTION FOR SUCCESS

**There are numerous ways for clubs/DCs to offer multiple tests within the year, and ways to have adequate numbers of candidates to demonstrate group riding in the open, and group teaching at the C Levels.** Clubs within a Region can get together to hold multiple ratings. This insures greater numbers attending the ratings and more opportunities for their members to have a workable date to rate. Also, members from one club can rate at another club's test, or regions can assist their clubs' DCs by helping to organize Regional ratings. Note that DCs are still responsible for recommending their candidates to attend a rating, and should be present at the rating. In principle, it is still the DC's responsibility to ensure the location, and conduct of the test is in accordance with the requirements in the SOPs, and the DC must still sign the candidate's Certificate. Increased opportunities to rate provide more possibilities for success and growth for our Pony Club members.

## IX. GENERAL/RECOMMENDED TIME FRAMES FOR D-1 TO C-2 TESTS THAT INCLUDE ALL SECTIONS OF HM, FLAT AND JUMPING\*

**D-1 and D-2 levels:** Groups of 2 to 4  
1-2 hours riding  
1 hour un-mounted

**D-3 level:** Groups of 3-4  
1 ½ -2 hours riding max  
1-2 hours un-mounted

**C-1 level:** Groups of 4-6 (2-3 examiners ideal)  
2-2 ½ hours riding  
1 ½-2 hours un-mounted

**C-2 level:** 3-7 (2-3 examiners ideal)  
2-3 hours riding  
1 ½ - 2 ½ hours un-mounted

*\*The D-1 to C-2 Ratings which include all un-mounted and mounted sections are used in the development of this schedule, and can be used as an example from which a modified schedule can be developed for any alternate progression rating track. Times do not include breaks and tack changes, Examiners finishing paperwork and briefing candidates on results. Unforeseen events or difficulties with mounts can also affect the ability to stay on schedule.*

**Generally speaking, a workable schedule is as follows (again, using the complete D-1 to C-2 Tests as a general guideline):**

Turnout/Inspection (questions such as parts of the horse, tack, conformation, shoeing, etc., may be asked at this time).

Horse Management (D Levels hands on: saddling, grooming, etc.).

Flat riding phase

Break/Lunch (also for possible tack change, watering horses, etc. at C levels)

Grid work and jumping or further flat work

Riding in the open (D-2 and up)

Cooling out

Break/Lunch (in the case of C Levels)

Other Horse Management skills (hands-on) followed by remaining Oral Questioning (Parents can be used to watch horses if tied to trailers rather than stabled)  
Complete paper work and provide results

## X. TEST SITE REQUIREMENTS

Test site requirements are driven by the requirements of the SOPs and related Test Sheets being tested. Read the requirements of the test and Standards carefully to ensure your site meets the requirements for space, terrain and equipment required.

## XI. REQUIRED CANDIDATE ATTIRE & EQUIPMENT

All required equipment and attire is described in the SOPs for each rating level and the accompanying guidance for the specific discipline. This Guide does not supersede any requirements set forth in the SOPs. Be sure candidates have read the SOPs carefully and understand the attire and equipment needed for their rating. In general, the following guidelines should be followed:

### All D Levels (mounted)

ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet  
Hard-soled shoes which cover the ankle  
or boots with heels,  
Breakaway halter, lead rope, bucket, hay  
bag/net  
Tack to be used on own mount  
Any artificial aids used on own mount

### (Un-mounted)

For un-mounted portions of a test, long pants,  
belt (if belt loops), and similar shirt and  
boots/shoes as above, will be worn

### C-1 and Above

Correct formal or informal attire  
w/ ASTM/SEI approved helmet  
All tack to be used on mount  
Any artificial aids used on own mount  
Tack to be used on own mount  
Any artificial aids used on own mount

### (Un-mounted)

Slacks or kakis, belt (if belt loops),  
Sleeved collared shirt, tucked in, belt,  
Hard-soled boots or shoes with a  
high ankle and heel

## XII. OTHER CANDIDATE MATERIALS

The following equipment is required for mounted testing. The SOPs should be carefully reviewed for any further equipment requirements.

