

Section 3 - Gear Checking Process

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OBJECTIVES FOR GEAR CHECKING IN PONY CLUB WA

Safety is the first and paramount consideration. If any gear is unsafe, it **MUST** be corrected before a rider can continue to take part.

BASIC PRINCIPLES	SAFETY OF THE RIDER
	COMFORT OF THE HORSE
	TO INSTILL A SENSE OF PRIDE IN WEARING THE PONY CLUB UNIFORM AND PRESENTATION AT ALL PONY CLUB ACTIVITIES
	TO ENSURE FAIRNESS IN THE SPORT

GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR ALL GEAR CHECKING

1. Gear Checkers must **PREPARE** prior to Gear Checking
 - a. The Gear Checker is to make themselves familiar with the Pony Club Australia Gear Checking Rules and Guidelines specific to the activity.
 - b. Prepare yourself a small pack of Dilly Bag items to have with you.
 - c. Dress appropriately – see Officials Attire.
 - d. Present for duty at the Club Office or Event Organiser’s Office at least 40 minutes prior to the first rally lesson or competition start time. Competitors riding early will present prior to the event start to warm their horses up – you must be in-field for this.
 - e. Ensure you are provided with adequate tools and communication devices for the day.
 - f. Orient yourself with the lay of the site – traffic flow to Gear Check, to Marshalls and then to Arenas. Riders must present to you first prior to any riding. Introduce yourself to your Marshall as you will most likely work together to traffic riders to arenas.
 - g. Locate yourself in-field so that you can be found throughout your shift. Request if needed table, chairs, sun shade / weather protection.

2. The Gear Checking Process In-Depth
 - a. **Have a Process:** In order to be quick but thorough when Gear Checking, try to establish a routine, starting with the rider (helmet, hair, uniform, boots, spurs, whip), then the horse/pony’s head/bridle, then the saddle, extra equipment (martingales/breastplates/boots/bandages etc.).

 - b. **Greet the approaching rider:** Refer to your rider list and try to politely address the rider according to their name.

 - c. **Inspecting the Rider:** Look and consider the following:
 - Approved Safety Helmet with correctly adjusted harness.
 - Correct Uniform.
 - Safe Footwear.
 - Permitted spurs (to be checked for correct type, correct fit, and permitted length). A tape measure/ruler must be available.
 - Medic Alert bracelets and chains.
 - Jewellery / Rings.
 - Piercings comply.
 - Pony Club WA State Badge.

d. **Inspecting the Horse:** Look and consider the following:

- Horses that will not stand still, ask the rider to circle you on a small circle and perform a visual inspection. Ask the rider to verify items that you cannot physically access. Not your inspection on your form.
- General Condition (not thin or tucked up with a staring coat, appearing underweight).
- Condition of coat i.e. shiny/silky
- Grooming of body, underbody, legs, head (no dried sweat, dirt, bot eggs etc.)
- Mane and Tail - clean and tangle-free. Presented as for relevant competition.
- Long flowing manes may be a tangle hazard with the rider's hands, reins and whip. If not able to be pulled or shortened, enquire if the main can be plaited in a way to make safe for riding.
- Eyes, Nose - no discharge. Clean
- No chronic cough
- Blood: The sighting of any blood (whether wet or dry) on the horse, in particular from the mouth, nostrils or spur area during Gear Check must be reported to the Chief Coach / Chief Judge / Steward / Technical Delegate or Vet (whichever is most applicable).
- Hooves – confirm with the rider that they are picked out. Note condition of hooves and state of shoeing (if applicable)

e. **Inspecting the Saddlery:** Look and consider the following:

- All leather and stitching must be checked for wear and tear.
- Permitted bit, bridle and noseband.
- The checking of the bridle must be done with the greatest caution, as some horses are very head shy and touchy and sensitive about their mouths. If necessary, the Gear Checker may require the bridle to be removed by the competitor, so that the bit may be inspected. Where Gear Checkers are required to inspect horses' mouths or bits, clean water to wash hands is necessary. Disposable gloves may be used.
- Fit of Saddle and Saddle Cloth/Numnah.
- Size of Stirrup Irons/Toe Stoppers in relation to Boots.
- Check fit of Cruppers and Breastplates.
- Martingales, Boots, Bandages to be checked for correct fitting and application.
- Check Stirrup bars are in working order.

f. **Conclude your inspection:** Wish the rider well and ensure that you mark the rider as gear checked on your sheets, together with any notes to report on the Report Form.

