

## Learn to Ride/Drive Programs FAQ

Please note that this information is subject to change without notice.

### Q. What does the term “discipline(s)” refer to?

A. The term “discipline(s)” refers to the type/style of equestrian sport you are doing. For example English riding, Western riding, and Driving are all different “disciplines” that are part of Equestrian as a sport. Check out the Alberta Equestrian Federation's FREE publication for those who are new to riding: [“A New Rider's Guidebook”](#)

### Q. What is the difference between English, Western and Driving as disciplines?

A. *English Riding* is a style of riding performed in a more flat type saddle with no horn. English riding is displayed in activities such as Show Jumping, Dressage, and Eventing etc.

*Western Riding* is a style of riding performed in a saddle with a higher cantle and a horn. Typically seen when referring to “Cowboys/Cowgirls” western riding is displayed in activities such as Barrel Racing, Pole Bending, Cattle Penning, Roping, etc.

*Driving* refers to a horse drawn cart/vehicle/carriage, where the “athlete” is the one in charge of guiding the horse and cart/vehicle/carriage etc.

### Q. How do I get started with this program?

A. After ensuring that a current [AEF membership](#) is in place, the first step a rider must look after is finding the appropriate level examiner from the AEF examiner listing document located on the general Learn to Ride program webpage. Examiners are NCCP certified instructors/coaches who have received additional training as examiners and are qualified to complete the testing process. It is recommended the candidate contact the examiner to let them know they wish to complete the Learn to Ride Program of their chosen discipline, if they are not already enrolled to do so through their lesson program. IMPORTANT: Instructors/Coaches who are not NCCP certified, are not provided access to the Learn to Ride Programs.

### Q. How do I initiate the testing process?

A. Before any testing is initiated, it is recommended that riders complete an assessment ride with an NCCP certified instructor/coach to determine proper placement within the program if they already have some experience riding. The rider and examiner (who has been trained to deliver the testing) can then decide on a testing date, keeping in mind the application must be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the testing date. If the rider is new to the sport, placement starts typically at rider level 1 and testing is initiated and determined by the NCCP certified instructor/coach moving forward. Trained examiners will already be briefed on the application process.

**Q. Are there any resources I must purchase for these programs?**

A. Yes, there are manuals available for both the English and Western Learn to Ride programs as well as the Learn to Drive program. The non-discipline specific "Stable Management in Canada" is also recommended with each manual set. It is also recommended that riders download the complimentary applicable rubrics for each program. **IMPORTANT:** The English Learn to Ride level 9/10 handbook is available online only, as is the Western Intermediate Rider level manual. These are provided at no cost to the rider/coach.

**Q. How much does it cost to get my rider levels?**

A. The agreed upon fee for testing rider levels is determined between the rider and their selected examiner, with respect to the examiners time needed to conduct testing. The rider is responsible for making that payment in full to them directly. In addition to this, a processing fee of \$25 per rider level certificate is charged and collected by the Alberta Equestrian Federation, (to produce certificates and rider badges). This processing fee is collected at the time of the application process when setting up a date with an examiner to complete testing.

**Q. What does a Learn to Ride test look like?**

A. Each Learn to Ride Test is composed of a written test section, stable management section, and a riding section. All sections of the exams must be passed with a 70% or higher mark to ensure successful completion of the respective test.

**Q. Is there a passing grade for rider level tests?**

A. Yes, a rider must score 70% or higher in each SECTION of a particular rider level test in order to successfully complete the level testing.

**Q. Can I complete my written test sections at the AEF office?**

A. No, unfortunately all testing components must be completed with an examiner directly.

**Q. Must I have my own horse to participate in this program?**

A. No, it is not a requirement that riders have their own horses to participate in this program. Riders may use their own horse, a lease horse, a school horse etc. It is up to the rider to determine which situation is best for them.

**Q. Is it possible to complete the Learn to Ride/Drive program testing by video evaluation?**

A. Unfortunately, not at this time.

**Q. I live in a remote area where I cannot find an examiner. How can I complete my testing?**

A. It is suggested that the rider contact the closest current examiner to their area and see if they can meet somewhere in between, or travel to the riders location. If an examiner is unable to be secured this way, there are periodical testing opportunities hosted at facilities throughout Alberta, and the rider may opt to travel to complete the required testing. Sometimes, it is easier and more cost effective for the examiner, if a large group of individuals are committed to a testing date in one location.

**Q. My coach is already a qualified examiner, can they test me for all of the program's levels?**

A. If your own coach is a qualified examiner, they can only test you up to certain levels, at which point an examiner who is not a rider's regular coach would need to be sought after to complete the remaining levels of testing. Please refer to the resource section of the Learn to Ride/Drive program webpage for documents outlining restrictions.

