

Time Management at a Horse Show

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Time management at a horse show takes practice, but a good routine can relieve a lot of stress from the horse and rider; therefore, contributing to optimal performance. The goal is to find times that are comfortable to work within that will not leave you rushed and feeling anxious, nor sitting ringside for lengthy periods of time. To assist you in your time management, the following is a guideline to get you organized.

- 1) Know what time your class start time is the day before, often provided by the horse show. Understand that times are liable to change, and it is your responsibility to check that start time periodically throughout the day by checking in at the in-gate. Rarely will shows allow classes to start ahead of schedule, but as a precautionary check with horse show office on their policy.
- 2) Find where you are in the order of go. This may be set by the show, your trainer, or you personally signing up. If you are signing up personally, familiarize yourself with the horse show sign up process, which is now frequently done online the night before, or at the show ring first thing in the morning.
- 3) Set course walk time, if applicable. Routinely, 15-20 minutes prior to class start time is allocated for course walk. Use this to set your schedule but note that course walks may be made available earlier if horse show is ahead of schedule.

Note: Some featured competitions that attract crowds will have advanced course walks to accommodate pre-show performances, check with in-gate personnel if unsure.

- 4) Estimate your show time. On average you can estimate this based on 2 min/round, but often an experienced in-gate person can tell you how many rounds they are averaging an hour, and you can adjust time accordingly. For simplicity, we will work with 2 minutes/round, which has served me well over the years more often than not. So if we are 21st in the order at 10:00 we can estimate that we will be showing at 10:42 (21 rounds x 2 minutes/round).

Note: Water and drag times. In larger classes, they will often take breaks to water and drag. Check with in-gate personal on where in the order they plan to do so, and how long are they estimating for the break. Adjust show time accordingly.

- 5) Set arrival/warm up time. By rule of thumb, starting your warm up when you are 10 out on the count will leave you with optimal to do a proper warm up. That is 20 minutes based on our 2 min/round estimate. You can adjust this accordingly to your personal and horse's needs. I tell my students to plan to be *at* the warm up ring 30 minutes prior to allow a little extra time for schedule changes, watching other rounds, saddle or saddle pad adjustments, etc.

Note: if you are in the top 10 order in a class with a course walk, I suggest arriving *at* the show ring 45 minutes ahead to allow yourself time to do a partial warm up before your course walk. If you are in the order between 10 and 20, you will want to pre-groom your horse and have tack set out and ready to go before your course walk.

- 6) Set a time to leave the barn. This is more relevant at horse shows where the walk between the barns and the show ring is substantial (Thermal, Spruce Meadows International or Meadows on the Green rings, etc). Have an idea of how long it takes for you to travel between barn and show ring, considering your horse's walking pace. For the easily distracted riders, I suggest setting a timer on your phone for this time.
- 7) Set tack up time. For this one, you need to be self aware of how long you need to do a good, proper grooming and tack up. Consider if the horse has had a thorough grooming already that day and needs just a quick clean up, as well as any tack changes and corking that might adjust the time you need. Practice by timing yourself.

If needed, make yourself a cheat sheet:

	Example 1	Example 2
Class	Class # 112 1.15m Jun/Am	Class # 53 1.30m Open
Ring	Jumper 2	Meadows on the Green
Start time	10:00	4:00
Order of go	31	8
Course walk	9:45	3:45
Show time	11:02	4:16
Arrive/Warm Up	10:32	3:30 *Partial warm up prior to competition
Leave barn	10:25	3:15
Tack up	10:00	2:45

Remember, time management at a horse show is the responsibility of the *rider, solely*. Even if the schedule is to guide their grooms, it is up to the rider to set a program that allows them to get to the show ring, on time, prepared, and ready to give their best efforts.