GEAR CHECKING PROCESS AT RALLIES

- Safety is the first and paramount consideration. If any gear is unsafe, it MUST be corrected before a rider can continue to take part.
- Riders preparing for Proficiency Certificates/Competition etc. should not be subjected to unnecessary and lengthy criticisms.

Who can Gear Check?

- Often at Rallies, it is the Coach that is about to give the rally lesson, however each club may assign the gear check to another club person.
- Anyone listed on the Pony Club WA Officials Annual Strength Return.

- Anyone listed on the Annual Strength Return and Membership List of a Pony Club currently affiliated with the Pony Club WA.
- Any one 16 years or over.
- Should have attended a "Safety & Comfort of the Rider and Horse" Clinic.
- Must be conversant with the current requirements of dress and gear pertaining to the activity.

Gear Check Process

- Riders present dismounted. Mount when the Gear Checker indicates and is re-checked for saddle fit and stirrup fit.
- The Gear Checker/s appointed by the Organiser will check the rider's dress and saddlery before the start of every activity. An in-depth description of the gear checking process is listed after this section.
- Record on the Gear Check Report Form / Record any items unsafe or ill-fitting.
- If the Gear Checker has any doubt with Rider Dress, Gear, Condition of Horse etc., consult with the Chief Coach. When a decision has been made, the Report form must be signed by the deciding Coach.
- In the event of a dispute, assistance should be sought from the Chief Coach. When a decision has been made, the Report form must be signed by the deciding Coach.

Adjusting Gear

- Gear Checkers and Coaches should insist on alterations so that the correct fit can be tried out.
- Adjusting the height of a bit may need to be gradual.
- A leather punch, spare numnah, saddle cloth, wither pads and stirrup leathers could be useful to have on hand.
- Get the rider or their parent to adjust the gear. **Never the gear checker.** Insist it be done as this is the time (at a Rally) to try out new fittings, not at a competition.
- It is the Gear Checker / Coach's responsibility in this situation to teach the rider/parent the correct fitting of all equipment.

Temporary Adjustments at Rallies

- When teaching or assisting with Pony Club activities, it is sometimes necessary to make a temporary adjustment to ill-fitting gear so that it can be used safely and comfortably.
- Any such adjustments must be made so that the gear is safe for the rider and comfortable for the pony/horse and should be strictly temporary.
- DON'T SEND A MEMBER HOME WITH A "TEMPORARY" GEAR ADJUSTMENT WITHOUT MAKING SURE THAT HE/SHE KNOWS THAT THIS IS ONLY "TEMPORARY" AND THAT THEY, AND THEIR PARENTS, UNDERSTAND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO MAKE THE GEAR FIT CORRECTLY AND SAFELY PRIOR TO THE NEXT RALLY OR ACTIVITY.
- If "Temporary" gear adjustments have not been corrected permanently by the third rally, the member will not be permitted to ride.
- Any 'repaired' leather may not be safe and is an area of concern. Assess and encourage full replacement of leather e.g. stirrup leathers, girth straps where necessary.

GEAR CHECKING PROCESS AT COMPETITIONS, PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION AND ANY TRAINING DAYS OR CLINICS

- Safety is the first and paramount consideration. If any gear is unsafe, it **MUST** be corrected before a rider can continue to take part.
- Riders preparing for Proficiency Certificates/Competition etc. should not be subjected to unnecessary and lengthy criticisms.

Who Can Gear Check?

- Often at Competitions, Clinics and Training Days it is an assigned helper linked with a listed competitor / rider. At Proficiency Examinations it may be the examiner or another club person.
- Anyone listed on the Pony Club WA Officials Database.
- Anyone listed on the Membership List of a Pony Club currently affiliated with the Pony Club WA.
- Any one 16 years or over.
- Should have attended a "Safety & Comfort of the Rider and Horse" Clinic.
- Must be conversant with the current requirements of dress and gear pertaining to the activity.

Gear Check Process

- Riders present mounted.
- The Gear Checker/s appointed by the Organiser will check the rider's dress and saddlery before the start of every activity. An in-depth description of the gear checking process is listed after this section.
- Record on the Gear Check Report Form / Record any items unsafe or ill-fitting.
- If the Gear Checker has any doubt with Rider Dress, Gear, Condition of Horse etc., consult with the Head Gear Checker, Chief Steward, Technical Delegate, Chief Judge or Ground Jury. When a decision has been made, the Report form must be signed by the deciding Official.
- In the event of a dispute, assistance should be sought from the Chief Steward, Technical Delegate, Chief Judge or Ground Jury. When a decision has been made, the Report form must be signed by the deciding Chief Steward, Technical Delegate, Chief Judge or Ground Jury.

