PARENTS HANDBOOK

everything you need to know



UNITED DRESSAGE & JUMPING CLUB



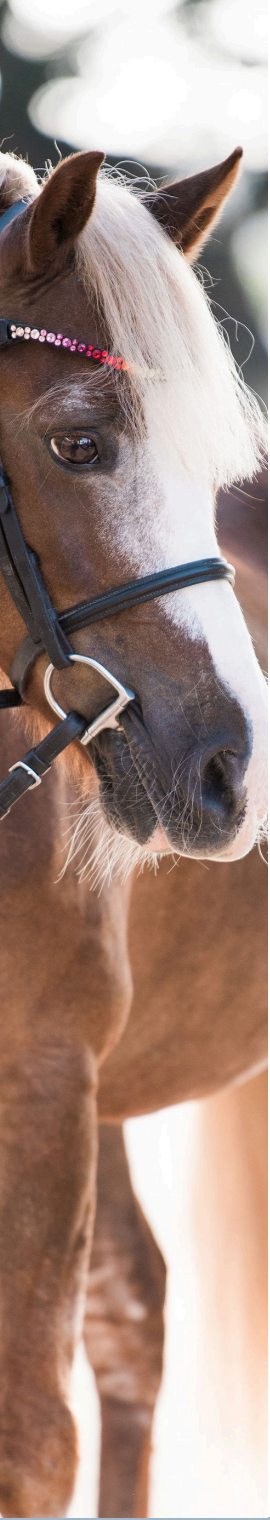


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Dear Parents,

Your child may begin riding because they love horses. Our job is to turn that love into confidence, knowledge and real riding skills.
At a UDJC Certified Riding School, your child follows a clear path through four levels:
Unicorn → Level B → Level E → Level A
At every stage, children learn to ride correctly, care for their horse and understand the responsibility that comes with being a rider. At Badge Shows held right at their barn, they can proudly demonstrate what they have learned and earn official UDJC badges. This gives your child something exciting to work toward and gives you a clear pathway to celebrate their progress.
Dressage is the foundation of their education because it develops balance, control and communication with the horse. Jumping is introduced gradually when your child is ready, followed later by Hunters.
The E and A badges also help your child advance through the UDJC Performance Levels when they begin competing. This creates one connected journey, from that unforgettable first ride to confidently entering the show ring.
Your child is not simply taking riding lessons. They are building a relationship with horses, developing responsibility and becoming a real rider.



Karoline & David Reichert
Founder UDJC

UDJC's goal is not to be "just another riding school." We focus on a holistic education around ponies - we don't just put kids on a pony/horse and let them ride around for 30 minutes until they get back into their cars and go home.

The equestrian world has so much more to offer than that and each horse, a living animal who needs a lot of attention and care, deserves much more than that. This is what makes riding such a different sport compared to activities like baseball, tennis, gymnastics or dancing.
Part of each lesson is learning how to safely clean and tack up the horses, which is as important as the riding. This process takes, depending on the age and the level of the student, typically between 10 and 30 minutes but it's absolutely essential. If tacking up takes longer than expected, it simply means the child needs more practice.
The more confident and skilled the students become in all horsemanship manners, the more the focus shifts towards spending actual time on the horse and learning how to ride.



"Dealing with a horse or pony has a personality-defining meaning, especially for young people. This meaning must always be observed and promoted"

At UDJC Riding Schools, safety is one of our main concerns. One of the reasons that we're so obsessed with horsemanship is the fact that horses can be dangerous! They're flight animals that can be unpredictable: They can kick, bite and run away. Even though our horses are all very gentle, there are always things that can happen. We teach the kids safety standards, so they know how to behave safely around horses.

Also when it comes to riding the horses, it is possible that a kid will fall off, which is completely normal and part of the process. Typically, falling off a bike on the concrete is more uncomfortable than falling off a horse. After a fall, if the child is physically able, we encourage them to get back on the horse to help build confidence and prevent fear from developing.



In order to attend classes we require the kids to wear proper riding gear. This consists of a riding helmet, riding breeches and paddock boots. These are an absolute must for safety reasons.

"Learning how to groom and tack up the horse is as important as learning how to ride!"

CHAPTER 1: The high value of riding horses

Many world wide studies show that a child's life can be positively influenced by horses. Riding and being around horses can enhance many skills needed in life, not only physically but also emotionally and mentally. To the lay observer of equestrian sports, the rider may appear to be “just sitting on the horse” but there is so much more to it. Swimming is the only activity that uses more muscles at the same time than horseback riding. Read that sentence again!

Additionally the rider needs balance, coordination, a keen sense of space and timing, quick responses, endurance and a tactile connection of energy between the rider and the horse. Horseback riding is by far the most complex sport in the world since the rider is dealing with a huge animal that doesn’t use a voice in order to express feelings or concerns.

