

Sport matters

How to guide ...

Riding on the oval track

We'd like to offer a little bit of an insight in to some of the things that can help you prepare for your competition debut or indeed help you to fine tune your performance on the oval track. Here we touch on some of the 'etiquette'.

Entering the oval track

Individual tests

- Not all oval tracks have the same point of entry, so it is important to have a look when you arrive at the venue to make sure you know where the gate is and where the shortest route is to the centre of the short side.
- Enter the track in the gait that you wish to start your test in or a gait above walk (unless you are starting in walk!). It is not 'law' to do so, but if you have your horse prepared in the collecting ring, then keep his attention and performance and make your way on to the track when called!
- You must start your test in the middle of the short side and take the shortest route possible to get there!
- A clear, clean nod of the head whilst passing the centre point of the short sides indicates to the judges that you have started your test.



If you have any questions about the content of this leaflet, or would like to know more about other aspects of sport riding, email sport@ihsgb.co.uk

Entering the oval track

Group tests

- Prior to you entering the track, you will have been given armbands (or similar) to indicate the colour you are – this helps the judges to identify you whilst on the track in a group. You will also be called forward to enter the track in order, as you are listed on the start list.
- You will already know which rein you should be starting your test on – if in doubt double check with the gatekeeper or fellow riders!
- You should enter the track from the collecting area, in slow tempo tölt and continue to maintain this as you go around the track.
- Leave enough space between you and the rider in front of you, but if all riders are going in a nice steady tempo, then the spacing should not be a big issue! If all the riders enter at the same time, with little space between you – the judges will not be able to see you and give you the score you deserve!
- There are never more than 6 horses on the track at the same time, so a good spacing guide to give yourself is if the horse in front reaches the middle of the short side – now is a good time for you to enter.



Music

When riding on the oval track, there is always music playing during your performance.

If you are riding an individual test, you are able to choose your own music to play. You should hand this in the speakers hut in plenty of time before your test and clearly mark your cd with your name and which test you are riding (i.e. T1 or F1 etc).

This is not compulsory though!



Riding the individual test

Changing the rein in your test

- In the tölt tests, you will be required if performing an individual test, to change the rein. You should always do this between the middle of the short side and the beginning of the long side.
- Don't forget however that you are being judged right up until you pass the centre of the short side – so keep up your performance.
- Top tip: use the width of the track to change the rein. Stepping off the track will lead to an instant disqualification. Don't just spring the turn on your horse, relax, move him over to the edge and then turn him.
- Prepare – then move off again, ready to be judged all over again from the middle of the short side.

Changing the tempo

- The beginning and end of the 'short and long sides' of the track will be clearly marked.
- Make sure you are aware of what these markers are when you arrive at a venue. Sometimes it can be a plant pot, mark on the outer fence etc – it's worthwhile checking though!



Top tip

Think of your dressage markers when identifying places on the track (if it helps!) So, the middle of the short sides are 'A' or 'C' and the long sides go between 'K' & 'H' or 'M' & 'F', making clear tempo changes can help your scores!

Finishing your test / exiting

- You must also indicate your test is over with a nod when you end your test in the middle of the short side.
- Bring your horse back to walk by the middle of the long side – if you don't – you will be disqualified!

Riding in a group test or final

- Although it is important to focus on your own performance, it is always useful to be aware of others around you.
- It is advisable to keep to the outside track of the oval track when performing in a group class.
- If you wish to overtake the horse in front, then you can overtake smoothly and cleanly on the inside.
- Let the rider know that is in front of you, that you will pass – a quick shout out and they will know you are coming.
- Focus on your test – but listen out for instructions from the speaker. Only when they indicate that you should change rein, can you. The instructions will be clear.
- Top tip: use the width of the track to change the rein. Stepping off the track will lead to an instant disqualification. Don't just spring the turn on your horse, relax, move him over to the edge and then turn him.
- If you are asked to return to walk between your gaits, have a look around you and make sure that you have enough space between you and the other horses. DO NOT make a circle to save space – only do this if the speaker asks you directly to do so – turning around on the track when not asked to, will result in disqualification.



Be aware of others, and know your test!

Each of us perform differently during a test – so be aware of others around you!

If someone is warming up in the designated area, they might like to be 'on their own' – the warm up area can be a busy place and some people like to enter their own world whilst others need to chat at 100mph to keep them calm! Just be aware of others – think of how you feel at this moment.

You will have entered your test with plenty of notice to the tournament – so read them and know what is expected of you! Reading the FIPO guide and also the sport judges guidelines can help give you an idea of what you need to do.

Even in group classes, you will be asked to follow the speakers' direction, but the speaker will be following the guide that you've already read. So you will know in your head what comes after trot etc., and be able to prepare your horse for what comes next!

Hopefully that has given you a little insight in to the 'etiquette' of the oval track. The people around you and those organising tournaments want to help – so if in doubt – ask them for their advice! We are all in it together and all here to help each other – these are not all 'rules' but a better way of performing.

KC, February 2015