



**Department of
Education**

APPENDIX J: HORSE RIDING

EFFECTIVE: 1 JANUARY 2021

VERSION: 2.1

HORSE RIDING

This document contains specific requirements related to horse riding activities and must be read in conjunction with *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures*.

1. BACKGROUND

Horse riding activities include those conducted in an arena or enclosed area, as well as trail riding in an open, natural environment.

Activities conducted in an arena or closed area are designed to improve the skill level of all students from beginner to advanced.

Trail riding is an organised recreational riding activity where participants are led as a group outside of an enclosed area or arena into a natural environment. The term is applied to long (multi day) as well as short (an hour or two) rides that can be experienced in metropolitan, coastal, rural and remote regions.

DEFINITIONS

ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR

Assists the Qualified Supervisor and or Department teacher-in-charge. May or may not have relevant qualification or experience.

ARENA

An enclosed area (generally square or rectangular) specifically designed or prepared for riding tuition, training or performance based activities involving horses.

EVENT

An organised series of activities held in the one place at the one time. Events have a defined start and end and may involve both participants and spectators.

LEAD RIDE

Participants are taken on a leisurely recreational ride using a lead rope between animal and supervisor

OPEN AREAS

Areas outside the enclosed teaching area. This may include fenced paddocks, bushland, bridle trails and roads.

TEACHER-IN-CHARGE

The member of the teaching staff who is authorised by the Department of Education to manage a school activity.

TRAIL RIDE

An organised recreational ride where students ride horses outside an enclosed area in a natural setting.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Unless members of the supervisory team have a recognised qualification in horse riding, all school horse riding programs (with the exception of recognised colleges of agriculture) must be based at an established riding school or equestrian centre that has qualified riding instructors, fit for purpose horses, the appropriate equipment and environment.

Arena or enclosed facilities must have safe fences, enclosed yards and/or gates.

Students at a recognised college of agriculture may participate in onsite training for VET qualifications, if the site meets the requirements as stated above. They may also need to travel offsite to recognised training, events or competitions. Appropriate risk management plans will need to reflect the nature of these activities.

Riding instructor/s must be familiar with the facilities or location in which the riding will take place. Instructors should confirm students can access water, toilets and shelter when appropriate.

Instructors must have good knowledge of the horses provided for use, especially for students new to horses. Instructors should confirm horses are suitable to the level of the rider, and appropriate horses should be provided to inexperienced riders.

Students must not be exposed to bushland, trails, roads or any locations that have not been assessed by a qualified riding instructor who is familiar with the horses, the environment, and the students' capacity, skills and experience.

Guidance

Further information about equestrian trails, see [Trails WA](#) and the [Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions](#).

Trails should:

- have safe footing and clearance;
- be located away from main highways;
- be at an appropriate level of difficulty for student capacity; and
- have access to emergency vehicles at predetermined sections along the trail.

Horse riding on roads

Beginner or inexperienced riders must not ride on roads or along the edges of busy public roads.

Experienced horse riders riding on roads must keep to the left and obey all traffic rules and regulations, as horses are considered vehicles. They must be familiar with procedures for crossing roads and allowing vehicles to pass. Horses should be familiar with and deemed suitable for this environment.

Students will ride in single file or in pairs. When in pairs, a more experienced rider and/or horse should be placed on the traffic side.

Trail riding and riding in open spaces

All participants will follow the principles of Leave No Trace, abide by permit requirements, relevant laws and regulations, and recognise local community interests (e.g. use designated bridle trails).

Weather conditions need to be assessed and monitored in the days leading up to the activity, on the day of the activity and throughout the activity, to determine conditions and comply with fire ban regulations. The supervisory team may need to modify, relocate or cancel the activity at any time. Check the Bureau of Meteorology for up to date conditions and weather warnings.

Horse Riding in any area where high alert weather conditions are forecast and/or any area where the fire danger rating is very high or above are not to be undertaken. Refer to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services for fire alerts or fire danger ratings or contact the local shire as part of an environmental check.

If conducting a horse riding activity during the fire restriction season, plan a route that allows for evacuation and confirm that the group has access to current fire information via radio, mobile or satellite phones providing bulletins from a manned base.

School groups using the Jandakot Regional Park, Gull Rock National Park, John Forrest National Park, Kalamunda National Park or the Lane Pool Reserve (Les Cousins Bridle Trail) or other similar areas should consult with the local Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions office regarding prescribed burns that may affect their proposed activity. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions provide daily alerts/updates for subscribers.

Guidance.

