

Sportsmanship • Horsemanship
Leadership • Stewardship

A Parent's Answer Book

for the
United States Pony Clubs, Inc.

Welcome to USPC!

Inside you'll find answers to:

- What will my child learn?
- How much does it really cost?
- How much time does it require?
- Where do I fit in?
- How is this different from other clubs for young riders?
- What is the philosophy of Pony Club?
- What if I don't know anything about horses?

Organizational Structure

The USPC is a non-profit, IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Each club is autonomous, working under the bylaws of the organization.

The sponsors of each club propose for election by the USPC Board of Governors one person to serve as District Commissioner (DC) or two or more persons to serve as DC and Joint-District Commissioner(s). Other elected club officers are a Secretary and Treasurer. One or more instructors are also essential to the club's educational program. Club Sponsors act as a club's board of directors. Local Pony Clubs fall under the jurisdiction of a region, which is run by a Regional Supervisor (RS), often with the assistance of a Vice RS. They act as liaison between local clubs and the national organization.

The national organization sets the directives for Pony Club. It consists of an Executive Committee, a Board of Governors, an Advisory Committee and members of the USPC Activities and Instruction committees, all of whom are volunteers.

The National Office in Lexington, Kentucky, provides the administrative support necessary to carry on Pony Club business. The staff coordinates mailings, processes requests for publication purchases, maintains mailing lists, handles membership and insurance requests, provides support for the national testing program, edits and produces USPC publications, tracks membership, coordinates the USPC web site and much more.



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What is the Philosophy of USPC?

Pony Club is not just about English riding, horse sports and horse care, although those are important USPC activities.

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. – Pony Club – is also all about having fun, making friends, becoming a leader, being an important team member, learning to be more self confident, gaining recognition for being responsible, and advancing through the ratings to demonstrate proficiency as an equestrian!

Today, 13,000 happy young riders on happy horses and ponies have great times as members of close to 650 clubs in 42 regions across the nation that make up USPC.

Youth, through age 21, from beginning to advanced riders, love Pony Club because it's so much fun. Parents like Pony Club not only because it's fun for their children, but also because it's a great horsemanship and citizenship organization.

- Fair and friendly competitions develop teamwork and sportsmanship.
- Fun and friendship are part of Pony Club.
- USPC requires parental & volunteer involvement and support.
- The USPC is committed to safety.
- The local club is the core of USPC.

Mission Statement and Guiding Beliefs

Mission Statement

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc., an organization for youth, provides a program that teaches riding, mounted sports, and the care of horses and ponies, thereby developing responsibility, moral judgment, leadership and self-confidence.

Guiding Beliefs

- USPC is an educational organization that progressively develops the well-rounded horseperson.
- The well-rounded horseperson is capable of riding safely and tactfully on the flat, over fences and in the open.
- Knowledgeable care of horses and ponies (Horse Management) is basic to the well-rounded horseperson.
- USPC is committed to the well being of the horse.
- The USPC is committed to safety.

“Let me remind you that our purpose is not to make Olympic riders, though we will take great pride in any Pony Club member who can reach that height. It is not to turn out highly polished riders mounted on expensive horses, though we all admire the picture when treated to it. It is not to turn every child into an “A” rider.

... It is to provide every child with a backyard horse or pony the opportunity to develop his or her skill in riding and horse care... It is to instill in them a love for horses and an ability to care for and enjoy horses for the rest of their lives and through this contribute to their development as well-rounded, self-disciplined, responsible citizens. If we have done these things, we will have done our job.”

-Rufus Wesson, USPC President 1970-72

What Will My Child Learn?

