

# A Parent's Answer Book



## **Welcome to Pony Club!**

*Inside you'll find answers to:*

- What will my child learn?
- How much does it really cost?
- How much time does it require?
- Where do I fit in?
- How is this different from other clubs for young riders?
- What is the philosophy of Pony Club?
- What if I don't know anything about horses?



## A Parent's Answer Book



*The purpose of this booklet is to familiarize parents with membership requirements, resources and Pony Club structure, along with the various activities and opportunities available to Pony Club members (which may vary by club or center). This booklet also covers ways in which parents can serve their local club. Pony Club provides both the child and the parent with the opportunity to learn together.*

**Pony Club**  
*Where it all begins*

©The United States Pony Clubs, Inc.

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## *Organizational Structure*

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (Pony Club or USPC) is a non-profit, IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Each club is autonomous, working under the Bylaws and Policies of the organization.

At the local level, the Pony Club program is produced by clubs and riding centers. Local clubs and centers fall under the jurisdiction of a region, which is managed by a Regional Supervisor (RS), often with the assistance of one or more Vice RSs, and the other Regional Officers, such as the Regional Secretary and Treasurer.

Pony Clubs consist of adult sponsors, who assist in the efficient, effective administration of the club. The sponsors of each club propose one person for appointment by the RS to serve as District Commissioner (DC) and possibly one or more persons to serve as Joint DCs. Other club officers elected by the sponsors are a secretary and treasurer.

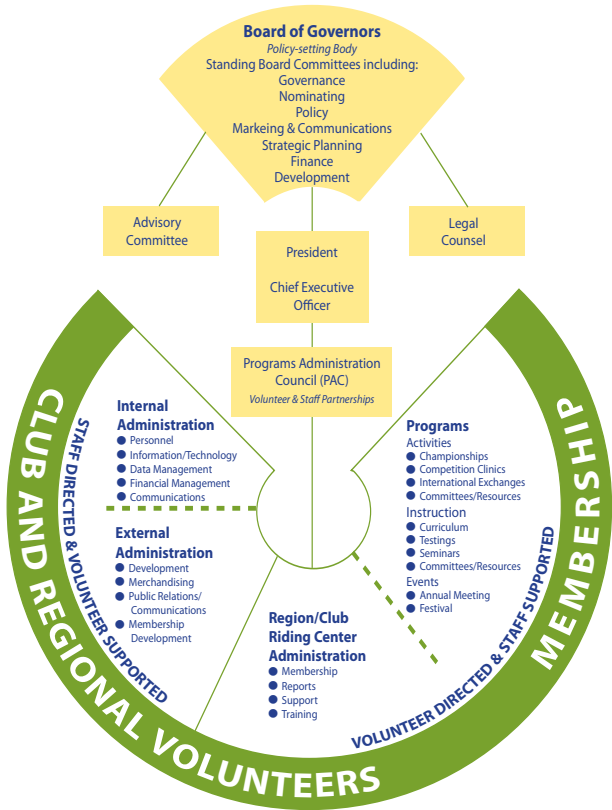
Riding Centers are facilities with which Pony Club has entered a contractual agreement to offer the Pony Club program through the administration of the facility. Facility operators appoint a Center Administrator (CA) and possibly one or more Assistant CAs. Riding Centers offer the Pony Club program as part of the business of the facility under Pony Club's bylaws and policies.

The national organization sets the directives for Pony Club. It consists of an Executive Committee, a Board of Governors, an Advisory Committee and members of the Pony Club Activities and Instruction Committees, all of whom are volunteers.

The national office staff in Lexington, Kentucky, provides the administrative support necessary to carry on Pony Club business. The staff coordinates mailings, processes requests for publication purchases, maintains mailing lists, handles membership and insurance requests, implements and plans programs, provides support for national testing, edits and produces Pony Club publications, tracks membership, coordinates the Pony Club Web site and much more.

A Parent's Answer Book

The Pony Club  
Organizational Hoofprint



## *What is the Philosophy of Pony Club?*

Pony Club is not just about English riding, horse sports and horse care, although those are important Pony Club activities.

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. – Pony Club – is also all about having fun, making friends, becoming a leader, being an important team member, learning to be more self-confident, gaining recognition for being responsible, and advancing through the testings and certification levels to demonstrate proficiency as an equestrian!

Today, 10,000 happy young riders on happy horses and ponies have great times as members of over 600 clubs and centers in 43 regions across the nation that make up Pony Club.

