



Department of
Education

APPENDIX J: EQUINE ACTIVITIES

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EQUINE ACTIVITIES

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

1. BACKGROUND

Equine activities include both horse riding and handling.

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

Trail riding is an organised recreational riding activity where participants ride 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.

Horse handling activities include where a horse or pony is interacted with, but not necessarily ridden, for example equine assisted wellbeing programs.

DEFINITIONS

ARENA

An enclosed area specifically designed or prepared for riding tuition, training or performance based activities involving horses.

ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR

Assists the Qualified Supervisor and or Department Teacher-in-charge. Has recent and relevant experience in the activity at the level being offered to students.

DEPARTMENT TEACHER-IN-CHARGE

The member of the teaching staff, employed by the Department of Education (or an Approved Provider) and is managing the school activity (for information relating to Approved Providers refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements*).

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 each horse and supervisor.

OPEN AREAS

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

QUALIFIED SUPERVISOR

Has the required qualifications, skill, experience and technical knowledge to instruct the activity. Also referred to in this document as 'Qualified Instructor'.

SUPERVISORY TEAM

A pair or group of people who have a supervisory role at the activity.

TRAIL RIDE

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

2. ENVIRONMENT

Prior to commencing the program, the Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team have a relevant recognised qualification and recent and relevant experience to deliver horse riding and and/or horse handling activities.

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

Qualified Instructor/s must be familiar with the facilities and location in which the equine activity will take place and confirm students can access water, toilets and shelter when appropriate.

Qualified Instructors must have knowledge of the horses provided for use, especially for students new to equine activities. Qualified Instructors must confirm the horses provided are suitable for handling and/or riding activities.

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

Guidance

For further information about equestrian trails, see [Trails WA](#)

Trails must:

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

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. They must be familiar with procedures for crossing roads and allowing vehicles to pass. Horses must be familiar with and/or deemed suitable for this environment.

Students must ride in single file or in pairs. When in pairs, a more experienced rider and/or horse must 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 (for example 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.

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

If conducting horse riding activities during the fire restriction season, the Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure a route is planned that allows for evacuation and confirm that the group has access to current fire information via radio, mobile or satellite phones.

3. CAPACITY OF STUDENTS

The Qualified Instructor must assess the:

- capacity of all students and determine whether they have the capacity to safely participate
- equine activity to be undertaken
- safety of horses proposed for the activity
- environment and equipment.

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 must be kept to a walk.

Students in Year 4 and below can only participate in trail riding, if their horse is on a lead.

Other equine activities such as handling, grooming or leading through obstacles, may be provided for students who do not have the capacity to participate in horse riding activities.

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

- a mounting ramp/sling
- training for supervisors and assistants regarding how to lift and transfer a student's weight across the horse
- support on either side of the horse, as well as a supervisor to lead the horse
- an assistant to walk beside students where required (refer to the Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia - Volunteer Training, Side Walking Fact Sheet)
- frequent checks during trail rides to combat fatigue and a loss of concentration
- arena activities for students that tire easily (more appropriate than a trail ride)
- regular rest breaks.

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

Students who have a medically diagnosed condition that may impact their safety must be cleared by a medical practitioner before they can participate.

Horses provided for beginner or inexperienced students must be experienced in the activities they are to undertake, respond to pressure on the reins to slow down and be approved as suitable. The horses must be calm and 'unflappable' and not show signs of nervousness, restlessness, being reactive or too responsive. Incidents can be caused by a new or inexperienced rider making sudden movements and noises which upset and frighten the

horse. Selected horses must not have vices such as kicking, rearing, bolting, shying or bucking/pigrooting.

The Qualified Instructor in consultation with 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.

4. STUDENT HEALTH CARE

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

5. ACTIVITIES

The range of proposed activities must be assessed by the Qualified Instructor in consultation with the Department Teacher-in-charge, before final decisions are made about activities and areas to be used.

Prior to approaching, handling 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

The Qualified Instructor must assess all equipment to confirm it is appropriate to the activity, safe and in working order.

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

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.

7. THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.

8. EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

The Department Teacher-in-charge must ensure that external providers are made aware of the documentation they need to provide, or that must be sighted.

External providers must follow all mandated requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures and will be asked to supply copies of certain documentation, and/or make them available for the Department Teacher-in-charge to sight. External providers should familiarise themselves with Appendix A: General Requirements and Appendix D: External Provider Checklist.

9. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in equine activities, and have the appropriate recent and relevant experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during activities.

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for mandated first aid and CPR accreditation requirements and supervisory team competencies. The Qualified Supervisor must hold a current activity specific qualification and maintain proof of experience (per annum).

