

What should I wear for a horse show? While the answer to this question will vary depending on whether you are riding in a local schooling show or competing in a rated show (e.g. the “A” rated Midstates Horse Shows in Mason City, or the “B” rated Valley Park in Des Moines), the following information should help you figure out what is appropriate.

If you have any questions about whether something is appropriate, ask your trainer. This is always good advice.

Helmet & Hair

Whether you are jumping huge fences or just sitting on your horse waiting for your lesson to begin, accidents can happen to anyone, at any time. Thus, any time you are mounted you need to be wearing a helmet with the chin-strap fastened.

- ✓ Purchase an ASTM/SEI-approved helmet that hasn't been involved in a fall.
- ✓ After a serious impact resulting in obvious helmet damage, discard the helmet and buy a new one. You May wish to replace it even if there is no external damage. The general rule is to replace a helmet every 5 years, whether or not it has been involved in a fall.
- ✓ When trying on helmets, wear your hair as you'll wear it when riding, as this will affect the fit.
- ✓ Helmets should fit snugly and be worn over the top of your head, with the brim resting just above your eyebrows. Do not wear your helmet perched on top of your head, or tilted back. If your helmet wiggles when you shake your head, it is too large. You may have to try several different brands before you find the right helmet for your size/shape of head.

Informal Options:

- ✓ For beginner lessons and local schooling shows, shiny plastic helmets with vent holes are fine. Common brands include Troxel and IRH.
- ✓ Whether in a show or during lessons, riders (male and female) with shoulder-length or longer hair are expected to wear their hair pulled back into a ponytail or braid.

More Formal Options:

- ✓ When showing at rated shows, you are expected to wear a black helmet. Common brands include GPA and Charles Owens.
- ✓ Adults and children who are no longer riding in Short Stirrup divisions are expected to wear their hair tucked up into their helmet with NO stray hairs whatsoever. Wearing a hairnet is standard.
- ✓ For girls with long hair in the Short-Stirrup division, two neat braids may be worn, with bows matching the hunt coat. Hair may also be worn up under the helmet with a hairnet.

Shirts

Informal Options:

- ✓ At Wyndtree schooling shows, any solid colored button-down or polo shirt is appropriate.
- ✓ For cooler weather, a tightly-fitting sweater or vest is a good idea, as well.

More Formal Options:

- ✓ Show shirts (sometimes called “ratcatchers”).
- ✓ Girls’/Women’s shirts should have a matching choker collar that can be embroidered with the rider’s initials, or left plain.
- ✓ For rated shows, choose a light color and a pattern that coordinates with your hunt coat. White is always a safe choice and is expected for many equitation classes at rated shows.
- ✓ Boys/Men should wear a regular long-sleeved button-down white shirt with a dark-colored tie.
- ✓ Short sleeves are fine for local schooling shows; for higher-level shows, long sleeves should be worn.
- ✓ Well-known brands of show shirts include Essex, Tailored Sportsman, and Ariat

Pants

There are a wide range of options for legwear, including jeans, leggings, or riding breeches. While any of the above are fine for Wyndtree shows, for the comfort of the rider, we recommend investing in a pair of breeches/jodhpurs.

Informal Options:

- ✓ Any color breech/jodhpur is fine, as are jeans with half chaps (although jeans may chafe). Do be sure that they are clean and free from holes.
- ✓ Some common brands of informal breeches include TuffRider, Ovation, and On-Course.

More Formal Options:

- ✓ For showing, tan or beige is appropriate. Only knee-patch (never full-seat) breeches are acceptable for Hunter or Equitation classes.
- ✓ Kids showing in Short-Stirrup classes should wear jodhpurs (long riding pants cuffed at the bottom) with garter straps and paddock boots.
- ✓ For taller, older riders, breeches (pants with Velcro at the bottom) should be worn with tall boots.
- ✓ Always wear a belt
- ✓ Some brands of breeches/jodhpurs to consider are Tailored Sportsman, Pikeur, RJ Classics and Ariat.