Youth and young adults through age 25, from beginning to advanced riders, love Pony Club because it's so much fun. Parents like Pony Club not only because it's fun for their children, but also because it's a great horsemanship and citizenship organization.

- Fair and friendly competitions develop teamwork and sportsmanship.
- Fun and friendship are part of Pony Club.
- Pony Club requires parental & volunteer involvement and support.
- Pony Club is committed to safety.
- The local program is the core of Pony Club.

## Mission Statement and Core Values

### Mission Statement

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. develops character, leadership, confidence and a sense of community in youth through a program that teaches the care of horses and ponies, riding and mounted sports.

### Core Values – HORSE

**H**orsemanship with respect to healthcare, nutrition, stable management, handling and riding a mount safely, correctly and with confidence

**O**rganized teamwork including cooperation, communication, responsibility, leadership, mentoring, teaching and fostering a supportive yet competitive environment

**R**espect for the horse and self through horsemanship; for land through land conservation; and for others through service and teamwork

**S**ervice by providing an opportunity for members, parents, and others to support the Pony Club program locally, regionally and nationally through volunteerism

**E**ducation at an individual pace to achieve personal goals and expand knowledge through teaching others

*“Let me remind you that our purpose is not to make Olympic riders, though we will take great pride in any Pony Club member who can reach that height. It is not to turn out highly polished riders mounted on expensive horses, though we all admire the picture when treated to it. It is not to turn every child into an “A” rider.*

*... It is to provide every child with a backyard horse or pony the opportunity to develop his or her skill in riding and horse care... It is to instill in them a love for horses and an ability to care for and enjoy horses for the rest of their lives and through this contribute to their development as well-rounded, self-disciplined, responsible citizens. If we have done these things, we will have done our job.”*

-Rufus Wesson, USPC President 1970-72

## *What Will My Child Learn?*

Through riding instruction...

*to ride safely, confidently and in control on the flat, over fences and in the open on confident, happy horses and ponies*

Through fun-filled activities...

*making friends and sharing a love for horses at camps, trail rides, rallies and in Quiz competitions and more*

Through teamwork...

*participating in competitive and noncompetitive activities as an important part of a team that depends upon every member*

Through important horse care...

*learning how to give horses and ponies the care, treatment and training that will make them healthy, happy friends and partners*

Through the teaching of others...

*sharing knowledge and experience gained as a Pony Club member with younger and less experienced Pony Club members*

Through exciting horse sports...

*learning about and competing in Eventing, Dressage, Mounted Games, Polocrosse, Show Jumping, Tetrathlon and other activities, depending on the local program*

And through advancement...

*gaining in self-esteem and proficiency while advancing through multiple testing and certification levels that Pony Club members may achieve*

*... our goal is that Pony Club members develop sound moral judgment, leadership skills, confidence, unselfishness, a sense of responsibility, sportsmanship, discipline – attributes for a lifetime – while becoming proficient young horsewoman and horsemen.*



## *What Does Pony Club Really Cost?*

Local clubs, centers and regions charge membership dues\* of varying amounts. In addition, there are national membership dues. Children do not have to own a pony or horse to be a member of Pony Club, but they must have access to one. The amount of access depends upon your child's goals; if your child's main objective is to learn horse management skills, he or she will not need a horse as regularly as if his/her goals include competition in the mounted disciplines. Some clubs meet in a barn where mounts are available for lease, and most centers have lesson horses available for use. Of course, the costs of owning/maintaining a horse vary greatly depending on where you live.

Compare the cost of riding lessons alone to Pony Club. Factor in what individual lessons don't offer as compared to what your child will learn in Pony Club. We believe Pony Club is a real bargain. Dues defray administration costs, such as insurance.

The national organization raises funds through adult memberships, corporate sponsorships, gifts and an annual fund campaign. These fund raising efforts help keep national dues for members as low as possible and supplement funds for instructional programs and volunteers' leadership training.

Pony Club requires that children read specific books as they progress through the testing and certification levels. Most clubs and centers have a "library" containing these books so members may check out some reading materials at no cost. However, some families prefer to purchase books through the Pony Club Bookstore.

Finally, because safety is of primary importance, Pony Club requires that an ASTM/SEI certified safety helmet be worn by every member while mounted. Other riding clothing and equipment, including boots with heels, are necessary, depending upon the different riding disciplines.