Through riding instruction...

to ride safely, confidently and in control on the flat, over fences and in the open on confident, happy horses and ponies

Through fun-filled activities...

making friends and sharing a love for horses at camps, trail rides, rallies and in Quiz competitions and more

Through teamwork...

participating in competitive and noncompetitive activities as an important part of a team that depends upon every member

Through important horse care...

learning how to give horses and ponies the care, treatment and training that will make them healthy, happy friends and partners

Through the teaching of others...

sharing knowledge and experience gained as a Pony Club member with younger and less experienced Pony Club members

Through exciting horse sports...

learning about & competing in Eventing, Dressage, Mounted Games, Polocrosse, Show Jumping, Tetrathlon and other activities, depending on the local club

And through advancement...

gaining in self-esteem and proficiency while advancing through nine rating levels that Pony Club members may achieve

... our mission is that Pony Club members develop sound moral judgment, leadership skills, confidence, unselfishness, a sense of responsibility, sportsmanship, discipline – attributes for a lifetime – while becoming proficient young horsewoman and horsemen.

What Does Pony Club Really Cost?

Local clubs and regions charge membership fees of varying amounts. In addition, there is a national membership fee. Children do not have to own a pony or horse to be a member of Pony Club, but they must have access to one. Some clubs meet in a barn where mounts are available for lease. Of course, the costs of owning/maintaining a horse vary greatly depending on where you live.

Compare the cost of riding lessons alone to Pony Club. Factor in what individual lessons don't offer as compared to what your child will learn in Pony Club. We believe Pony Club is a real bargain. Dues defray administration costs, such as insurance.

National dues (*non-refundable*) are:

\$85 for new members

\$75 for renewing members

The national organization raises funds through adult memberships, corporate sponsorships, gifts and an annual fund campaign. These fund raising efforts help keep national dues for members as low as possible and supplement funds for instructional programs and volunteers' leadership training.

USPC requires that children read specific books as they progress through the ratings. Each club has a "club library" containing these books so members may check out reading materials at no cost. However, some families prefer to purchase books through the USPC bookstore.

Finally, because safety is of primary importance, USPC requires that an ASTM/SEI certified safety helmet be worn by every member while mounted. Other riding clothing and equipment, including boots with heels, are necessary, depending upon the different riding disciplines.

Are Other Activities Offered?

Besides the regular instruction program provided by the local club, there are many other activities a Pony Club member may enjoy. These are part practice, part instructional – and all fun! Each club is different and each has different facilities and activities.

To supplement instruction, clubs and/or regions often sponsor special clinics with well-known instructors. These clinics are offered at a nominal cost, or the fees are covered by the club through a fund-raiser.

Throughout the year, clubs have the opportunity to participate in local, regional and national rallies in Eventing, Dressage, Show Jumping, Quiz, Mounted Games, Polocrosse and Terathlon. (Quiz – previously called Know-Down – is a verbal quiz bowl that gives Pony Club members the opportunity to show their knowledge of all things equine.) Demonstrations and scheduled activities in foxhunting, polo, vaulting, distance riding and driving are available in many regions. Championship rallies attract regional teams from all over the country.

The week-long USPC Festival is held every three years at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky. Championship competition in all disciplines is held the first three days, followed by four days of clinics and workshops. Festival is open to all members of Pony Club families. Activities are planned for everyone, with parents encouraged to participate. Festival is great destination for a family vacation.

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Many clubs and regions offer camps, a popular activity that the members enjoy. These invariably combine instructional activities with an emphasis on fun!

The USPC also promotes International Exchanges with Pony Clubs in Australia, Great Britain, Ireland, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa and other countries all over the world.

How Much Time Does It Require?

Each local Pony Club is run by a volunteer District Commissioner (DC) and other elected officers. Clubs involve entire families – as members and as volunteers.

Indeed, Pony Club is a shining example of volunteerism at its best. As a USPC-parent, you join more than 3,000 volunteers working at the club, regional and national level.

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend every club meeting and event. They often volunteer their time to fill in gaps, such as helping to build and set up jumps at a rally, operating food concessions, etc.

Yes, Pony Club involves a substantial time commitment, but spending time helping your child (and other children) learn and grow is an excellent investment in the future!

What About Safety?

A concern for safety is the foundation of USPC. Pony Club was the first equine organization to require its members to wear safety helmets. Every aspect of the organization emphasises safety. Volunteers, parents, staff – and our Pony Club youth themselves – make safety a priority.

