# LONG-TERM EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT: HUNTER/JUMPER



# **GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETES & COACHES**

# EQUINENATIPPIQUE

#### Equine Canada, 308 Legget Dr., Suite 100 Ottawa, Ontario, K2K 1Y6, Canada

Copyright © Equine Canada, 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording or from any information stored in a retrieval system, without the prior written permission of Equine Canada.

#### Note to Coaches and Participants:

Equestrian sport is an 'early start/late development' sport. Children and beginner riders need a broad sport experience that includes opportunity to try multiple disciplines in the sport, as well as ample opportunity to develop general athletic skills that will help the participant progress in equestrian sport to their maximum desired potential. Please refer to the red "Developing Equestrians in Canada" Guidebook for additional information. Coaches are encouraged to discuss general athletic needs with their students, and to assist students in designing an appropriately balanced training plan to develop mounted and unmounted athletic and horsemanship skills.

#### Acknowledgements

Equine Canada acknowledges the following contributors:

Equine Canada English Coaching Committee Jill Barker Mike Lawrence Danielle Yaghdjian Heather Sansom Designer: www.dazzlebydesign.ca

#### **Companion Resources available through Equine Canada and provincial equestrian associations:**

- "Developing Equestrians in Canada" (athlete development guidebook)
- "Stable Management"
- Equine Canada Learn to Ride Program
- Equine Canada Hunter/Jumper Rulebooks
- Equine Canada/National Coaching Certification Program Coaching Courses and Materials: Tier 1:
  - o Equestrian Teaching and Learning
  - o Planning an Equestrian Lesson
  - o Analyzing Beginner Equestrian Performance
  - Making Ethical Decisions in the Equestrian Environment
  - Tier 2:
  - Designing an Equestrian Sport Program
  - Managing an Equestrian Sport Program
  - Training Mental Skills for Equestrian Sport
  - Analyzing Performance Coaching Clinics
  - Discipline Specialist Clinics

Tier 3:

- Equine Clean Sport
- Developing Athletic Abilities in the Equestrian (human) Athlete
- o Developing Athletic Abilities in the Equine Athlete
- Performance Planning for High Performance Training (Yearly Training Plans)
- o Advanced Practice Planning (Lesson planning)
- Training and Planning for Injury Prevention & Recovery
- o Analyzing Advanced Equine Performance

# Introduction

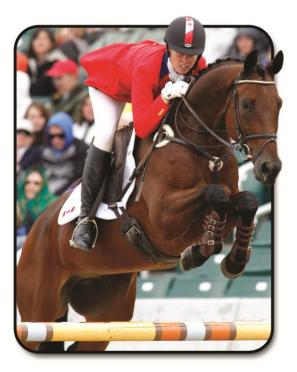


While Equestrian athletes pass through the same stages of development as athletes in other sports, athletes do not necessarily move through the stages at the same rate, or within the optimal age-range. Optimal age-range windows are based on sport science principals for describing the optimal human development windows for acquiring and developing sport capacity and skills.

Equestrian sport is described as an 'early start, late development' sport. Among the various equestrian disciplines Hunter/Jumper is a good example of this.

It is important to understand that lack of acquisition of certain skills and abilities within the optimal window means that the athlete in any equestrian discipline will have to address the gap remedially. Also, athletes that appear to be prodigiously ready early, are advised not to progress too quickly ahead of suggested age-ranges. Athletes should not be rushed through development stages. Just as with taking shortcuts in horse-training, attempting short-cuts in athlete development has a longer term negative impact on the athlete's performance and career.

In the Jumper discipline, safety considerations at intermediate to advanced levels make it particularly important for coaches and athletes to monitor and respect the athlete's development requirements and pace. Competition and performance expectations would be realistically set to the development stage at which the athlete is weakest since pushing too much can have damaging effects on future performance and on safety for both horse and rider. The physical, tactical skill and mental development of horse and rider must progress together at a pace that is optimal for performance and safety.