Cognitive effect	Physical effect	Social-emotional effect	Psychological effect
Gain of knowledge	Coordination	Social behavior	Acting independently
Following rules	Balance	Sense of responsibility	Reduction of anxiety
Structured approach to tasks	Motor activity	Teamwork	Raising self-confidence
New sensory stimulations	Body awareness	Thoughtfulness for animals & friends	Self esteem
Creating first hand experience	Muscle gain, flexibility & strength	Increased empathy	Motivation
Feeling for space & time in courses	Improvement of physical condition & stamina	Reduction of aggressive behavior	Pride

CHAPTER 2: The olympic equestrian disciplines - better known as “English riding”

English riding, or classic riding, has its origins in England, of course, but Germany and France also formed this style of riding. An interesting fact is, that the basics of how to ride a horse the classic way hasn’t changed in the last 100 years. As an example, Die Reitvorschrift (The Code of Riding) was written and published by Max von Redwitz in 1912 and it is still in place.
There are three different olympic equestrian disciplines, which you have probably seen on TV:
Dressage - Show Jumping - Eventing
Even though dressage, show jumping and eventing are different disciplines that seem to have nothing to do with each other, they're very similar in terms of the basics.

Dressage:

“Dancing with the horse”
Dressage is the execution by a trained horse of precise movements in response to barely perceptible signals from its rider. Particularly important are the animal’s pace and bearing in performing walks, trots, canters, and more specialized maneuvers. Dressage competitions have been included in the Olympic Games since 1912.





Show Jumping:

In show jumping, the rider maneuvers the horse over a specific number of arena jumps. Typically, the winner is the one who completes the course without mistakes in the fastest time. At the Olympic Games the obstacles can be 5'5" high and 6'7" wide.





Eventing:

Eventing consists of three different disciplines which have to be completed with the same horse: Dressage, Show Jumping and Cross-Country.

The cross-country portion of eventing is a course of up to 4.25 miles long. The rider has to jump 40-45 obstacles of different kinds: logs, ditches, hedges and water jumps.







Dressage is king. Without a proper dressage education the rider can't jump or do cross-country. In order to be a good show jumper or eventer the rider automatically has to be a skilled dressage rider since it's really the base for any discipline. Even a lot of Western riders seek to gain basic knowledge in dressage.



It takes a long time for a child or teen to specialize in one of the three disciplines. During the first few years of their equestrian education they'll learn basic dressage, they'll learn how to jump fences and they also learn how to take the horse or pony over some logs and water jumps before there is a need for specialization.

There are even some riders who compete at a world-class level in several disciplines. Even though the skills we talked about in Chapter 1 are what we focus on the most, we still want the kids and also you parents to understand that this is a very serious sport that needs to be treated at least as seriously as the other sports they're doing.

CHAPTER 3: The career path of a child or teen

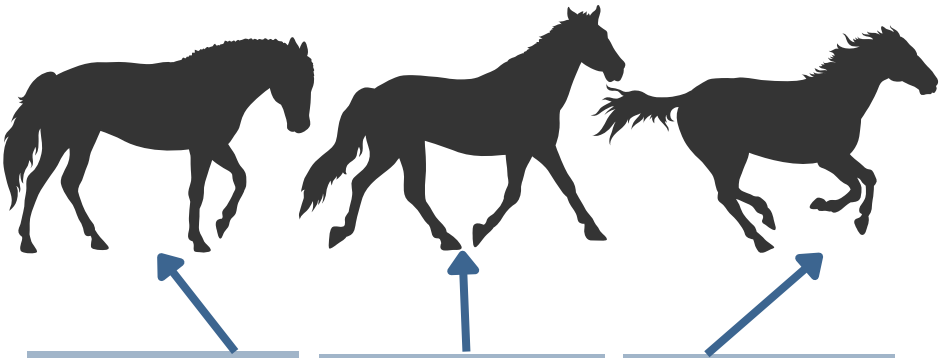
We like to start the kids on ponies as early as possible, often even at the age of two or three. It's never too early to be exposed to a pony.

Typically the kids start riding the ponies on a lead line.. They need to get a feeling for balance, speed and rhythm while the trainer leads them on a short line in order to make sure they can get support in case they lose their balance.



Once they're experienced and confident enough they'll move on to a lunge line. The lunge line is longer than the lead line and the horse is moving on a circle of 20-30 feet around the trainer who stands in the middle. This is where the kids are being exposed to a canter for the first time. Once they can ride confidently in a walk, trot and canter on a lunge line, we let them ride freely for the first time. This is a big step for the student since that's the first time they're in "full control" of their horse or pony. They learn how to steer, stop and how to transition between gaits.