**Q. Can an examiner from a particular discipline test me for levels in another discipline?**

A. No, examiners may only test within the discipline program that they are trained and certified for.

**Q. I participate in Pony Club, is there any recognition or equivalency for completing Pony Club levels?**

A. Yes, in the English Learn to Ride program, equivalency is granted to pony clubbers at rider level 6 and rider level 8. A pony clubber who has achieved level C2 will be granted equivalency to rider 6 and an pony clubber who has achieved level B or A will be granted equivalency to level 8 in the English learn to ride programs. **IMPORTANT:** All pony clubbers looking to have equivalencies recognized **MUST** complete the applicable Pony Club Equivalency Application which can be located on the Learn to Ride/Drive official webpage under the resource section. Sufficient documentation is required, as are reputable references. Applicants are notified by registered mail whether or not their application has been accepted. Certificates from the English Learn to Ride program will not be issued in this instance.

**Q. I participate in 4H, is there any recognition or equivalency for completing 4H levels?**

A. Unfortunately, not at this time.

**Q. I was unsuccessful at the level I was testing, now what?**

A. A retest will be required in the instance a rider is unsuccessful at a component(s) of a particular rider test. Riders are only required to retest unsuccessful components of tests, as opposed to the whole test and all its sections. Re-testing may take place at anytime as long as application guidelines are properly followed. **IMPORTANT:** Examiners may charge for their time to conduct a re-test. Riders are encouraged to verify this prior to completing any testing.

**Q. I completed my rider level tests many years ago, are they still valid?**

A. Yes, if a rider has previously completed their Learn to ride/drive levels in the past, and those results are still on file for that candidate - then they are still considered valid. If the Alberta Equestrian Federation office does not have record of them being on file, they may request a copy of the certificate from the rider or another P/TSO office as proof of completion. If neither is able to be found, the rider is responsible for contacting the examiner at the time they completed their testing and should ensure to provide the Alberta Equestrian Federation office with sufficient documentation that the applicable levels were completed. **IMPORTANT:** Those riders who participated in the English Learn to Ride program prior to 2009, will have likely completed a three level program as opposed to the current ten level program. These levels are still valid and are recognized in correlation to the new program at the following competencies:

- Old English Rider Level 1 – New English Rider Level 2
- Old English Rider Level 2 – New English Rider Level 6
- Old English Rider Level 3 – New English Rider Level 8

\*Certificates will not be reproduced for candidates who previously completed the old English Learn to Ride program within the new program, however a letter of completion as confirmation for the above competencies may be issued\*

**Q. I completed my level tests in another province, are they valid in Alberta?**

A. Yes, this is a national program and if a rider completed levels in another province, as long as documentation is available these levels are recognized as the same levels a rider would complete if testing was done in Alberta.

**Q. I lost my rider level certificates; can I get replacement copies?**

A. Yes, replacement copies of certificates are available at a cost of \$25 per certificate payable directly to the Alberta Equestrian Federation.

**Q. I already have quite a bit of riding experience, is there a way for me to fast track through the program to complete it or begin at a particular level that is closest to my current skill level?**

A. Yes, riders are able to challenge the Learn to Ride Programs up to a specific level. It is recommended that riders contact an examiner who is familiar with the Learn to Ride Programs within their respective discipline, and do an assessment ride so the examiner can recommend which level is best suited for the rider to challenge. Riders challenging levels in the English Learn to Ride program must complete only the written sections of the exams for each level leading up to the level they will be challenging, and then all sections of the test for the level they are challenging. Riders challenging levels in the Western Learn to Ride program must complete the written and stable management sections of the exams for each level leading up to the level they will be challenging, and then all sections of the test for the level they are challenging. For more details, please contact the Alberta Equestrian Federation office or speak with a qualified examiner. **IMPORTANT:** Challenging a rider level is not to be a drawn out process. Essentially, a rider who is challenging a level is indicating that they already demonstrate at standard the necessary skillset outlined in the respective level they are challenging at the time of application.

**Q. I am an English rider and do not want to participate in jumping; can I skip this part of the English Learn to Ride Program?**

A. Yes, a rider participating in the English Learn to Ride program may choose to opt out of the jumping portion of the rider levels beginning at rider level 3 and continuing onto rider level 8. **IMPORTANT:** If the rider desires to become an NCCP Certified Equestrian Instructor/Coach in future, they should review the next question and response in detail.

**Q. I have tons of experience under my belt, and am looking to become an NCCP Certified Equestrian Instructor/Coach. Do I have to complete the Learn to Ride/Drive programs?**

A. Yes, individuals who are looking to complete the following programs are required to complete the following listed level within the respective discipline Learn to Ride program:

- English Instructor Flat – Minimum English Rider Level 6 Flat Only;
- English Instructor Jump – Minimum English Rider Level 6 (jumping section included);
- English Competition Coach – Minimum English Rider 8 (jumping section included);
  - IMPORTANT: There currently it not an option available for riders looking to become certified as an English Competition Coach without completing jumping as part of their rider level exams and coaching evaluation.
- Western Instructor – Minimum Western Rider Level 4;
- Western Competition Coach – Minimum Western Rider Level 4 & Completion of the Basic Training module from the Western Intermediate Rider program;
- Saddle Seat Instructor – Specially designed riding competency test is required to be completed as there are no Saddle Seat rider levels currently available;
- Drive Instructor – Completion of the Learn to Drive program.

**Questions?**

**Contact Alberta Equestrian Federation at**  
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