Research on peak performance in sport and other areas commonly accepts that it takes 10,000 hours or approximately 10 years to develop to peak performance. Exactly how long it takes is very athlete-dependant. In the Hunter/Jumper discipline, specialization can start in the early stages although athletes need to reach a certain level of personal mental and emotional maturity before competing with a horse at the highest levels.



Fundamental sport skills for equestrians include BOTH equestrian-specific skills and general physical vocabulary and capacity. Equestrians entering the sport of Hunter/Jumper might have an introduction to equestrian sport in a wide variety of disciplines. Regardless of their starting point, it is important for children under 10/12 to maintain involvement in a variety of sport and equestrian activities in order to develop a base of capacity for movement, horsemanship skills, cardio-vascular ability and stamina in order to be able to excel competitively at later stages.



Athletes are not encouraged to specialize in Jumper competition prior to peak height velocity (PHV- growth spurt at adolescence). (Participants can specialize in Hunter at a slightly earlier age.)

The main reason for later specialization in Jumper is that at more focused competitive Jumper levels, the sport is very physically demanding, and both the demand of competition and the demand of the training regimen cannot be undertaken until certain physical maturity is reached. As the athlete progresses, the sport is also mentally demanding with added responsibility for the safety and well-being of the horse.



A key development age milestone for athletes in Jumper is around puberty and achievement of peak height velocity (PHV) and peak strength velocity (PSV). High physical demands of competition and training schedules in the later competing development phases make it very important that athletes not be pushed to competitive and advanced levels beyond advisability for their physical development. Each athlete is an individual, and it is up to the coach to assess the athlete's readiness, and to help the athlete pace their schedule and goals to what is appropriate.

Mental and emotional maturity are of special importance at higher competitive levels in Jumper because the higher the technical challenge, the more the rider is required to think independently, and make potentially risky decisions on behalf of another living creature.



The five main sport capacities of suppleness, skill, speed, stamina and strength have optimum time-frames in which they are acquired as an athlete develops. If the capacity is not developed well within the optimum window, the athlete will be challenged later in this area. For example, the window of trainability for suppleness is roughly between the ages of 6-10. A young rider who may not engage in activities other than riding, may not develop sufficient suppleness during this time. Lack of suppleness will later have an impact on movement ability, and wear and tear on joints.

Another example is skill acquisition for which the optimum window is 8-12yrs. Young riders who specialise too early, risk losing an ease with some skills that would be required in Jumper later. Coaches and athletes need to be aware of special challenges each athlete may face as an individual, and considerations for their training program which may result from missed windows of trainability earlier in their development.

Using the earlier windows of trainability to give a rider the right base of equestrian and athletic skill is the best way to give the athlete the preconditions for success with specialization in Hunter/Jumper.



At higher competitive levels, Hunter/Jumper places a very high demand on athletes for training time; technical accuracy; and emotional maturity for placing the horse's needs first, dealing with competitive pressure and working effectively in a team environment.

It is a given that only a very small percentage of athletes will go on to elite performance. A much larger percentage of participants will go on to teach, train and ride with a broad exposure to equestrian disciplines. Equestrian participants tend to stay with the sport actively for decades, or to come back to it later in life. Coaches and athletes keep in mind that the first goal of sport participation is to develop a person with the character qualities to be successful and responsible in their chosen path in life, and to be a responsible and well-rounded horseperson placing the welfare of the horse before personal ambition. Also, although performance is individual, the logistics of competition favour the ability to work well within a team environment





Elite Jumper participants and coaches spend considerable time on planning, training and preparation months and years in advance of a competitive goal, at all levels of the sport. At high performance levels, it can take years to prepare horses: cardio-vascular capacity, ligament and joint strength, skeletal adaptations, muscular adaptation and endurance, technical skills and mental ability. The rider is expected to develop parallel to their horse. As the athlete advances, training and competition loads also necessitate consideration of rest and recovery periods through the year so that for safety reasons, horses and riders are prepared and at peak at time of competition, and avoid injury.



