

What is **Working Equitation** (WE)?



Photo by Kellee Campbell

Working Equitation or WE, is an equestrian sport that originates from the Southern European countries of Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal. The governing body for the sport in the United States is USA Working Equitation (USAWE). <https://usawe.org/> There is a lot of information on the website about the sport and how to get involved.

Working Equitation is open to all breeds, all disciplines, English and Western riders. It tests the partnership a rider has with his/her horse and consists of 3 or 4 "Trials", or "classes".

- 1. Dressage** - you ride a pattern of movements called a Dressage Test. Dressage is the art of riding and training a horse in a manner that develops obedience, flexibility, and balance. This concept is the foundation of Working Equitation.
- 2. Ease of Handling Trial** - you ride a course through 10-12 obstacles. You are judged on your riding and navigation through each obstacle.
- 3. Speed Trial** - this is a time event completing an obstacle course. This is a test of a horse and rider's ability to navigate obstacles with accuracy as quickly as possible. It is thrilling to watch and a lot of fun for the rider and horse. The Speed Trial is for Level 2 and above.
- 4. Optional Cattle Trial** - a team of three or four riders work together as each rider separates a designated cow from the herd and moves it across the enclosure to a holding pen. Cattle trials are not always offered at each show and are always optional. The Cattle Trial is for Level 2 and above.

There are seven levels of competition. You compete in the Level that is appropriate for the training level of you and your horse. For example: Level 1 is walk trot only. Level 1 does not do the Speed or Cattle Trial. Level 2-7 is walk, trot, and canter. You may ride with two hands up to Level 5 in order to help your horse with his training. This sport focuses on basic horsemanship, training and partnership with your horse. The Levels give you a way to judge your progress in the training.

What skills are required from the Horse and Rider? Having a willing

horse partner is of primary importance. Your horse should listen to your riding aids and cues and respond appropriately. You want your horse to accept you handling and touching objects while in the saddle and to remain calm and quiet. The great thing about WE is that you compete in the Level that is appropriate for the Rider Horse skill.

Ex. a beginning rider can compete on an experienced horse in Level 1. An experienced rider can complete on an inexperienced horse also in Level 1.



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**If you decide you like WE,
you will need to become a USAWE member**

Adults - \$55 per year; Youth, - \$41 per year.

All horses are required to be registered with USAWE for a one time fee of \$20

Go to www.usawe.org/become-a-member to join and to register your horse.

You can sign up for a WE show by going to the calendar on the USAWE website, find a show in your area, and contact the show organizer for an entry form.

You can find all the Dressage Tests and Rules at www.usawe.org/rules.

How the show runs once you're there

Day before the show It is advised that you arrive a day before the show. At most venues the Dressage court and obstacles will be set up for schooling. Many events offer a clinic the day before the show. Ask the Show Manager.

Day of the show If you are arriving the day of the show, Depending on the show format, many times the Dressage arena is open for early schooling, but the obstacle course is closed. You will have an approximate set time for all of your rides. You want to be warmed up and ready to go into the ring at least 10 minutes before your time. The level you compete at determines the dressage test you ride.

L1-L3 riders may have a caller, which is someone who stands on the outside of the dressage and EOH arena and reads your test to you as you are performing.

Dressage All of the riders will individually ride their Dressage tests. When everyone is finished, the shows usually have a time for Lunch and then the EOH Course Walk.

Ease of Handling (EOH)

Course Walk At the designated time, riders in their show clothes, with their course map have the opportunity to walk the course with the judge. At that time, the judge will answer rider's questions about the obstacles or the course. You will now have an opportunity of 20 minutes, to walk the course and plan your route of navigation between 10-13 obstacles according to the course map.

The path you take between obstacles is your own decision. It is up to you how best to "show

off" your horse's abilities for the route you take between obstacles. You are JUDGED on how you do the obstacles, and how well you navigate the course between obstacles.

EOH Trial You will want to have your horse warmed up and ready to go into the ring about 10 minutes before your assigned time. When it is your turn, you will go into the ring and ride around until the judge rings the bell. Be sure to learn the rules about what you can and can't do during this time. When the bell rings, halt facing the judge, salute, then ride through the start markers and start your course.

When you finished, ride through the finish markers, halt facing the judge and salute once more. You are done!

Speed Trial: When all the EOH rides are done, there will be a break to set up the obstacles for the Speed Trial. *NOTE, the Speed Trial course is usually different from the EOH.*

Once the Speed course is set up; Level 2 riders and above will normally have 15-20 minutes to walk the course on their own. The Judge will be nearby to answer any questions. This is a timed event only, and your goal is to complete the course as designed as quickly and as safely as possible.

Your scores from each Trial are tallied for overall winners in each Level, so you are competing only against riders or horses with your same skill level.

If a **Cattle Trial** is offered, it will be optional and usually done as the final day event. You are judged individually for penning a cow, but you work in a group of three in order to help with the other cattle in the herd.

For more information, please go to USAWE.com

We hope to see you at a Working Equitation show someday soon!