

Simple Etiquette Can Help You Up Your Game

Being Prepared And Polite Help Create A Calm Environment For Success

By Oliver Brown



Oliver Brown prepares his grandson, Collins Brown, to enter the show ring to compete in Upperville's famed Lead Line class.

Horse shows are busy places and sometimes the hubbub can throw you off your game. Following some simple etiquette guidelines, starting with being well prepared, can have a positive impact on those around you and be a huge benefit to your experience.

Being prepared will also help your sense of calm which transfers directly to your horse. Remember, if you are well prepared helps save everyone's time, which is courteous and shows respect.

Here are some tips that will help create the calm state of mind that you need to compete well:

Have your attire in order-

Organization will help keep you calm. Know what you are going to wear and make sure it fits properly. Have your show attire clean, pressed, and ready. When you get dressed, make sure your collar is in and your rider number is easily visible...you never have a second chance to make a first impression.

Have your horse's tack ready-

Make a list of what you need being sure to check the fitting and clean everything before the show. The bit should hang on the bridle to create a slight smile, but not a cheesy grin. Bring a

clean appropriate saddle pad and make sure it's centered when you tack-up. Remember to check your girth. This saves time and helps keep things running smoothly.

Registering-

Again, compile your papers prior to the show. Have a paper copy of your current Coggins that can be left at the show. Bring a "blank" check and make sure it's signed. Fill out your entire entry form either on line or at show. Take papers out of the way to complete, so that you don't hold up others waiting in line.

Stall-

If you have a stall, make sure that you have plenty of help and unload your horse and gear efficiently, so that others can do the same. Be aware of traffic and stop or park in a way that doesn't impair the thoroughfare for others.

Longing-

This is a real issue at horse shows. It takes up a lot of space and can be unnerving and distracting for people trying to ride. Show respect for others and find a remote place to longe your horse.

Schooling-

This is perhaps the most

dangerous and hectic place at any show. Understand this and make an assessment of the current situation before you enter. The best approach is to ask to join what is happening. If there is a group of riders schooling in a certain way, it will be better to take part in their group, as opposed to doing your own thing and rudely calling out jumps.

Prepare for your class by schooling what's there; do not change the jumps! Do not try to imitate your "at home" schooling routine; work with others. You may not get to do everything that you want, but this also helps prepare you for your class. Another thing you can do is find another place to warm-up prior to entering the schooling area, this reduces your exposure to the chaos. Please note: some of the "A" shows don't even allow schooling.

General grounds behavior-

Always use good manners, offer to help with jumps, but don't take it upon yourself to do things without asking. Be respectful of everyone from the concession stand to other entrants. ie: don't take a one hundred dollar bill to the food stand first thing in the morning and get irritated that they can't make change. It all matters!

Gate-

This is the main hub of the show. As a courtesy, touch base with the gate person. People that run the gate are perceptive, smart, and efficient, they appreciate information and it helps them keep things moving. Be willing to compromise if a gate person



Find an out-of-the way place to complete your entry forms and get your paperwork together.



Offer to help do things at the show. Pretty sure a lot of people were appreciative that a resident cat was removed from the show ring by a competitor.

needs to change the order of go to get riders in the ring. Remember "stuff happens!"

In the Ring-

Know your course! Check for dotted lines and try to limit long scenic trips before your course. Like a horse race, every second counts and everyone appreciates the show moving along. Don't be that person!

If you are having a bad day, leave promptly after your three refusals. Do not wait for an invitation to leave or argue when excused and for Pete's sake, do not try a fourth time!

Judge's decisions-

There are times when you may have questions regarding your placing or performance in the ring. Most judges do not mind answering questions or giving their opinions, however, they are busy, so try and limit questions for times that really matter. Do not approach the judge on your own, ask a member of the show's staff if there is a time that you could approach the judge. Be prepared that this may be after the show.

When you approach the judge, be respectful. This is not a time to "hold court with the judge", remember, you paid for their opinion. Also keep in mind, that you may encounter them in the future and it always best to make a positive impression.

Winning & Losing-

Winning: be humble and always thank people for their compliments.

Losing: always accept your ribbon graciously with a smile and never throw it!