Footwear

All riders must wear boots or shoes with a heel. Tennis shoes are not recommended for riding, nor are rubber boots, as they don't allow ankle flexibility. There are many options available for paddock boots and tall boots in all price ranges.

Informal Options:

✓ Any boots/shoes with a low heel are acceptable. Paddock boots or tall boots are usually most comfortable and effective.

Paddock boots are short boots that reach the top of the ankle and a practical alternative to tall boots for riders of all ages.

✓ Lace-up, zip-up or pull-on styles are available, though pull-on boots are worn mostly by saddleseat riders.

✓ They're available in leather or synthetic leather that's durable and easily cleaned.

✓ Affordable paddock boots are available from TuffRider, Dublin, and Saxon, among others

Half chaps are an informal alternative to tall boots, and provide the rider's leg with protection and extra grip in the saddle.

✓ Worn with paddock boots, they're pulled on over the lower leg and zip or Velcro closed for a snug fit.

✓ The tops should reach to just behind the knee but not pinch.

More Formal Options:

Children riding ponies or Short Stirrup classes should ride in paddock boots and jodhpur straps. Older children and adults are expected to wear tall boots.

Paddock boots

✓ Generally lace-up boots in brown or black leather are worn with jodhpurs and garter straps.

✓ Jodhpur garter straps are worn by children in jodhpurs, for showing only, to prevent the pants legs from riding up.

✓ Garter straps sit at the top of the calf (not around the widest part), just below the knee. Wrap them around the back of the calf first, then to the front. After the second trip around, thread the end of the strap through one of the two slits in the strap, and wrap again, buckling snugly this time. The buckle should face out, and the end of the strap should point rearward, and can be tucked into the second slit if possible.

Tall boots

Tall boots are one of the most important, most expensive, and most difficult-to-fit pieces of riding apparel. A proper fit is crucial. Therefore, be sure that you have a trainer evaluate your choice of boots before you purchase them, and to determine whether the fit is appropriate once they arrive. You may have to try several pairs of boots before finding the “right” ones.

- ✓ Black leather boots are required for juniors once they graduate from the Short Stirrup division and for all adults . They may be worn for schooling, as well.
- ✓ Two styles of tall boot are available: **dress boots** are more formal and traditionally were the boots most frequently worn during shows, and **field boots** (with laces at the instep), which are becoming most popular with hunter-jumper riders
- ✓ Newer styles are available with a zipper option in the back. Purchase these with caution, however, as the zippers seem to have a tendency to break at the most inopportune times.
- ✓ Before ordering tall boots for the first time, be sure to have someone from the barn measure you. They come in many different sizes to fit different leg lengths, calf widths, etc.
- ✓ Brand-new tall boots require time and patience to break in. Expect new boots to drop at least an inch in height after break-in.
- ✓ To speed up break-in, it helps to condition the boots and wear them around before trying to ride in them. New boots that will eventually fit well are usually excruciatingly painful at first. They will feel too tight and too tall. Again, someone at the barn can help you determine if your boots will break in appropriately.

Gloves are recommended, to protect the rider’s hands from the friction of rein movement.

- ✓ Gloves should fit snugly, with reinforcement between the fingers.
- ✓ For showing, solid black gloves are standard.

Hunt coats are not required for Wyndtree schooling shows, but are necessary for all hunter and equitation classes at rated shows. They are always single breasted, with a double vent (“flap”) in the back and three buttons in the front.

- ✓ Colors: Navy is always appropriate and is standard in equitation classes. Gray, dark brown, and dark green are also acceptable. Brown and green seem to cycle in and out of fashion, while navy and gray always in style.
- ✓ Whenever wearing a hunt coat, be sure that it is clean and well fitted, with sleeves just covering the wrists (ideally with ¼” to 1/8” of shirt-sleeve showing) and with the bottom hem at or just above the crotch.

While these items can be expensive, if they are well-cared-for, they can last a long time. Also, once you know what you are looking for, don’t be afraid to purchase used items (except for helmets) from consignment stores or e-bay. If you have any questions regarding the appropriateness of specific items, don’t hesitate to ask your trainer!