

1. WHAT IS THE ENGLISH VERSATILITY CLASS?

English Versatility is an individual pattern class designed to showcase your horse's movement, responsiveness, and overall rideability in an English frame. It includes a mix of flatwork, pole work, and transitions, and is intended as a steppingstone for riders and horses working toward over-fences classes—or simply looking for a more engaging English flat class.

2. WHO CAN ENTER?

- **Open Division:** Any exhibitor, including professionals
- **Non-Pro Division:** AQHYA and AQHA Amateur members
- Horses must be **3 years of age or older**

3. WHAT TACK AND ATTIRE ARE REQUIRED?

- English tack and attire per AQHA rules (SHW310 and SHW320)
- **ASTM/SEI-certified helmet is required**
- Plain cavesson bridles (no figure-eight or flash nosebands)
- Conservative turnout is encouraged

4. WHAT WILL THE PATTERN INCLUDE?

Each exhibitor will ride a pattern individually. Patterns will include a combination of:

REQUIRED MANEUVERS:

- Walk, trot, and canter both directions
- Hand gallop
- Stop and back
- Change of lead (simple or flying)
- Trot or canter over ground poles

OPTIONAL MANEUVERS (MAY VARY BY PATTERN):

- Walk over poles
- Extended gaits
- Lateral movements (leg yield, turn on forehand or haunches)
- Trot or canter over raised rails (up to 8")
- Open division only: Trot or canter over jump or cross rail (up to 18")

AQHA
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English Versatility Class EXHIBITOR FAQ

For AQHA-Approved Events | Pilot Class



CONTACT US:

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5. HOW WILL I BE JUDGED?

You'll be evaluated on:

- Quality of movement
- Correctness and fluidity of transitions
- Responsiveness and willingness of your horse
- Suitability and effectiveness of the rider-horse partnership

Judges are not looking for perfection—but for forward, balanced movement, and correct execution of the pattern. This class rewards **effective riding**, not just stride length or flash.

Important Note: A shorter-strided horse can score just as well doing a clean 5 strides between poles as a longer-strided horse doing 4. What matters is how well the pattern is ridden for your horse.



6. HOW DOES SCORING WORK?

- Horses are scored on a scale from 0 to 100, with 70 as average
- Penalties are assessed separately for errors (see below)
- Each maneuver is scored from -1.5 to +1.5 based on execution

7. PENALTY SCORE SHEET

PENALTY	DEDUCTION	EXAMPLES
▪ Minor Errors	-1 point	Over-bridled, out of frame, light hit of pole, 2 feet in single-strided space
▪ Moderate Errors	-3 points	Wrong lead, knocking down pole, trot more than 3 strides into canter, break of gait
▪ Major Errors	-5 points	Refusal, blatant disobedience, spurring in front of girth, knocking down jump
▪ Disqualification	DQ	Off pattern, fall, abusive behavior, 3rd refusal, illegal equipment

A printable version of the full penalty list is available.

8. HOW SHOULD I PREPARE?

- **Know the pattern:** Patterns are posted ahead of time—study it and walk through each element
- **Practice ground poles at home**—including at the trot and canter
 - Trot rails are set as a series of 3 to 5 poles each 3 - 4 feet apart.
 - Canter rails are set in 10 per stride increments with 5 feet for landing from the first pole and 5 feet for take off from second pole. (ie. 50 feet is the distance for a 4 stride line, but it is acceptable in 5 strides for an all-round horse.)
- **Build transitions:** Practice upward and downward transitions and lead changes in a show-like setting
- **Focus on control and feel**—this class is about riding your horse effectively

9. WILL I GET TIME TO PRACTICE BEFORE I SHOW?

Show management may allow a short warm-up over poles before the class begins. This varies by show, so check with the show office on the day of competition.

10. WHY SHOULD I ENTER?

- Great for horses not ready to jump or needing ring experience
- Perfect for youth, amateur, and open riders who want more variety in English competition
- Helps build confidence, control, and communication between horse and rider
- A fun, forward-moving alternative to traditional rail classes

LET US KNOW HOW YOUR RIDE GOES—WE'RE LEARNING WITH YOU, AND YOUR FEEDBACK HELPS SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THIS CLASS!

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