Horses provided for beginner or inexperienced riders should be trained in the activities they are to undertake, and be approved as suitable for those new to horses.

The horses should not show signs of nervousness, restlessness, being reactive or too responsive, and should not have vices such as aggression to people or other horses.

The horses should be calm and 'unflappable'; and not inclined to kick, rear, bolt, shy or buck/pigroot.

3. CAPACITY OF STUDENTS

A qualified riding instructor assesses the capacity of all students, the activity, horses, environment and equipment, and determines whether students have the capacity to safely and successfully complete the planned activities.

Students must not participate in trail riding activities unless the qualified riding instructor determines that the horses are safe to ride, the environment is controlled, and the students have the capacity to safely participate.

Ideally, students should have a lesson in an enclosed arena first and, if they are deemed competent, then participate in a trail ride with the correct supervision requirements in place. For beginners of any age group, the horses should be kept to a walk.

Participation in trail riding activities is not recommended for students in Year 4 and below, unless they are on a lead or have been deemed to be an experienced rider by the qualified riding instructor.

Other horse-related activities such as grooming, leading through obstacles, etc. may be provided for students who do not have the capacity to participate.

Guidance

Horse Riding activities may be included as an advanced activity for Year 5 and Year 6 students in an arena or enclosed setting, if the qualified supervisor determines that each student has the capacity and skills to participate safely in the activity.

Where students with a disability, impairment or medical condition participate in horse riding activities, particular attention is given to the:

- use of a mounting ramp;
- provision of training for supervisors and assistants regarding how to lift and transfer a student's weight across the horse (refer to the *Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia* - Volunteer Information Booklet);
- provision of support on either side of the horse, as well as a supervisor to lead the horse;
- provision of an assistant to walk beside students where required and dependant on disability (refer to the the *Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia* - Volunteer Information Booklet);
- frequency of checks during trail rides to combat fatigue and a loss of concentration. Consideration should be given to students who tire easily. In such circumstances, arena riding may be more appropriate than a trail ride; and
- provision of regular rest breaks.

Students with the condition known as 'atlantoaxial instability' (i.e. greater than average neck mobility) should not be permitted to undertake riding activities. This condition is common in students with Down Syndrome.

New and inexperienced riders should be given a quiet, steady horse that has been trained to slow down in response to pressure on the reins. Incidents can inadvertently be caused by a new or inexperienced rider making sudden movements, and noises which upset and frighten the horse. The selected horse will need to be tolerant of such behaviours.

The qualified riding instructor and/or the Department teacher-in-charge confirms that each student has the additional skills required before they participate in jumping activities, longer trekking, trail riding expeditions or dressage.

Alternative activities should be provided for students who do not have the capacity to participate.

4. STUDENT HEALTH CARE

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

5. ACTIVITIES

Horse riding activities are more appropriately offered within secondary school physical education or outdoor education and recreation courses. In educational contexts such as colleges of agriculture, horse riding is a component of recognised onsite VET training for a qualification.

Prior to approaching or riding horses, all students must be provided with a briefing or induction that includes safety rules which apply when interacting with horses.

Beginner riders must be assisted to mount their horses. This includes holding the horse while the rider mounts, checking the girth/cinch is firm before and after the mount, and ensuring stirrups are the correct width and length for the comfort and safety of the rider.

6. EQUIPMENT

All equipment must be assessed to confirm it is appropriate to the activity, safe and in working order.

All participants must wear a properly fitted riding helmet that adheres to the appropriate *Australian Standard*. Chinstraps should be fastened securely for all horse riding and horse related activities.

Equipment must be retired after a maximum of five years unless the manufacturer specifies a longer service life. Equipment must not be used if there is any doubt about its integrity.

Emergency equipment appropriate for the activity, location and duration of the activity, must be readily accessible.

Appropriate first aid equipment must be readily accessible. The first aid kit must include items appropriate to the activity, environment, size and needs of the party, and duration of the activity.

For trail rides, supervisors should carry a lead rope and know how to use it to lead correctly from another horse.

Straight sided stirrups or devices such as *Smarrider Breakaway* are recommended, as they are specifically designed to prevent individuals being dragged by the stirrup in the event of a fall. Safety stirrups (with a bend on one side) are not recommended.

Shoes should fit freely in and out of stirrups. Stirrup irons should not exceed the width of the shoe at the ball of the foot by more than 1cm. Track shoes or joggers must not be worn unless *Smarrider Breakaway* stirrups are used.

The qualified instructor must be satisfied with the maintenance of all relevant equipment prior to the commencement of the activity. External providers are responsible for recording the safety and maintenance of their equipment.