Adjusting Gear

- Gear Checkers should suggest but must not insist on alterations so that the correct fit can be achieved. For example, alteration of the height/length of a noseband, bit or martingale because it might affect the horse's performance. **However, point it out if it is not correct and note it on the Gear Check Report Form.**
- It is up to the rider to seek tools to allow them to adjust gear - leather punch, spare numnah, saddle cloth, wither pads and stirrup leathers etc.
- Get the rider / parent / Team Manager to adjust the gear. **Never the gear checker.**
- It is helpful (but not mandatory) if the Gear Checker can offer correct guidance on the correct fitting of all equipment.
- Gear is not to be altered (except for tightening of a girth) by any person after the gear check. A rider that wishes to do so, must first have such alterations re-checked by the presiding Gear Checker. Failure to do so by the rider/parent/team manager could entail disqualification of the rider/team. Gear checkers are to document such instances, advise the rider/parent/team manager and in severe cases of misconduct report to the presiding Technical Delegate, Judge or Ground Jury. This latter party decides if disqualification applies, never the Gear Checker.

State Championship and Team Competition Considerations

As per above, with the following amendments:

- Clubs must assign (solely responsible for) Team Managers that are conversant with relevant and current Gear Checking Rules prior to the commencement of the competition.

- Team Managers must conduct their own Gear Check on their team prior to presenting for Gear Check. Even if they are managing a composite team.
- Team Managers listed as per the competition draw must accompany teams reporting for Gear Check. Teams reporting without a Team Manager will not be accepted as there is no-one responsible for riders or for possible gear changes. This causes unnecessary hold-ups.
- Teams presenting with an unofficial Team Manager, not per the competition draw released by the event organisers, will not be gear checked and will not be permitted to ride.
- All Team Members to present together for Gear Check. Teams will not be gear checked until this condition is met.
- Teams presenting with inappropriately dressed Team Managers will not be accepted for Gear Checking until such time as the Team Manager is suitably attired or replaced by a correctly attired person.
- Teams with a riding Team Manager will not be permitted.
- Gear Checkers will not be held responsible for delays caused by Teams / Team Managers not presenting correctly / safely attired or on time.

Competitors must remain in a designated area after inspections are complete.

PROBLEMS THAT MAY ARISE WHEN GEAR CHECKING

A. DIFFERING OPINIONS FROM GEAR CHECKERS ON THE SAME DAY

- Ideally a Gear Check Briefing should be held at the start of the competition and a Chief Gear Checker appointed.
- Any queries to be directed firstly to the Chief Gear Checker and then to the Steward/ Technical Delegate /Chief Coach or Officials

B. CAN STEWARDS/TECHNICAL DELEGATES OVERRULE A GEAR CHECKER?

- Stewards/Technical Delegates must consult with the Chief Gear Checker before making a decision, they must then sign off on the Gear Check Report Form (i.e. - the Steward/ Technical Delegate then takes responsibility for that rider's gear and dress).

C. BAD BEHAVIOUR/LANGUAGE/ABUSE TO ANY OFFICIAL

- Bad behaviour/ language / abuse to any official (including Gear Checkers) by either a Rider, Parent, Team Manager, Coach, Club Official etc., is a reportable offence to the Chief Gear Checker / Steward / Technical Delegate / Judge and can entail elimination / disqualification of the competitor.
- All persons reported for bad behaviour/language/abuse to any official will be maintained on a register and may be refused future competition entry by Pony Club WA Officials.

D. ILLEGAL / DANGEROUS GEAR

- If you are not the appointed Gear Checker at an event (e.g. ODE), and you see possibly illegal and/or dangerous gear passing the Gear Check – report immediately to the Chief Gear Checker/Steward/ Technical Delegate of the event.

E. INCORRECT GEAR OR ATTIRE

- When a rider presents in incorrect gear or attire (e.g. incorrect coloured Jodhpurs / Breeches, stirrup irons too small, etc.) politely advise and explain to the rider how it may be addressed.
- Saddle fit can still cause problems at Gear Checks. While a saddle may have fitted well earlier in the season or when assessed by an accredited Saddle Fitter, the situation can change quite quickly – horses/ponies change shape, riders grow and/or become heavier and the flocking in the panels can shift and/or settle - all of which can cause the saddle to become ill-fitting.