The USPC Safety Committee is charged with promoting and overseeing safe practices for riding and working with horses. In addition, members of the Safety Committee educate both children and their parents in accident prevention. The Committee originated a long-term study of accidents in equestrian activities. For parents, all of this means that a group of dedicated, nationally-known safety experts approve USPC programs and activities before they are put into practice. Selections from several USPC Policies concerning safety are listed in the box below.

Safety Considerations for Riders

1. When mounted (except when vaulting, where no helmet is worn and polo, when a different safety helmet requirement is in place), all Pony Club members must wear securely fastened helmets which meet current ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) Standard #F1 163-88.
2. The helmet must have a seal bearing the letters SEI (Safety Equipment Institute), which will verify the testing.
3. The helmet must be properly fitted.
4. Pony Club recommends the use of safety vests.



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5. While riding, a conventional type of riding footwear with a heel, such as leather or rubber riding boots, jodhpur boots, or the equivalent, is required. 'Waffle' type soles are not allowed.
6. For unmounted Pony Club activities, acceptable footwear is a boot (such as paddock boots) that is securely fastened, entirely closed, covers the ankle and is thick-soled and in good condition. Canvas or cloth shoes of any kind are not allowed.

Specific activity rulebooks have dress requirements for USPC competitions.

Safety Considerations for Instructors

1. Pony Club instructors must be mature and knowledgeable.
2. Pony Club instructors must have a good understanding of horse and rider psychology.
3. Pony Club instructors must have the ability to react calmly and assume responsibility in resolving any problem.
4. Pony Club instructors must endorse and reinforce USPC safety requirements.
5. Pony Club instructors must be aware of changes in rider and/or equine performance that might be reflective of changes in attitude and/or health of both horse and rider.

Safety Considerations for Mounts

1. Mounts should be temperamentally suited for the level of the rider.
2. Mounts should be healthy.
3. Mounts should be well cared for.
4. Mounts should be serviceably sound.

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5. Stallions and mares with a foal at their side are considered unsuitable mounts for Pony Club activities.
6. Horses and ponies must be at least five (5) years of age for USPC activities. (See USPC Policy 0135 for complete information.) Please note: the first year is considered to be January 1 following the date of foaling.

Safety Considerations for Trailing

1. An understanding of travel safety is important for parents and children.
2. Knowledge of loading and trailing and the ability to react to unusual circumstances when away from home, are of the highest importance.

Safety Considerations for Pony Club Mounted Meetings

1. Flat ground for riding
2. An enclosed area for riding
3. Good footing for riding
4. Good drainage
5. Solid jumping equipment
6. Access to a telephone
7. First aid equipment
8. Adequate off-street parking
9. Mowed open space, preferably a large, fenced area (at least several acres) desirable.

Additional safety information is available in USPC Policies, Handbooks and Rulebooks for each discipline, through the Safety Committee and the National Office. Also, please feel free to speak with your District Commissioner and/or Regional Supervisor if you have questions or need additional information.

How Does My Child Progress?

Each child joins Pony Club as an unrated member and progresses through the ratings at his own pace. The lower-level ratings (D-1 through C-2) are awarded within the local club. The C-3 is a regional rating, and members from different clubs throughout a region come together to be evaluated by a trained outside examiner. The B, H/H-A and A are national ratings, conducted by the National Testing Committee. The following is a brief overview of each level:

D Rating

The 'D' Rating is an introduction to the fun and challenge of riding, establishing a foundation of safety habits and knowledge of the daily care of a pony and tack. The D-1 through D-3 Pony Club member learns to ride independently, with control, maintaining a secure position at the walk, trot and canter on the flat and over low fences. All D ratings are awarded at the club level.

C Rating

The 'C' Pony Club member is learning to become an active horseman, to care independently for horse and tack, and to understand the reasons for what he or she is doing. The C shows development towards a secure, independent seat and increasing control and confidence in all phases of riding. The C-1 and C-2 ratings are awarded at the club level. The C-3 is a regional rating and reflects a basis of competence in riding and horse care that will make possible a lifetime of pleasure with horses.

