

Understand the UDJC Riding School Pathway

Before you change lesson groups, schedules, trainers, or anything else, you need to understand where your current students belong. The four UDJC levels are educational stages. They describe the rider's mounted ability, independence, understanding, and horsemanship.

THIS STEP IS ABOUT PLACEMENT, NOT REBUILDING YOUR SCHEDULE

Take your complete active student list and decide where each student belongs today. Do not change the schedule yet. Do not worry about the Badge process yet. We will cover Badges in a later step.

THE FOUR LEVELS IN PRACTICE

UNICORN

AGES 3 TO 5

Unicorn Playtime is for the tiny ones. These students are normally three to five years old and are being introduced to horses through play, movement, confidence, and simple pony care.

They work mainly with Shetland type ponies and only ride a little at first.

As they become more comfortable, Unicorn riders can do more on the lead line or lunge line.

The more advanced Unicorns may walk and trot, practice posting trot and sitting trot, and ride either in a regular saddle or with handles. The goal is still confidence, coordination, balance, and a positive relationship with the pony, not formal riding performance.

- Tiny students, normally age 3 to 5
- Play based introduction to horses and ponies
- Basic safety, grooming, leading, balance, and coordination
- More advanced Unicorns may walk and trot on the lead line or lunge line
- Posting and sitting trot may be practiced in a saddle or with handles

WHEN THEY MOVE ON: When a Unicorn student is developmentally ready for real lunge line education, the next step is Level B after passing the Unicorn Badge. We will explain the Badge system later in onboarding.

Level B

Where structured beginner riding begins

LEVEL B

OLDER BEGINNER RIDER

Level B is where the structured riding education begins. An older beginner does not go into Unicorn simply because they are new. A seven year old beginner, for example, starts in Level B.

Level B students begin with proper lunge line education. They learn walk, trot, and canter on the lunge line, both in a regular saddle and with handles when useful. At the same time, they learn to ride freely in the arena. Before moving on, they should be able to steer, stop, walk, and trot independently and safely. Ideally, they also have some independent canter experience before entering Level E.

- For older beginners, not preschool Unicorn students
- Walk, trot, and canter education on the lunge line
- Work may be done in a saddle and with handles
- Independent riding in the arena develops alongside lunge work
- Before Level E, the rider should walk and trot freely and safely, with some canter experience ideally in place

WHEN THEY MOVE ON: After passing the B Badge, a rider who is ready for safe group education moves into Level E.

BEFORE YOU PLACE A STUDENT IN LEVEL E

A rider does not become Level E simply because they have cantered on the lunge line or jumped once. Level E begins when the student is ready to ride safely with other students in the arena. For this first placement, look for the following:

- Walk and trot independently and safely without the lunge line
- Steer, stop, and maintain enough control to ride with others
- Canter experience already established on the lunge line
- Ideally some independent canter experience as well
- Enough confidence and awareness to participate safely in a group lesson

A SIMPLE EXAMPLE

A seven year old who has never ridden does not start in Unicorn. That rider starts in Level B. A child who can walk and trot safely in a group and already has canter experience from the lunge line is beginning to look like a Level E rider.

Level E and Level A

The group lesson pathway

LEVEL E

DEVELOPING RIDER

Level E covers a wide range of developing riders and is taught in group lessons with no more than three riders. The entry point is important: the lowest Level E rider should already be able to walk and trot safely and independently in a group lesson. The rider should have canter experience from the lunge line, even if they still need to learn how to canter independently in the arena.

From there, Level E can develop quite far. More advanced Level E students ride simple Dressage patterns, improve accuracy and influence, canter independently, and may jump small educational courses. Jumping is not the base of the level. It is added as the rider becomes ready.

- Group lessons with up to 3 riders
- Entry point: safe independent walk and trot in a group
- Canter experience should already exist from the lunge line
- Independent canter is developed during Level E
- More advanced E riders ride easy Dressage patterns and small courses
- A Level E student may only jump if they ride at least twice each week

WHEN THEY MOVE ON: After passing the E Badge, the student moves into Level A and begins the more competitive riding school pathway.

LEVEL A

ADVANCED RIDING SCHOOL STUDENT

Level A is for the advanced riding school student who has graduated from Level E. These riders train at least three times each week in group lessons and are moving from basic development into more serious, competitive riding.

A Level A rider should already be able to ride Dressage patterns, manage the horse independently, and jump courses around 65 cm or higher as appropriate for the horse and rider. They are preparing for shows or already attending them. The emphasis is not simply on jumping higher. The rider should become more accurate, more effective, more independent, and more responsible for the horse.

- Minimum of 3 rides each week
- Group lesson education with a more competitive focus
- Able to ride Dressage patterns with growing accuracy and influence
- Able to jump 65 cm or higher courses as appropriate
- Preparing for shows or already competing
- Greater independence, responsibility, show preparation, and horsemanship

IMPORTANT: Level A is still an education level. Competition becomes more important, but correct riding and horsemanship remain the standard.

Quick Placement Guide

Use this as the first filter when you work through your student list. If a student clearly does not meet the entry point of the next level, keep the student at the lower level for this first placement and flag them for review.

UNICORN	Usually age 3 to 5. Tiny students playing with Shetty ponies, learning confidence, balance, safety, basic care, and a little lead line or lunge line riding. Advanced Unicorns may walk and trot, post, and sit the trot.
LEVEL B	Older beginner who needs structured lunge line education. Walk, trot, and canter on the lunge line, plus independent walk and trot in the arena. A seven year old beginner belongs here, not in Unicorn.
LEVEL E	Safe independent walk and trot in a group. Canter experience already exists from the lunge line. The rider is learning independent canter, Dressage patterns, and eventually small courses. Jumping requires at least two rides each week.
LEVEL A	Graduated from Level E. Rides at least three times each week. Can ride Dressage patterns, jump courses around 65 cm or higher, and is preparing for or already attending shows.

DO NOT PLACE STUDENTS BY ONLY ONE THING

The highest fence a child has jumped does not decide the level. Neither does age, except that Unicorn is specifically the preschool introduction. Years of riding do not decide it either. Look at the complete student: riding ability, independence, confidence, control, understanding, responsibility, and horsemanship.

WHAT TO DO NOW

Take your complete active student list and make a first placement into Unicorn, Level B, Level E, or Level A.

- Assign every current student a preliminary level.
- Flag anyone you are unsure about.
- Count how many students you currently have in each level.
- Keep the list. You will use it when we build the actual program.

DO NOT CHANGE YOUR LESSON GROUPS OR REBUILD THE SCHEDULE YET.

Step 1 is only about understanding where your students belong today. **TASK COMPLETE? CONTINUE**

TO STEP 2: WEBSITE + SOFTWARE

www.udjc.org/crs2

PLACE THE STUDENT YOU HAVE TODAY, NOT THE STUDENT YOU HOPE TO HAVE NEXT MONTH.