



Horsemanship

Scouts BSA · Outdoors

Name

Started

Completed

Horsemanship is about caring for, understanding, and riding horses. You'll learn about horse health and behavior, practice grooming and tack, and ride. It's a great badge for anyone who loves animals and the outdoors.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/horsemanship/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Safety

Tips for this section: Learn how to approach and move around a horse safely, and why barns need careful fire safety.

Example for this section: Explain safe handling like you're coaching a friend: speak to the horse as you approach from the front and side, never stand directly behind it, keep a hand on it as you walk around, and never wrap the lead rope around your hand.

- ☐ **1a** Describe the safety steps to take when you handle and care for a horse

- ☐ **1b** Describe how to prevent fires in a barn and around horses

- ☐ **2** Name 15 body parts of a horse and talk with your counselor about the job each one does

Tip: Use a diagram or a calm horse with an experienced handler to learn the parts.

☐ **3** Name 4 horse breeds and explain what each breed is known for

Tip: Visit a stable or look through a horse breed book, and pick four breeds that catch your eye.

Example: Pick four breeds and compare them in a chart: a Quarter Horse for quick bursts and ranch work, a Thoroughbred for racing, a Clydesdale for pulling, and an Arabian for endurance. Add height, color, and where each breed came from.

☐ **4** Describe the signs of colic, and name and describe 4 other health problems horses can have

Tip: Ask a vet or stable owner about colic and other common problems and what warning signs to watch for.

Example: Describe colic as belly pain that can be an emergency. Signs include pawing, rolling, and looking back at its side. Add four more problems, like thrush, laminitis, a cut, or a respiratory infection, with what an owner should watch for.

☐ **5** Explain what conformation means and why it matters, and explain how lameness differs from unsoundness

Tip: Have an experienced horse person show you how to look at a horse's build and spot signs of lameness.

☐ **6** Explain why hoof care is important and why a horse might need shoes

Tip: Watch a farrier at work if you can, and ask why hoof care is so important.

Example: Watch a farrier work if you can. Then explain why hooves need trimming every several weeks, what a shoe protects against, and how to pick out a hoof safely by standing beside the leg and asking the horse to lift it.

- ☐ **7** Show how to groom a horse, including picking out the hooves and caring for the horse after riding

Tip: Practice grooming with an experienced handler nearby, and learn what to do after a ride to cool and care for the horse.

Example: Groom in order: curry comb in circles to loosen dirt, stiff brush to flick it away, soft brush for the face, then comb the mane and tail and pick the hooves. After a ride, walk the horse until it's cool and check for sweat marks or sores.

- ☐ **8** Explain how you'd decide what kind of feed a horse gets and how much, and why both change with its breed and how active it is

Tip: Talk with a stable owner about what horses eat and why feeding schedules matter.

Example: Talk through a horse's day: plenty of good hay or pasture, fresh water at all times, and grain only if the horse needs it. Explain why changing feed suddenly can cause colic and why horses eat many small meals.

9 Tack, saddling, and mounting

Tips for this section: Practice saddling and bridling with an instructor until it feels natural, and always wear a riding helmet when mounting.

- ☐ **9a** Name 10 parts of the bridle and saddle you'll use, and explain how to take care of this tack

- ☐ **9b** Show how to saddle and bridle a horse correctly

- ☐ **9c** Show how to get on and off a horse safely

- ☐ **10** Explain and show how to safely approach a horse, lead it out of a field, corral, or stall, and tie it securely

Tip: Practice leading and tying a horse with an experienced handler watching closely.

- ☐ **11** After mounting safely, ride these moves one after another on level ground, doing each correctly, relaxed, and in harmony with the horse (11a–11g)

Tip: Take lessons with a qualified instructor, and always ride with a helmet and supervision.

- ☐ **11a** Walk in a straight line for 60 feet

- ☐ **11b** Walk a half-circle with a radius of 16 feet or less

- ☐ **11c** Trot or jog in a straight line for 60 feet

- ☐ **11d** Trot or jog a half-circle with a radius of 30 feet or less

- ☐ **11e** Come to a straight halt

- ☐ **11f** Back up 4 paces in a straight line

- ☐ **11g** Halt, then dismount

12 Careers and hobbies: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Ask a riding instructor, vet, or farrier about their work, or join a riding club.

- ☐ **12a** Explore careers related to horsemanship. Research one, including the training and education needed, costs, job outlook, pay, duties, and advancement (with permission, by internet or library search, an interview, or a workplace visit). Discuss your findings with your counselor and why the career might interest you

- ☐ **12b** Explore how horsemanship skills could lead to a hobby or healthy lifestyle. Research the training, costs, and groups that support it, and discuss with your counselor the short- and long-term goals you might set