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B Rating

The 'B' rating is for the active horseman and Pony Club member who is interested in acquiring further knowledge and proficiency in all phases of riding and horse care. The B is able to ride experienced horses with confidence and control on the flat, over fences and in the open and should be able to ride and care for another person's experienced horse, maintaining proper mental and physical condition without undoing any of the horse's education. The 'B' understands and is able to explain the reasons for what he or she is doing and contributes to the education of younger members.

H/H-A Rating

The 'H/H-A' rating covers horse management, teaching and training. The H/H-A has the knowledge, experience and maturity to evaluate and care for a horse's needs efficiently and in a variety of circumstances and to teach riding and horse care to others.

A Rating

The 'A' is able to ride horses of various schooling levels with judgment, tact and effectiveness, to train young horses and retrain spoiled horses.

Please refer to the Standards of Proficiency for specific participation requirements and recommended study guides.

Reading, Riding and Responsibility

The 'three Rs of Pony Club' were established twenty-five years ago and have been followed since: Reading, Riding and Responsibility.

Reading is essential to obtain the knowledge required to properly care for and teach our horses and ponies. Much of the pain inflicted upon our four-footed friends is inflicted through ignorance; it is our duty to attempt to remedy this situation through our education program. Thousands of devoted members and alumni represent proof that we are succeeding.

Riding safely and skillfully means that our members will have a foundation of confidence and ability so as to be able to pursue a healthful sport throughout their lives. Pony Club offers a range of activities so that nearly every member, regardless of the skill of his or her mount, will be able to participate and make a start at this foundation.

Responsibility is a natural result of having the complete care of a living creature and learning to care for it properly. Consequences of acts are faithfully reflected by either a nicker of recognition or by the pinning back of ears. The competitions offered develop sportsmanship and maturity. All of these characteristics, once established, carry over into other areas of life.

- James K. Ligon, USPC
President, 1978-80, 1987-1988
from USPC Annual Report 1979

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We care about people. We want them to develop good sportsmanship, self-discipline, a sense of responsibility and a feeling of belonging. We want them to have an opportunity to learn to cope with success and failure. Pony Club offers all of this through equestrian involvement.

- Marylou Anderson, USPC
President, 1983-85

I think that USPC gives your whole family an opportunity to learn about horses and learn not only the many lessons that you will always remember, but also patience, understanding and responsibility.

- Lucia Podlipny, Pony Club
member, from a letter to *USPC*
News, 1994

Thousands of former
Pony Club members are
in all walks of life...

From accountants to zoologists, from laboratory researchers to a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, Pony Club alumni, no matter what rating they reached, continue to keep, ride and enjoy horses. Among those who are professional horsemen and horsewomen, over 30 have been members of U.S. Olympic Teams as equestrians. Others are nationally and internationally known instructors, trainers and competitors.

Where Do I Fit In?

Even if you're not a horseperson, you can help your local club. You might consider...

- Painting and setting up stadium jumps
- Providing food and beverages at meetings or competitions
- Providing transportation for field trips
- Providing pony/horse trailering to a rally
- Assisting with fund raising projects
- Publishing the Club Newsletter
- Chaperoning a team
- Jump judging cross country fences at an Eventing rally
- Building cross-country fences
- Becoming a club officer
- Speaking at an unmounted club meeting
- Becoming a local club "sponsor"*

You may wish to study riding and horse care with your child as he or she progresses through the levels of proficiency. Pony Club 'homework' assignments can become a learning activity for the entire family!

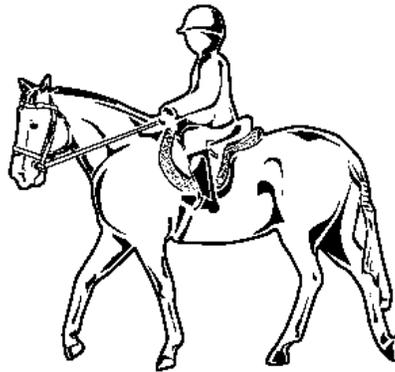
Some families plan their family vacations around Pony Club activities such as the USPC Festival, held every three years at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky. Annual Championships competition take place in the summer, and the USPC Annual Meeting is hosted by a different Region each year in late January.