Where sub-groups are formed, each sub-group must have a Qualified Instructor.

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

Minimum qualifications that the Qualified Supervisor must have, include, but are not limited to:	<u>AND</u> proof of experience:
<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"> - Instruct Horse Handling Skills - Instruct Fundamental Horse Riding Skills - Instruct the advancement of Recreational Horse Riding Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain proof of logged experience per annum.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tracked Horse Trail Ride Guiding 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. 	
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Skills and experience

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

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

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

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](#).

It is recommended that supervisors maintain evidence of their currency and experience through the use of a logbook, or similar.

10. MINIMUM LEVELS OF SUPERVISION

Group sizes and supervision levels are determined after considering the:

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

The minimum level of supervision is:

- one Qualified Instructor, for arena or enclosed riding areas or
- where there are two supervisors, the first should be the Qualified Instructor and the Assistant 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 Qualified Instructor.

Students not directly involved in equine activities are supervised separately.

Kindergarten to Year 4 students can only participate in a trail ride, if their horse is on a lead.

Lead activities

Kindergarten - Year 4

Must have two supervisors at all times:

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

Enclosed arena riding, handling and lead activities

Year 5 - 6

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

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

Trail riding/open spaces

Year 5 - 6

There must be two supervisors at all times:

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

Enclosed arena riding, handling area and lead activities

Year 7 - 12

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

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

Trail riding/open spaces

Year 7 - 12

There must be two supervisors at all times:

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

The following table illustrates the minimum 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 /Instructor</i>	<i>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	Not permitted			
5 - 6	Arena (enclosed riding/handling area)	1 - 8	1	0	1
		9 - 16	2	0	2
	Larger group sizes 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/handling area)	1 - 8	1	0	1
		9 - 16	2	0	2
	Larger group sizes 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 or part thereof) as listed in the table above and each must supervise their own group of students.

11. SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

Supervision strategies must be confirmed by the Department Teacher-in-charge to ensure 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 equine 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 Instructor is situated at the front (*the head*) and also at the rear (*the tail or drag*) of each trail ride group. The most experienced Qualified Instructor should ride at the rear of the group.

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

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 regular head counts can be conducted, equipment checks can take place 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, the extra instructors should ride at various points along the group, watch the students, and give instruction as required.

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

12. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Students and supervisors must be easily identifiable.

A system of identification is determined by the Department Teacher-in-charge and may include:

- the wearing of coloured helmets, armbands or school shirts
- confining students to designated areas not being utilised by other schools or members of the public.

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for further requirements.

13. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Refer to [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) for further requirements.

14. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements and Appendix B: Risk Management Plan for further requirements.

Guidance

Further information relating to risk management for horse handling and/or riding, can be found in the Safe Work Australia Guide to managing risks when new and inexperienced persons interact with horses

15. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements and Appendix C: Emergency Management Plan 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 (learning intentions) and the cooperative nature of the activity
- components of the activity (including skills required – see Guidance)
- standards of behaviour, including roles and responsibilities
- hazard identification and safety requirements
- buddy practices (and lost buddy procedures when applicable)
- physical boundaries marked for the activity
- communication signals to gain attention and request assistance
- emergency and evacuation procedures
- the route to be followed (where applicable) including pre-determined stops and/or meeting points along the way
- minimal impact principles for that location (see Leave No Trace principles).

Students must not approach or mount a horse until they have participated in a briefing session.

In addition to the above, the Department Teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team have been briefed about the following:

- the role and location of supervisors
- maintaining supervision ratios (including of those students not involved in the activity)
- modified/adjusted activity requirements for students with a disability or impairment
- the system for identifying students and supervisors
- student-specific medical requirements
- conditions associated with hypothermia, sunburn and dehydration
- communication strategies that will be used throughout the activity, including designated signals to gain the attention of the whole group, and to identify when emergency assistance is required
- location of first aid kit and emergency/rescue equipment
- appropriate clothing for the activity and weather conditions, including thermal and sun protection
- aspects of the environment and expected weather conditions.

Special information sessions must be arranged for students or staff who were absent from preparatory briefings.

Guidance

Briefings may include (but are not limited to):

- *ways to approach a horse and the importance of avoiding its 'blind-spots' and hind quarters; maintaining a safe distance from the horse and rider in front*
- *stopping, starting and turning a horse*
- *appropriate behaviour around horses, remaining aware, alert, calm and quiet*
- *moving slowly when standing and holding a horse and not moving suddenly*
- *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*
- *minimal impact practices when on a trail ride (e.g. remaining on the track).*

17. INFORMED CONSENT

Refer to Appendix A: General Requirements for further requirements.