### D-1 Level

Basic grooming tools

### D-2 Level

Protective boots / bell boots, *if used*

### D-3

Up-to-date Pony Health & Maintenance  
Record Book (3 months minimum)  
Protective boots and/or bell boots

**C-1 Level**

Record Book (6 months minimum)  
Stable or standing wraps and bandages  
Simple conditioning & feeding schedule

**C-2 Level**

Record Book (9 months minimum)  
Shipping and standing/stable wraps  
Thermometer and watch w/ second hand  
Letter from DC in reference to  
teaching program  
Longeing equipment appropriate for  
mount

**XIII. DIMENSIONS OF FENCES**

**Each of the SOPs provides a chart with the appropriate and required dimensions for jumps and grids to be used during the rating test. Always refer to the SOP and Test Sheets to ensure you are testing to Standard. Although striding distances can be adjusted to suit the size and stride of the horse being ridden, the required heights for the Rating Level must be jumped by the candidate during the test. If the mount brought to the test is not capable of the required heights on that day, the candidate may not complete/be successful at that rating level on that day.**

**XIV. SAMPLE JUMPING COURSES FOR D-1 THROUGH C-2**

**\*This does not include ground pole requirements for Flat Riding Alternative Rating Progression Tests, which are provided with each test sheet.  
(Also see grids and charts in Standards of Proficiency)**

**D-1 Level Requirements and Sample Courses**

Very simple course, once around in enclosed area  
4-6 ground poles  
(Walk over poles in jumping position; No in-and-out or poles-in-line [cavaletti] allowed.)

**D-2 Level Requirements and Sample Courses**

Uncomplicated course with generous sweeping turns in enclosed area  
4-5 obstacles, 18" maximum, with ground-lines if a vertical other than small log used  
(No oxer or in-and-out combinations requiring correct striding)  
Trotting permissible

**D-3 Level Requirements and Sample Courses**

Gymnastic Jumping Exercises to be set in accordance with the Chart "Over Fences D-3 Level" provided on last page of Standards of Proficiency for D-Levels

Simple hunter type course with no difficult turns, with changes of direction across the diagonal  
Course to be set in an enclosed or contained area  
5-7 obstacles, **majority of fences to be set at 2'6"** maximum height, related distances of three or more strides (distances to be adjusted for individual horse's or pony's stride).  
All jumps to have ground-lines, with one oxer (graduated only) on course  
No single stride, bounce or two stride combinations

### **C-1 Level Requirements and Sample Courses**

Gymnastic Jumping Exercises to be set in accordance with the Chart "**Over Fences C-1 Level**" provided on page 6, Standards of Proficiency for C-1/C-2 Levels  
Course to be set in an enclosed or contained area providing some related distances and smooth bending lines  
6-8 obstacles, **majority of fences to be set at 2'9" maximum height**, with 2-3 oxers (must be graduated), and one 2 strides combination, (vertical must come first).  
No bounce or 1-stride combinations

### **C-2 Level Requirements**

Gymnastic Jumping Exercises to be set in accordance with the Chart "**Over Fences C-2 Level**"  
Slightly more difficult turns, related distances; bending lines  
Enclosed area recommended  
7-9 obstacles, 3' max. height  
2-3 oxers (may be 1-stride), not part of combination; may be in line if enough room  
Longeing equipment appropriate for horse.

## **XV. WHERE TO GO FOR HELP**

**Regional and Club leadership throughout the country must work to ensure that all ratings are recognized as important and vital to the USPC goal of developing well-rounded, capable horsemen. These Guidelines and the documents they support (the Standards of Proficiency for each level and the supporting Test Sheets), are the core elements of the Pony Club Instructional Program and should be read carefully by all those involved with Pony Club instruction and testing.**

If problems or questions arise, it is important to know that there people to turn to for answers. The D-1 to C-2 Program Committee is anxious to ensure that USPC, as an educational organization, is meeting the needs and expectations of all Pony Club members and their families. The committee is also available to help insure the program is delivered equitably, fairly and consistently throughout the Nation. To do this, the committee works closely with the Curriculum and Standards Committee, the C-3 Program Committee, the National Testing Committee, and Regional Administration. Please feel free to call or contact the current Chair of the D-1 to C-2 Committee, if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions.

**For contact information for THE D-1 to C-2 PROGRAM COMMITTEE** refer to the current Annual Directory for names, addresses and phone numbers of the committee members, or go to [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org) and click on Contacts, or contact [instruction@ponyclub.org](mailto:instruction@ponyclub.org) for further information.