**Sponsors are parents and other adults who have expressed an interest in the welfare of the club. They are active in the club, attend all sponsors' meetings, cast their votes for club officers and aid the DC in planning, organizing and running club activities.*

Other Important Information

Club Membership

It is the policy of USPC to admit as local club members all interested young persons who comply with the requirements for membership regardless of race, color, gender, religion, or national origin. In order to become a member of a club or to maintain membership status, each individual must pay annual club, regional and national dues, as well as the annual insurance premium. Each club may set a minimum age for joining if it so desires, but no person may remain a member of a club after December 31 of the year of his or her 21st birthday. Dues and fees are non-refundable.



MOUNTS

Ownership of a horse or pony is not a prerequisite for membership. Arrangements for obtaining a suitable mount is the responsibility of the parents. Stallions and mares with a foal at their side are unsuitable mounts for Pony Club activities. Horses and ponies must be at least five years of age for USPC activities (see USPC Policy 0135 for complete information). *Please note: The first year is considered to be Jan. 1 following date of foaling.*

How is Pony Club Different?

Through the USPC formal instructional program, members have the opportunity to learn about horses and their care.

Specific riding activities include Eventing (Dressage, Stadium Jumping, Cross-Country), Mounted Games, Show Jumping, Dressage (as single activity), Vaulting (horseback gymnastics), Polo, Polocrosse (combination of polo and lacrosse), Foxhunting and Tetrathlon (riding, running, swimming, shooting).

A favorite non-riding activity is Quiz, a verbal quiz bowl in which Pony Club members match their knowledge of all things equine.

Although USPC emphasizes instruction over competition, members do compete with one another at club, regional and national rallies. (The term "rally" is used because Pony Club competitions are not merely competitive; they're educational, too.) Many Pony Club members do compete (and take supplemental riding lessons) outside Pony Club.



At USPC rallies, there is very little help from parents. Teammates help each other (with qualified adults nearby).

An important part of any rally is horse care, which is judged and is highly competitive. The bottom line is this: Pony Club members learn to ride and care for their mounts safely and well; in addition, they become thinking, responsible people... and have fun.

A Glossary of Pony Club Terms

Championship – competition for riders/teams qualifying at regional and/or inter-regional rallies in any discipline

Combined Test – activity or competition in Dressage and Stadium Jumping

Cross-Country (XC) Course – prescribed course over fixed obstacles and natural terrain

Dressage – (means ‘training’) – education of the horse through prescribed movements and patterns on the flat (no jumping) from level to level

Eventing – activity or competition composed of Dressage, Cross-Country and Stadium Jumping.

Formal Inspection – check of rider and mount for cleanliness and safety

Horse Management – care of horse in accordance with USPC Standards

Horse Manager (HM) – non-riding member of a rally team

Quiz – (*previously called Know-Down*) Pony Club oral quiz-bowl competition to test horse knowledge

Mounted Meeting – scheduled club riding activity

National Examiner (NE) – examiner at B, H/H-A and A level

Polocrosse – a combination of polo and lacrosse

Rally – mounted or unmounted activity/competition among Pony Club members at the club, inter-club, region, inter-region, or national level

Rating – level of proficiency, level of achievement in riding and horse care OR the test conducted by a club (D-1 through C-2), regional (C-3), or national examiner (B, H/H-A, or A)

Standards of Proficiency – written summary of the levels of achievement in riding and horse care

Tack – term includes saddle, bridle and other horse equipment

Tetrathlon – activity or competition comprising running, riding, swimming and pistol target-shooting

The purpose of this booklet is to familiarize parents with membership requirements, resources and USPC structure, along with the various activities and opportunities available to Pony Club members (which may vary club by club). This booklet also covers ways in which parents can serve their local club. Pony Club provides both the child and the parent with the opportunity to learn together.



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