Guidance

For further information, refer to Australian Adventure Activity Good Practice Guide: Horse Trail Riding.

The bridle should be the correct size and fit the horse.

The saddle should be of a comfortable size and fit for the horse and rider (beginner riders may benefit from the use and security of a stock saddle or a Western or Hybrid saddle).

Beginners should be put in a saddle which supports them with knee and thigh rolls.

The girth/cinch should be re-checked for tightness after the horse has moved around and warmed up and should be sufficiently tight as to allow mounting without excess saddle movement.

A neck strap is useful for beginner riders when they are learning to trot.

All participants should wear: long, tightly fitted trousers that do not restrict movement or chafe; a shirt with a collar and long sleeves; leather or synthetic riding boots with a smooth sole and solid heel; or smooth-soled shoes with a closed toe and a distinct heel, to stop the foot slipping through the stirrup.

A broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen is applied to exposed skin, as per manufacturer's specifications.

Drinking water should be available at all times.

7. THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

8. EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

9. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in handling and horse riding, and have the appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during horse riding activities.

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for mandated:

- first aid and CPR accreditation requirements; and
- components of qualifications and competencies.

At least one member of the supervisory team must be a qualified riding instructor.

Guidance

Further information about qualifications in the different horse-riding disciplines can be found on the following websites:

- [Horse Safe Australia](#);
- [Equestrian Australia](#); and
- [Equestrian Western Australia](#).

Where sub-groups are formed, each sub-group must have a qualified riding instructor.

Where an external provider is used, the Department teacher-in-charge must be satisfied that the provider is a qualified and competent riding instructor.

It is recommended that at least one member of the supervisory team holds one qualification identified in the table below. Suggested minimum qualifications and/or formal training requirements for the teaching of riding include, but are not limited to:

<p>Qualified supervisor requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Horse Riding Centres (AHRC) <i>Level 1</i> qualification (recreation and/or trail riding); or • Equestrian Australia Introductory Coach qualification (or higher); or • Pony Club Australia Preliminary Coach qualification (or higher); or • Horse Safety Australia <i>Instructor, Senior Instructor or Trail Guide</i> qualification; or • Certificates (with equestrian units) or skill sets from the SIS Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Instruct Horse Handling Skills</i> - <i>Instruct Fundamental Horse Riding Skills</i> - <i>Instruct the advancement of Recreational Horse Riding Skills</i> - <i>Tracked Horse Trail Ride Guide</i>; or • Riding for the Disabled Association <i>Level 1 or 2 coaching</i> qualification for students with disabilities; or • an equivalent qualification, as recognised by the Director General.
---	---

Guidance

For current information about recreation industry training, refer to the [Commonwealth My Skills](#) website.

Skills and experience

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team:

- has experience in the activity at the level being offered to students;
- has at least one member with a current First aid and CPR qualification; and
- understands the emergency responses and supervision responsibilities.

Teachers or supervisors who are not qualified riding instructors from the site must not be placed in an instructional role (regardless of their personal horse riding experience), as they are likely to be unfamiliar with the behaviours of the individual horses being used, the specific requirements of activity being undertaken, and the emergency systems of the site.

10. MINIMUM LEVELS OF SUPERVISION

Group sizes and supervision levels are determined after considering the:

- purpose of the activity;
- age, capacity, experience and skills of each student;
- qualifications, capacity and experience of the supervisor(s);
- type of activities to be undertaken;
- students' medical conditions or disabilities; and
- nature of the environment.

The minimum level of supervision is:

- one experienced riding instructor, for arena or enclosed riding areas; or
- where there are two supervisors, the first should be the lead supervisor and the other supervisor can be an experienced rider, trained in the procedures of the site, is familiar with the route to be taken, has first aid qualifications and assists the lead instructor, for trail rides.

Greater supervision must be provided for beginners, primary aged or less able students if they are participating in activities outside the school grounds.

Students not directly involved in horse riding activities are supervised separately.

No students under 10 years of age should participate on a trail ride, unless being lead or are an experienced rider.

If students are on lead, additional supervisors are required as the person leading cannot be counted as a supervisor.

Lead activities

Kindergarten - Year 4

Must have two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every four students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

Enclosed arena riding area and lead activities

Year 5 - 6

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

Trail riding/open spaces

Year 5 - 6

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 10 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 5 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

Enclosed arena riding area and lead activities

Year 7 - 12

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

Trail riding/open spaces

Year 7 - 12

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 12 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 6 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

The table below illustrates the supervision requirements for each group size. Larger group sizes are not recommended for horse riding activities.