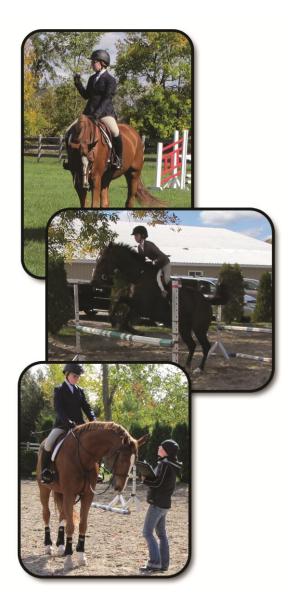
Competition selection and timing has to be realistic and achievably matched to athletic ability, skill level and commitment to appropriate training regimen. Coaches and athletes need to be aware of the milestone markers in their calendar which will signal to them whether or not they or on track to a desired competitive goal, or need to re-adjust the goals to match the feasible training schedule.



An athlete's readiness for specialized coaching in the Hunter or Jumper discipline should be assessed, and all facets of readiness for competition taken into account.



Evaluation of each athlete's stage in development is a continuous process. Continuous improvement does not always mean continuous progression. If a gap is discovered, it needs to be addressed so that in the long-term view, the athlete can progress safely in the sport.





Fun, Safety & Active Participation!

- Introduction to horses
- Explore the fun experience of horses and participation in the equestrian environment
- Group participation interaction and socialization with peers through games
- Encourage experimentation with different equestrian disciplines, or in programs offering broad exposure/broad sport development (Pony Club, 4H, Vaulting, experimenting with involvement with different disciplines.)
- Acquire basic transferable skills (balance, coordination, proprioception, physical/athlete 'vocabulary', flexibility)
- Encourage ongoing participation in a broad variety of other sports and activities to maximize the window of opportunity for basic sport abilities

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 30-50 min. / week progressing to 100 min. / week
- 1 Other:
- 60 min. daily activity as per Canada Food and Health Guidelines
- Involvement in as wide a range of other sports and games as possible

#### **SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW**

- Horse body language and movement, confidence with and around horses (5-8 yrs)
- Balance, co-ordination, flexibility, sport vocabulary (non-equestrian activity 3-5 yrs, & 5-8 yrs)

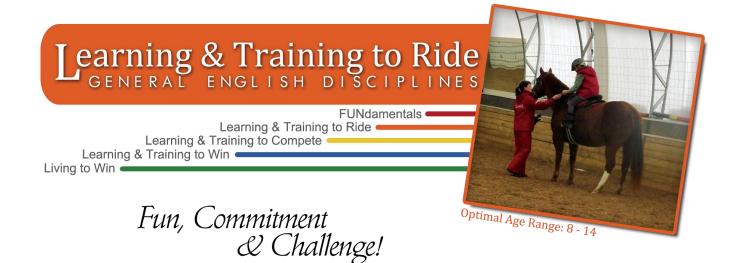
Perseverance, reward of effort, simple goal-setting, focus, passion for the sport

**OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 3 - 8 yrs (active 3-5 yrs, introduction to equestrian 5-8 yrs)

#### **COMPETITIONS**

• Non-competitive group activities: fun days; in-house activities – non-competitive fun experiences. (*Various disciplines*)

**COACH:** Instructor



- Further develop and consolidate basic equestrian skills introduced at the Fundamental Stage through experimentation with different disciplines and activities
- Group and individual training sessions with coach
- Emphasize frequency of practice and consistency in skill performance within practices
- Initiate emphasis on overall physical fitness and fitness lifestyle, as well as further development of general athletic skill through a variety of activities outside equestrian sport
- Further develop engagement in equestrian sport through a variety of involvement opportunities within the equestrian community such as volunteering or supporting competing athletes, 4-H or Pony Club or similar equestrian school programs

#### **TRAINING TIME**

Equestrian: 2 training sessions/ week (off-peak) to 5 session (peak season)

- 1 Other:
  - 60 min. daily activity as per Canada Food and Health Guidelines
  - Participation in up to 3 other sports 3-4x / week

#### SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW

**OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 8 - 14

- Riding 'feel', empathy, 'vocabulary' of movement and horsemanship skills
- 🏌 Co-ordination, stamina, agility, aerobic ability
  - Positive attitude mindset, goal-setting, focus in spite of distractions, confidence, consistency

#### **COMPETITIONS**

- RATIO: mostly practice, occasional competition
- Primarily non-competitive: In-house "schooling" competitions & fun days (Various disciplines)
- Open Schooling Shows and Beginner Divisions
- Technical:
  - Maximum jump height 2'0"

**COACH:** Instructor (various disciplines) or Coach 1 / Competition Coach

#### LONG-TERM EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT:HUNTER/JUMPER



#### TRAINING

- Introduce participants to competitive experience analysis and evaluation of performance, rules, ethics
- Introduction of concept of setting competition goals
- Foster healthy priorities in competition doing your best, sportsmanship, having fun, team-work with the support crew and peers
- Encourage competition in different disciplines with goal of balanced development in horsemanship and equestrian skills
- Maintenance of involvement in other sports and conditioning modalities which favour transferrable abilities: flexibility, endurance, agility, rhythm, strength, speed and competitive focus

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 3-5 training sessions/ week
- **b** Other: 3-5x/ week, 30-60 min

#### **SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW**

- Control of horse through micro movement, understanding biomechanics, training for performance
- Physical growth spurt ideal for developing endurance, speed and proprioception (12-15 yrs) and strength (15-18 yrs)

Self-awareness, goal-setting, managing stress, team-work mindset, solid training habit

#### **COMPETITIONS**

**RATIO:** 80% training / 20% competition

**OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 12 - 18

- Provincial, regional and local competitions (various disciplines)
- Training and Novice levels
- Technical:
  - Jump heights up to 2'6" Hunter, 0.90m Jumper

COACH: English Competition Coach / Coach 1



- Introduce participants to Hunter/Jumper competition analysis and evaluation of performance, rules, ethics
- Target appropriate types of competitions
- Reinforce concepts of setting individual performance and competition goals
- Foster healthy priorities in competition doing your best sportsmanship, having fun
- Introduction to Yearly Training Plan (YTP)
- Introduction of competition strategy
- Encourage involvement in other sports and activities for variety, physical development and development of competitive and sportsmanship skills

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 4-6 training sessions/ week
- **b** Other: 3-5x/ week, 30-60 min

#### **SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW**

#### **OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 12 - 18

- Refinement of aids and role as trainer of the horse
- Physical growth spurt ideal for developing agility, endurance and speed (12-15) and strength (15-18)
- Self-awareness, goal-setting, and planning, managing multiple demands, team-work mindset, solid training habit

#### **COMPETITIONS**

**RATIO:** 70% training / 30% competition

- Provincial, regional and local Hunter/Jumper Competitions up to Provincial Championships
- Technical:
  - Max. jump heights 3'3" Hunter, 1.0/1.10m Jumper

COACH: English Competition Coach / Coach 1, Hunter/Jumper experience



- Introduction of more discipline specialization
- Further develop Yearly Training Planning (YTP)
- Increased commitment to training while maintaining a balance with school
- Develop competition strategy
- Further development of new and consolidate and refine basic technical skills (discipline specialization)
- Support commitment to unmounted training time to maximize athletic ability and endurance and reduce risk of injury
- Ensure planned rest and recovery periods in the training schedule, harmonized with need for peaking in competition
- Ensure access to adequate calibre horses at this stage and above.