> "Every student develops and grows at their own pace. It's impossible to put a time frame on the development of a child!"



The WALK is the slowest of the three gaits. It has a four-beat rhythm and is very easy and smooth to sit.

The TROT is faster than the walk and has a two-beat rhythm. It's the hardest of the three to sit and balance since it's the bounciest gait.

The CANTER is the fastest gait. It has a three-beat rhythm but, even though it's faster, it's easier to sit than the trot.

Again, once they're experienced enough, the kids will move on to riding completely freely in a walk, trot and canter. That's the time when we highly recommend having two or three lessons a week instead of one. They'll learn easy dressage movements in the arena and master having the horse fully under control.
When that's the case the kids are going to be exposed to their fist little jumps and to trail riding.

Now it's crunch time: At this point, and it takes a couple of years to get there, the student will be a good little rider who has the tools to move on to a competitive career. On a lease horse or on their own horse, the students are going to be able to compete at shows in dressage and show jumping and even take the first steps in cross-country. The goal now is to permanently get better and move up the levels by becoming more skillful as a rider.

CHAPTER 4: The levels of UDJC Riding Schools

The UDJC Riding School program is divided into four Levels:
Unicorns, Level B, Level E, Level A.
In the **Unicorns** program the students are mainly on a lead line, in the Level B program they're mainly on a lunge line and in the Level E program they start to ride independently.
The classes typically go by age but there's also a skill factor to it. In other words:
Generally Unicorns are 2-5 years old, Level B Students are 6-8 years old, and Level E students are 9+ years old; however, depending on the student's skills, it may vary. For example, an 11 year-old beginner could be in Level B and an 8 year-old advanced sudent might be in Level E.







"Everything we do at UDJC Riding Schools is designed for the long term. Learning how to ride is a very long process. Quick and easy is not an option!"

Unicorns

lead line
walk
trot

- fun
- discovery
- safety
- confidence
- balance

Level Up requirement:

Unicorn Badge

Level B

lunge line
w/t/c

free riding
w/t

- physical abilities
- coordination
- steering and controlling the horse

Level Up requirement:

Level B Badge

Level E

free riding
ground poles
jumps

- athletic performance
- dressage movements

Level Up requirement:

Level E Badge

Level A

free riding
ground poles
jumps

- athletic performance
- dressage movements

Level Up requirement:

Level A Badge

The Unicorn Program

The Unicorn Program is the first step in the UDJC Riding School System, created especially for beginner children ages two to five. Through playful, age-appropriate lessons, children receive their first introduction to tacking up a horse, moving safely around the animal, and developing balance and confidence in the saddle.

The program includes the UDJC learning book “Falling in Love”, which introduces basic riding and horse-care knowledge in a child-friendly way.

To earn their **Unicorn Badge**, students complete a lunge-line riding test and have a short, age-appropriate conversation with the judge about what they have learned.

The Unicorn Curriculum

During the Unicorn Program, children learn to:

- Walk and trot on the lunge line, both in a saddle and bareback with handles
- Ride with one hand while walking and trotting on the lunge line
- Trot with their eyes closed to develop balance, feel and confidence
- Ride transitions between trot, walk and halt independently
- Develop age-appropriate knowledge about basic horse care, riding and safety



Level B

Level B is the next step in the UDJC Riding School System. Students build greater balance, control and independence while learning to ride at the walk, trot and canter. They gradually progress from lunge-line lessons to riding freely and begin developing the position and skills needed for Dressage and Jumping.

The program includes the UDJC learning book “Becoming a Rider”, which develops the student’s knowledge of riding, horse care and safety. To earn the UDJC Level B Badge, students must achieve a score of at least 7.0 in a Beginner Level Walk/Trot test and pass an age-appropriate oral theory test in front of a judge at a UDJC Badge Show.





The Level B Curriculum

During Level B, students learn to:

- Walk, trot and canter on the lunge line Ride upward and downward transitions
- Ride in a saddle and bareback with handles Recognize and trot on the correct diagonal
- Develop their balance and control without the lunge line
- Ride in the two-point position at the walk and trot
- Begin riding independently at the walk and trot
- Develop age-appropriate knowledge of riding, horse care and safety

Level E - We're Getting Somewhere

During Level E, students become more independent and learn to ride confidently at all three gaits: walk, trot and canter. They practice Dressage patterns such as circles, diagonals and half-circles, learn to ride over poles, jump individual fences and complete jumping courses. They also gain experience riding in the field and over uneven terrain.