<i>Year level</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Qualified supervisor</i>	<i>Experienced assistant supervisor</i>	<i>Total supervisory team</i>
K - 4	Lead activities	1 - 8	1	1	2
		9 - 12	2	1	3
		13 - 16	2	2	4
	Trail rides/open areas	This activity is not recommended for K - 4			
5 - 6	Arena (enclosed riding area)	1 - 8	1	0	1
		9 - 16	2	0	2
	Larger group sizes than those listed are not recommended in enclosed arenas				
	Trail rides/open areas	1 - 10	1	1	2
		11 - 15	2	1	3
16 - 20		2	2	4	
7 - 12	Arena (enclosed riding area)	1 - 8	1	0	1
		9 - 16	2	0	2
	Larger group sizes than those listed are not recommended in enclosed arenas				
	Trail rides/open areas	1 - 12	1	1	2
		13 - 18	2	1	3
19 - 24		2	2	4	

Guidance

Arena riding

Where more than eight students are participating in an arena or enclosed area, two groups of students may be formed. If this occurs there should be two qualified supervisors (one for each group of eight) as listed in the table above and each qualified supervisor (riding instructor) must supervise their own group of students.

11. SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

Supervision standards must confirm that the safety and wellbeing of students is maintained at all times.

Supervision strategies must address all circumstances where students are not in clear view of the supervisors.

Students not directly involved in the horse riding activities must be supervised separately.

Trail rides

Participants with asthma or dust sensitivity should travel at the front of the group if the terrain is dusty.

A qualified and experienced riding school instructor or qualified supervisor is situated at the front (*the head*) and also at the rear (*the tail or drag*) of each trail ride group. The most experienced and qualified instructor should ride at the rear of the group.

Beginner and/or inexperienced riders remain in clear view of the supervisors and kept under close supervision.

Students who are inexperienced or beginner riders ride single file.

Supervisors remain in close proximity to students at all times.

Students and horses are continually monitored for fatigue/exhaustion.

Pre-determined stops are arranged en route so that regular head counts can be conducted and students can be provided with feedback.

Trail rides should align with the ability of the least skillful rider in the group.

For larger rides which have three or more qualified instructors and supervisors, the extra instructors or supervisors should ride at various points along the group, watch the students, and give advice as required.

Rides in excess of twelve (12) horses (in total) are not recommended in a single group.

12. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Refer to Appendix A: *General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

13. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Refer to Appendix A: *General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

14. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Refer to Appendix A: *General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

15. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Refer to Appendix A: *General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

Specific reference to the handling of loose, injured or misbehaving horses must be included in the emergency response plan.

16. BRIEFING STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that all participants are briefed about:

- the educational purpose and the cooperative nature of the activity;
- the activity itinerary;
- required skills appropriate to the activity;
- participants' roles and responsibilities, including standards of acceptable behaviour and activity rules;
- the role and location of supervisors;
- the system for identifying students and supervisors;
- food and water requirements;
- procedures that will be followed if members of the party are overdue, or become lost or separated from the group;
- potential hazards and safety procedures appropriate to the activity and venue;
- buddy practices and lost buddy procedures;
- health and hygiene protocols;
- areas demarcated and identified specifically for student groups;
- communication strategies that will be used throughout the activity, including a signal to gain the attention of the whole group and a signal to be used if assistance is required;
- emergency and evacuation procedures, signals and location of emergency equipment;
- appropriate clothing for the activity and weather conditions, including thermal and sun protection;
- minimal impact principles for that location (see *Leave No Trace* principles);
- aspects of the environment and expected weather conditions (if appropriate); and
- the route to be followed including pre-determined stops and/or meeting points along the way.

Students should not mount a horse until they have participated in a briefing session.

Special briefing sessions must be arranged for students who were absent from preparatory briefings.

Guidance

Before beginner student riders mount a horse, they should be briefed by the instructor about:

- *ways to approach a horse and the importance of avoiding its hind quarters;*
- *maintaining a safe distance from the horse and rider in front;*
- *stopping, starting and turning a horse;*
- *remaining aware, alert, calm and quiet around horses;*
- *not moving suddenly;*
- *moving slowly when standing and holding a horse;*
- *not getting too close to a horse and getting stepped upon;*
- *the importance of not mounting a horse without assistance;*
- *respect and care for the horses; and*
- *minimal impact practices when on a trail ride (e.g. remaining on the track).*

17. INFORMED CONSENT

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.