

Gaits in the Driving Class

Horses are to be shown both ways of the arena at a walk, regular trot, and extended trot. All gaits must be done willingly and the horse should appear to be a pleasure to drive. They are judged on 60% performance, manners, and way of going; 30% on condition and fit of harness and cart; 10% on neatness, appropriateness of driver attire and overall expression. Excessive speed will be penalized.

There are other gait requirements for specific classes at sanctioned breed shows, but this is what you'll find at local shows:

- **Walk:** A free, regular and forward moving four-beat gait. The horse should walk energetically, but calmly with an even and determined pace.
- **Regular trot:** A balanced, easy moving, relaxed two-beat gait demonstrating forward movement.
- **Extended trot:** This is a clear, but not excessive, increase in gait and length of stride. The horse goes forward freely, on a taut but light rein.
- **Line up and rein back (back up):** The horse must stand quietly in line and when asked, rein back (back up) straight and calmly, without gaping at the bit or shaking their head. Look behind you before you back up. When lining up, leave plenty of room between yourself and the exhibitor next to you. Teach your horse to stand quietly while in the line up.



Handling Misbehaviors

If someone's horse acts up, especially if it's near you or could be coming near you, use your best judgement and slow or stop your horse, standing as quietly as possible. The announcer will usually call for a stop should this happen.

If your own horse misbehaves in such a way as to make it unsafe for you and/or for others, ask the judge or ring steward to be excused from the ring. It's possible they may ask you to leave the ring even before you ask them. You may need someone to assist you in leaving the ring by taking your horse by the bridle.

Helmets, Headers, and Youth Drivers

Exhibitors of any age may wear protective headgear (certified ASTM/SEI equine helmet) in any class without penalty from the judge. While not required, it is certainly encouraged.

A header (an assistant over the age of 16 who comes in during the line up) is often required for drivers under the age of 16. Headers enter the ring when the line up is called, may assist in setting up the animal and then step back two paces where they are to remain, except in an emergency. This allows for the header to grab the horse's bridle should it become necessary.

For youth drivers, a responsible person over the age of 16 may ride in the cart with them, but it's not required. The skill and experience of the youth driver can dictate if a rider is needed.