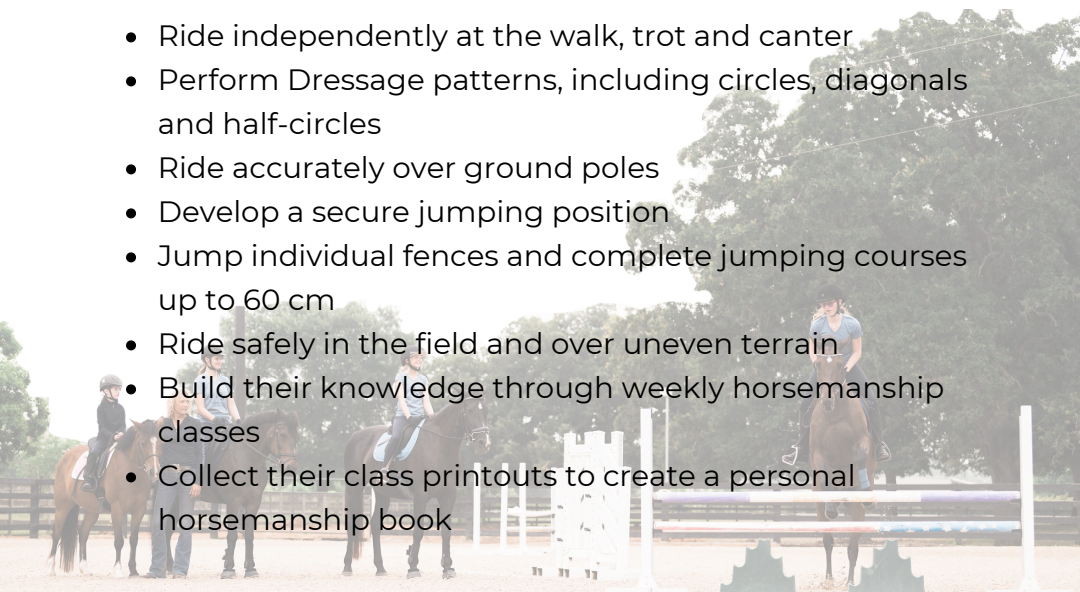
Level E also includes weekly horsemanship classes covering riding theory, horse care, safety and the needs of the horse. Students receive a printout with each class, which they collect over time to build their own personal horsemanship book.

To earn the UDJC Level E Badge, students must complete three sections: an E Ability Dressage test, a 60 cm jumping course and a written theory test. Each section must be passed with a score of 7.0 or higher.

The Level E Curriculum

During Level E, students learn to:

- Ride independently at the walk, trot and canter
- Perform Dressage patterns, including circles, diagonals and half-circles
- Ride accurately over ground poles
- Develop a secure jumping position
- Jump individual fences and complete jumping courses up to 60 cm
- Ride safely in the field and over uneven terrain
- Build their knowledge through weekly horsemanship classes
- Collect their class printouts to create a personal horsemanship book



Level A

At Level A, riding begins to develop from a hobby into a sport. Students start competing at shows away from their home barn, typically several times throughout the year, and gain experience preparing for and participating in a more competitive environment.

Students learn to ride more complex Dressage tests, including lateral movements, and begin developing the skills needed to ride the horse on the bit. In Jumping, they learn to ride more technical courses with combinations and more challenging lines. Weekly horsemanship classes continue to deepen their knowledge of horse care, training, competition and responsible horsemanship.

To earn the UDJC Level A Badge, students must complete three sections: an A Ability Dressage test, an 80 cm jumping course and a written theory test. Each section must be passed with a score of 7.0 or higher.

The Level A Curriculum

During Level A, students learn to:

- Compete at shows away from their home barn
- Prepare themselves and their horse for competition
- Ride more complex Dressage tests
- Perform introductory lateral movements
- Develop the ability to ride the horse on the bit
- Ride more technical jumping courses
- Jump combinations and more challenging lines
- Develop their skills through regular competition experience
- Continue weekly horsemanship classes
- Build a deeper understanding of horse care, training and competition

CHAPTER 5 - UDJC Badge Shows

Every three to four months, we host a UDJC Badge Show right at the riding school. These special weekends include one day of clinics with a UDJC judge, followed by one day of competition. They give every student an opportunity to learn, experience the excitement of showing and receive valuable feedback in the familiar environment of their home barn.

All students can participate in regular classes appropriate to their current riding level. Students who have mastered the complete curriculum for their level may also complete their official UDJC Badge Test and take the next step in the Riding School System.

During the weekend, the judge evaluates each rider's position, balance, use of the aids and overall performance. Depending on the badge, students also complete an oral or written theory test. Riders receive scores and helpful feedback showing what they already do well and what requires more attention.

Badge Shows are an important part of every student's development. They give children a goal to work toward, teach them to manage excitement and a little pressure, and allow parents and trainers to clearly follow their progress. Most importantly, the experience is designed to be positive, educational and fun, even when a student is not yet ready to earn the next badge.

Our goal is not the quickest ribbon, but the development of educated riders who can succeed while always putting the horse first.



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