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 4-6 training sessions/ week per horse (saddle time on more than one horse is ideal)
- Other: 3-5x/ week, 30-60 min (should have a training plan synchronized with equestrian training plan)

#### SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW

**OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 14 - 21

- Technical skill development
- Proprioception, strength and stamina (athlete will have to start working at maintaining flexibility and suppleness against tightening effect of rigorous training schedule)
- Self-awareness, goal-setting, and planning, managing multiple demands, team-work mindset, solid training habit

#### **COMPETITIONS**

RATIO: 60-70% training / 40-30% competition

- Provincial and National Competitions to National Championships
- Technical:
  - Jump heights 1.10m 1.40m

COACH: Jumper Coach Specialist / Coach 2, High Performance Jump Coach / Coach 3



- Introduction of more discipline specialization
- Further develop Yearly Training Planning (YTP)
- Increased commitment to training while maintaining a balance with school
- Develop competition strategy
- Further development of new and consolidate and refine basic technical skills (discipline specialization)
- Support commitment to unmounted training time to maximize athletic ability and endurance and reduce risk of injury
- Ensure planned rest and recovery periods in the training schedule, harmonized with need for peaking in competition
- Ensure access to adequate calibre horses at this stage and above.

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 4-6 training sessions/ week per horse (saddle time on more than one horse is ideal)
- Other: 3-5x/ week, 30-60 min (should have a training plan synchronized with equestrian training plan)

#### SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW

**OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 14 - 21

- Technical skill development
- Proprioception, strength and stamina (athlete will have to start working at maintaining flexibility and suppleness against tightening effect of rigorous training schedule)
- Self-awareness, goal-setting, and planning, managing multiple demands, team-work mindset, solid training habit

#### **COMPETITIONS**

RATIO: 60-70% training / 40-30% competition

- Provincial and National Competitions to National Championships
- Junior/Amateur Owner divisions
- Technical:
  - Jump heights 3'3" 3'9"

COACH: Hunter/Jumper Coach Specialist / Coach 2, High Performance Jump / Coach 3



- Regular International competitions
- Consolidate and refine the repertoire of skills to meet International competition standards
- Develop consistency of performance, optimal performance state
- Refine pre-competition vs. competition training plans; monitor fatigue and plan training for injury prevention
- Team competition environment (NAYCs) International Federation, National Federation, and Provincial Association eligibility and selection standards, etc.
- Enhanced Integrated Support Team (IST) support
- Team coach, individual coach and discipline experts, and fitness/conditioning coach
- National Talent Squad programs discipline experts
- Potential for training opportunities with International Team coach
- Develop embassadorial skills for representation internationally in a team environment
- Develop coaching and teaching skill (certification as Instructor / Coach if coaching envisioned)
- Access to adequate calibre horses at this stage is essential.

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 6 training sessions/ week per horse (multiple horses)
- **%** Other: 3-4x/ week, 60-90 min

#### SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW

#### **OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 16 – 25

Technical skill mastery, knowledge of performance standards and rules, develop individuality

11

- Strength, stamina and power
- Advanced mental training skills, lifetime training and business habits

#### **COMPETITIONS**

**RATIO:** 60% Training / 40% competition

- National and International Competitions
- Technical:
  - Jump heights 1.30m 1.60m

**COACH:** High Performance Jump Coach / Coach 3

#### LONG-TERM EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT:HUNTER/JUMPER



#### TRAINING

- Develop consistency of performance, optimal performance state
- Refine pre-competition vs. competition training plans; monitor fatigue and plan training for injury prevention.
- Enhanced Integrated Support Team (IST) support
- Individual coach and discipline experts, and fitness/conditioning coach
- Develop coaching and teaching skill (certification as Instructor / Coach if coaching envisioned)
- Access to adequate calibre horses at this stage is essential.

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 6 training sessions/ week per horse (multiple horses)
- **1** Other: 3-4x/ week, 60-90 min

#### SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW

#### **OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 16 - 25

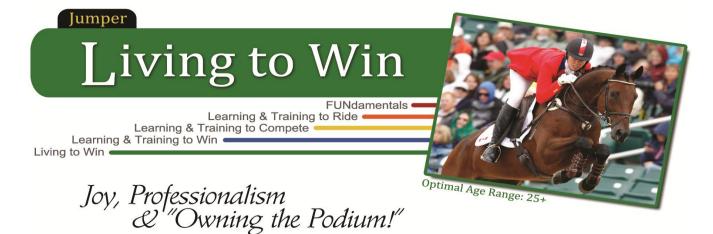
- Technical skill mastery, knowledge of performance standards and rules, develop individuality
- Strength, stamina and power
- Advanced mental training skills, lifetime training and business habits