F. REPEAT OFFENDERS

- **All** repeat offenders reported for bad behaviour/language/abuse to any official will be maintained on a register and may be refused future competition entry by Pony Club WA Officials.
- Clubs will be advised of repeat offenders and the “3 strikes and out” rule will be implemented.
- This cannot be implemented if the Gear Checkers Report Forms are not returned to Pony Club WA Headquarters.
- It is the Organiser’s responsibility to make sure that Gear Checkers have a copy of the Gear Check Report Form and the completed form is returned to Pony Club WA Headquarters.

G. OPEN RIDERS

- Open Riders riding under Pony Club Australia Rules **must** obey the Pony Club Australia Gear Checking Rules.
- As Open Riders do not have a PC uniform, they are not bound to present in Formal PC Uniform, hence they have exceptions for Dress and Saddle Cloths specified in this manual.
- Riding at their own risk is not an option when riding under Pony Club Australia Rules.
- Obeying the Pony Club Australia rules for gear and dress is to cover the Open Riders for insurance and to cover Pony Club WA officials and the Organizing Committee under the Pony Club WA’S Risk Management Policy.

H. GEAR CHECKING UNSETTLED / UNSAFE HORSES

- If necessary, the Gear Checker may require the bridle to be removed by the competitor, so that the bit may be inspected.
- Ask the Steward/ Technical Delegate to verify a ‘sight gear check’ if the Gear Checker cannot get near a horse to check for safety (stitching, stirrup bars down etc.).
- The **Chief Coach / Chief Judge / Steward / Technical Delegate or Vet** must then sign off on the Gear Check Report Form (i.e. - the Chief Official then takes responsibility for that rider’s gear and dress).

I. REMINDERS

- It is recommended that **Clubs Gear Check** their riders in their **competition outfits and gear prior to the Activity and in preparation for Competitions, especially Championship events.**
- **Team Managers, Riders and Parents** need to be reminded to check rider dress and gear requirements prior to an Activity/Competition (especially prior to Championships).

OFFICIALS ATTIRE IN PONY CLUB WA

In keeping with Risk Management and Sun Smart Policies, **all Officials (Gear Checkers / Team Managers / Examiners / Coaches / Stewards / Technical Delegates / Marshals etc.)**, should be suitably attired.

- **Clothing** Jodhpurs / Breeches, neatly fitting Slacks or Dress Shorts
Long sleeved Shirts with ties, or neatly fitting long sleeved tops in Club or Zone colours.
- **Footwear** Short or Long Riding Boots.
Closed in Shoes or Work boots permitted if the Official is unmounted.
- **Jewellery** No jewellery etc. that could get caught on horse/pony’s gear/mane etc.
- **Hats** Stable and suitable for weather conditions.
- **Gloves** If used, should be soft enough to feel buckles and reins
- **Hair** Neatly secured/restrained.
- **Sunscreen** Sunscreen protection is strongly encouraged.
- **Mobile Phones** If required for emergency use, to be kept on silent mode.
- **Chewing Gum** Also eating lollies - Not permitted while coaching.
- **Smoking** Not permitted.

PONY CLUB WA GEAR CHECKING REPORT FORM

- The Report Form for Gear Checking at competitions and rallies can be found in the FORMS section of this manual.
- This form is **COMPULSORY** for event organisers to place in gear checkers folders, and to be carried by officials and gear checkers appointed at any pony club activity.
- Any incorrect, ill-fitting or unsafe gear must be noted on this Gear Check Report Form.
- Only names of riders (and their Club) with incorrect, ill-fitting or unsafe gear should be recorded and how the problem was resolved. This information, when sent to Pony Club WA is entered to the Pony Club WA Offender Register. Members may enquire about repeat offenders on this register at any time by emailing gearchecking@ponyclubwa.asn.au
- In the event of an unresolved dispute (between Rider, Parent, Guardian, Coach, Team Manager and the Gear Checker), assistance should be sought from either the Technical Delegate / Chief Steward, Chief Judge or Ground Jury who, after inspecting the rider and their mount, must sign the form before either

Permitting the rider and horse/pony to compete

OR

Refusing to allow the rider and horse/pony to participate.

- The Report Forms help the Gear Checking Advisory Panel monitor any problem areas that may need to be addressed.

