

Horse Show Course Designing – HUNTERS

From the MHJA Rulebook: “Hunter courses test the quality of the horse over the jump rather than the boldness or difficulty of the course.”

1. A hunter course can be made up of single fences, one or two stride combinations, and fences set in a straight or bending line with a related distance between them.
2. Courses consist of eight to ten jumping efforts with at least one change of direction.
3. All fences are numbered individually. There is not an “A” and “B” portion.
4. First and foremost, hunter fences should look inviting and safe.
5. Hunter fences are generally composed of rails, pickets, coops, brush boxes, brick walls, straw bales, and roll tops. The color scheme is natural – bare wood, or painted brown, white or green.
6. Colored/Striped rails should not be used.
7. “Ramped” ascending oxers are used. The front rail should be 3 to 6 inches lower than the back rail. The spread of the oxe should not exceed the height of the back rail.
8. Square oxers are prohibited.
9. All hunter fences should have a ground line (pole, brush, low wall, etc.) For a vertical, ground lines can be set on both sides to allow the fences to be jumped from both directions.
10. For an outdoor course, the distance between fences should be based on a 12 foot stride. (For example, 60 feet is a 4 stride line with space for take-off and landing.)
11. For an indoor course, the distance between fences should be based on an 11 foot stride. (For example, 55 feet is a 4 stride line.)
12. The turns on a hunter course should be open and wide to encourage an open stride to be maintained on the corners.
13. An encouraging fence jumped in the direction of the in-gate is a nice first fence, especially for the lower classes.

Horse Show Course Designing – JUMPERS

Designing a jumper course encourages creativity with both the layout and the construction of the fences. However,, be careful to mediate artistic flair with safety.

1. Jumper courses can have a combination of spread fences, triple bars, solid fences, verticals and combinations.
2. Brightly colored or striped fences may be used.
3. For the higher classes, distances between fences may be lengthened or shortened.
4. Ground lines are not required.
5. Setting courses with “spooky” jumps and/or technical lines encourages riders to plan ahead.
6. Jump-offs (over a shortened course) can have tight turns and require fences to be jumped at angles.
7. In a jumper class, cones mark the start and finish lines. A rider must pass through the cones to start the clock when he/she begins, and again pass through to stop the time at the end.
8. When designing the courses, try to place the start and finish cones on the same end of the arena. This makes the job of the timers much easier.
9. The first round should be timed in order to break ties.

Horse Show Course Designing – EQUITATION

Equitation courses have been described as “riding a hunter round over a jumper course.” The course should test the technical abilities of the rider.

1. Colored fences and combinations are allowed.
2. The course may be designed with tighter turns and bending lines.
3. Often a single vertical is set at the end of the ring.
4. For the equitation medal class, the judge may have the top riders back to perform a test.