#### **COMPETITIONS**

**RATIO:** 60% Training / 40% competition

- National Competitions to National Championship levels
- Amateur categories
- Technical:
  - 3'6"- 4'6"

COACH: Hunter/Jumper Coach Specialist / Coach 2, High Performance / Coach 3



- Senior National Team Program monitored by Technical Advisor/Head Coach
- Full commitment to International excellence
- Consolidate and refine the equestrian's repertoire of skills to meet International competition standards
- Full Integrated Support Team (IST) support equine & human
- Athlete Assistance Program
- Enhanced Coaching expertise (jumping, personal conditioning program)

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 6 training sessions/ week per horse (multiple horses, 3+ hrs / day)
- **%** Other: 3-4x/ week, 60-90 min

#### **SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW**

**OPTIMAL AGE RANGE: 25+** 

- Horse training and business management skill mastery
- Maintain personal conditioning program to prevent injury and to maximize required competitive capacity: flexibility/suppleness, muscle group re-balancing (symmetry, and ensuring joint integrity against imbalances created through riding), strength, speed, aerobic capacity and stamina with ongoing fitness testing
- Advanced mental training habits

#### **COMPETITIONS**

- World competition: Olympic Games, World Equestrian Games, Pan American Games
- International categories: World Cup, Grand Prix
- Technical:
  - Jump heights 1.45m +

COACH: High Performance / Level 3, Level 4



- Full commitment to National excellence
- Consolidate and refine the equestrian's repertoire of skills to meet National competition standards
- Full Integrated Support Team (IST) support equine & human
- Athlete Assistance Program
- Enhanced Coaching expertise (jumping, personal conditioning program)

#### **TRAINING TIME**

- Equestrian: 6 training sessions/ week per horse (multiple horses, 3+ hrs / day)
- **%** Other: 3-4x/ week, 60-90 min

#### **SPECIAL TRAINING WINDOW**

#### **OPTIMAL AGE RANGE:** 25+

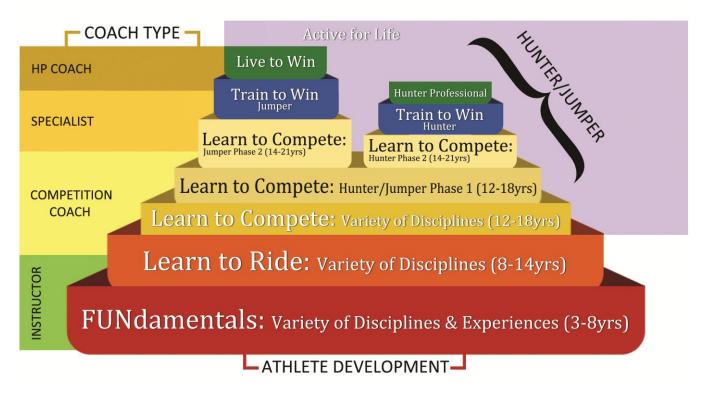
- Horse training and business management skill mastery
- Maintain personal conditioning program to prevent injury and to maximize required competitive capacity: flexibility/suppleness, muscle group re-balancing (symmetry, and ensuring joint integrity against imbalances created through riding), strength, speed, aerobic capacity and stamina with ongoing fitness testing
  - Advanced mental training habits

#### **COMPETITIONS**

- National Competitions to Championships, Open Categories
- Train and compete green and client horses/ coaching clients in other categories
- Technical:
  - Max. jump heights 4'6"

COACH: Hunter/Jumper Coach Specialist / Coach 2, High Performance / Coach 3, Level 4

#### LONG-TERM EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT:HUNTER/JUMPER



# Primary Differences Between Hunter/Jumper LTED Model and General Equestrian Model:

Learn to Compete phase is longer, extending into the international competitive levels for the Jumper. This is also the phase where athletes choose to specialize in either Hunter or Jumper.