GEAR CHECKERS LAMENT

Once upon a time, there were some Gear Checkers.

Now these Gear Checkers had spent a lot of their valuable time learning the gear checking rules and attending schools to learn how to be a Gear Checker. They learnt simple rules such as the minimum width of stirrup irons, that stripped holes were unsafe, and that certain bits were not allowed – amongst other rules. They are also volunteers – unpaid!

Unfortunately, when they were asked to be Gear Checkers at various activities, it was found that not everyone knew or agreed with the Rules, and that there were some riders and parents who wanted them to ignore the rules, or overlook them, so that the riders would not miss out on participating.

What should the Gear Checker do?

- Follow the Guidelines and risk ridicule,
- Overlook the Guidelines and risk a rider's safety and their own integrity?

Parents should keep an eye on gear for stripped holes (where buckle holes stretch and begin to split), stitching coming undone, broken keepers, reins too long, stirrups too narrow (2cm to 3cm clearance between widest part of the rider's boot and the side of the stirrup iron), saddles sitting too low, etc.

If you are queried or picked up with a problem with your gear, **please remember that the Gear Checker is not there to cause a problem, but to ENSURE FAIRNESS IN THE SPORT and, more importantly, SAFETY.**

A GENTLE REMINDER to Riders (and their Parents) – please take care whenever you go out competing that you find out the Gear Checking Guidelines for the Activity/Discipline in which you are competing (they differ from Activity to Activity!) so that you have a trouble-free gear check.

Printed by courtesy of the Toodyay Pony Club.

GEAR CHECKING EXEMPTIONS

Defined:

An exemption is a form of authorisation that Pony Club WA and Pony Club Australia offers a member to participate in Pony Club WA, when their circumstances prevent them from complying with our Gear Checking Rules.

Who can apply for an Exemption?

Any Pony Club WA member is entitled to submit an exemption request. The rider / parent must systematically go through the process outlined in the Online Exemption Application Form.

<https://www.jotform.com/form/211177535758867>

When to apply for an Exemption?

A Pony Club WA member is invited to apply for an exemption in the following circumstances

- They or their horse have a physical impairment restricting them from complying with Pony Club Australia Gear Checking Rules.
- They or their horse have a scenario where their safety and comfort is considerably impacted by complying with the Pony Club Australia Gear Checking Rules.

Members are welcome at any time to email GCAP to check on whether they have a genuine exemption case by emailing gearchecking@ponyclubwa.asn.au.

Examples of exemptions granted historically:

- Aged pony with mouth trauma, unable to be ridden with a bit at rallies – exempted for a year to ride at rallies under coach supervision bitless.
- Aged pony that had never been trained to a bit – exempt for a year to ride bitless at rallies only under coach supervision.
- Horse has cut to mouth, exempted to be ridden at a rally bitless.
- Horse suffers severe head-shaking syndrome, exempted for a year to be ridden with a nose net at competitions.
- Horse has proven propensity to bolt in open spaces, granted an exemption to be ridden XC in a running gag by an associate rider on grounds of safety.
- Horse has a proven propensity to get their tongue over the bit, granted an exemption to be ridden in a Pelham and Hanoverian noseband by an associate rider grounds of safety.

When not to apply for an Exemption?

A Pony Club WA member may apply for an exemption however such an application may be rejected if:

- The application submitted is incomplete in any way.
- The applicant has not received written support from their Club Coach and President.
- The applicant wants an exemption merely based on their personal preference or convenience. A sincere and bona fide case cannot be demonstrated.
- The exemption will unquestionably compromise the welfare and comfort of the horse.
- The applicant wants an exemption to use harsher equipment in order to progress quicker through the levels of competition. Without dedicating time to systematic training of the rider and the horse.
- The applicant cannot demonstrate that they understand how their specific gear functions, fits, its correct application and their own ability to use it safely and effectively. Riders with a C* Proficiency Level and above are considered to have propensity to use more advanced gear.

- Vaulting specific – applications to vault on a horse, without a helmet will not be granted:
 - If members have been vaulting less than 12 months and / or
 - If members vaulting at the walk only levels (including EA Preliminary level)

Members that can demonstrate more than 12 months experience with vaulting, proven competency at Pre-Novice Vaulting level and above (where more advanced positions are required) will be considered, however not guaranteed.

Members participating in vaulting on a horse, with no helmet, and with no approved exemption are in breach of their membership, as are presiding coaches, clubs and officials present for the event or rally.