The model branches into two development paths at Learn to Compete Phase 2, depending on athlete specialization. Athletes in Hunter reaching the Live to Win phase usually become professional trainers or coaches, largely in the domestic competitive contexts. The Jumper discipline is an FEI sport and peaks in International competition contexts.

Safety risks present at higher Jumper levels necessitate greater planning and preparation and more time spent training for the Jumpers; as well as early development of independent thinking for the rider.

## Equine Canada Resources Available for Coaches & Athletes

Publications

#### **GENERAL**

- 1. **Developing Equestrians in Canada** (Guidebook for Athletes & Coaches)
- 2. Equine Canada Learn to Ride Program
- 3. Stable Management
- 4. Coaching program course reference materials (see courses below)
- 5. Equine Medications & Control Handbook
- 6. Various Equine Canada Rulebooks

#### HUNTER/JUMPER

- 1. Long-Term Equestrian Development: Hunter/Jumper
- 2. Hunter/Jumper Rulebook

### Reasons to Train withA Certified Coach or Instructor





Certified coaches are professionals who are expected to adhere to strict standards of the profession. Equine Canada coaches and instructors sign nationally accountable Codes of Ethics and Conduct. Written complaints about coaches are addressed. They are also required to maintain a current and clean police records report on file.



Trained in procedures, coaches hold a valid First Aid certificate which must be kept up to date for the coach to maintain certification.



Certified Coaches and Instructors have been trained and tested on their specific ability to teach and coach human athletes, using techniques and practices upheld by Sport Canada as best standard for coaching for all major sports in Canada. The coaching development curriculum is aligned with standard sport science and coaching skill principles and practices.





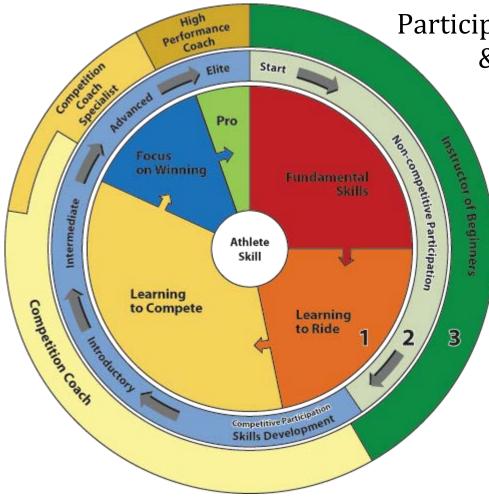
Coach candidates are assessed by very experienced equestrian coaching professionals. In addition to demonstrating coaching and teaching ability, coaches and instructors must demonstrate a high standard of competence in horsemanship, horse care, horse training, riding, business and other skills. They must show proof of continuing professional development activities to maintain certification status.



Becoming certified and maintaining certification requires significant time and financial commitment on the part of the instructor/coach. Certification shows personal commitment to the sport and to giving their students the best they can.



Conformance with growing requirement for and public expectation of certification in all amateur sports



# Participant Involvement & Coach Selection

**1.** Identify your skill level in the inner circle.

**2.** Next, select your degree of competitive involvement.

**3.** Select the coach type that most fits your stage and context.

**4.** Find a current coach or instructor on the EC and provincial websites.

# Athletes Progress, Coaches Specialize

*Athlete Centred* = As participant skill increases, the coaching context and degree of competitive involvement change. Choose a coach that specializes in the requirements of your context.

*Coaching Certifications: Equal but Different.* While competitive coaches do have to have prior experience as an athlete in their certification context, coaches seek certification that best describes the majority of their clients, not their own skills as an athlete. Coaching certificate type is not a hierarchy. The certificate type does not necessarily indicate a coach or instructors' years of experience, degree of expertise, or prior personal competitive experience.



# EQUINES HIPPIQUE CANADA 2685 Queensview Drive, Suite 100

FX

8

2685 Queensview Drive, Suite 100, Ottawa, Ontario, K2B 8K2, Canada