*\* Ask your club/center leader for the current amount of dues.*

## Are Other Activities Offered?

Besides the regular instruction program provided by the local club or center, there are many other activities a Pony Club member may enjoy. These are part practice, part instructional – and all fun! Each club and center is different and each has different facilities and activities.

To supplement instruction, clubs, centers and/or regions often sponsor special clinics with well-known instructors. These clinics are offered at a nominal cost, or the fees are covered by a fund-raiser.

Throughout the year, clubs have the opportunity to participate in local, regional and national rallies in Dressage, Eventing, Mounted Games, Quiz, Polocrosse, Show Jumping, and Tetrathlon. (*Quiz is an unmounted activity that gives Pony Club members the opportunity to be judged on their equine knowledge.*) Demonstrations and scheduled activities in foxhunting, polo, vaulting, distance riding and driving are available in some regions. Pony Club National Championships attracts regional teams from all over the country.

The week-long Pony Club Festival is held every three years at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky. Championships competition in all disciplines is held the first three days, followed by multiple days of clinics and workshops. Festival is open to all members of Pony Club families. Activities are planned for everyone, with parents encouraged to participate. Festival is great destination for a family vacation.

Many clubs, centers and regions offer camps, a popular activity that the members enjoy. These invariably combine instructional activities with an emphasis on fun!

Pony Club also promotes International Exchanges with Pony Clubs in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, and other countries all over the world.

## *How Much Time Does Pony Club Require?*

Each local Pony Club is run by a volunteer District Commissioner (DC) and other elected volunteer officers. Clubs involve entire families – as members and as volunteers. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend every club meeting to become involved in the administration of their children's club by becoming a Club Sponsor. Talk with your DC and refer to the Pony Club Bylaws for Registered Clubs for more detail.

Centers are administered by a facility as part of their business, but typically there are plenty of opportunities for parents to become involved by assisting with the Pony Club program.

Parents often volunteer their time to fill in gaps, such as helping to build and set up jumps at a rally, operating food concessions, etc. Yes, Pony Club involves a substantial time commitment, but spending time helping your child (and other children) learn and grow is an excellent investment in the future!

## *What About Safety?*

A concern for safety is the foundation of USPC. Pony Club was the first equine organization to require its members to wear safety helmets. Every aspect of the organization emphasizes safety. Volunteers, parents, staff – and our Pony Club youth themselves – make safety a priority.

The Pony Club Safety Committee is charged with promoting and overseeing safe practices for riding and working with horses. In addition, members of the Safety Committee educate both children and their parents in accident prevention. The Committee originated a long-term study of accidents in equestrian activities. For parents, all of this means that a group of dedicated, nationally-known safety experts approve Pony Club programs and activities before they are put into practice. Selections from several Pony Club Policies concerning safety are listed below.

## Safety Consideration for Riders

1. To participate in any Pony Club mounted activity (except vaulting, where no helmet is worn), all Pony Club members must wear an equestrian helmet, securely fastened, containing certification that it meets or exceeds the criteria established by a national or international safety body. (See *USPC Policy 0125A*).
2. Helmets for Polocrosse and Polo may have face-guards.
3. The helmet must be properly fitted.
4. Pony Club recommends the use of safety vests.
5. While riding, a conventional type of riding footwear with a heel, such as leather or rubber riding boots, jodhpur boots, or the equivalent, is required. 'Waffle' type soles are not allowed.
6. For unmounted Pony Club activities, acceptable footwear is a boot (such as paddock boots) that is securely fastened, entirely closed, covers the ankle and is thick-soled and in good condition. Canvas or cloth shoes of any kind are not allowed.



Specific activity rulebooks have dress requirements for Pony Club competitions.

## Safety Considerations for Instructors

1. Pony Club instructors must be mature and knowledgeable.
2. Pony Club instructors must have a good understanding of horse and rider psychology.
3. Pony Club instructors must have the ability to react calmly and assume responsibility in resolving any problem.
4. Pony Club instructors must endorse and reinforce USPC safety requirements.
5. Pony Club instructors must be aware of changes in rider and/or equine performance that might be reflective of changes in attitude and/or health of both horse and rider.

### **Safety Considerations for Mounts**

1. Mounts should be temperamentally suited for the level of the rider.
2. Mounts should be healthy.
3. Mounts should be well cared for.
4. Mounts should be serviceably sound.
5. Stallions and mares with a foal at their side are considered unsuitable mounts for Pony Club activities.
6. Horses and ponies must be at least five (5) years of age for Pony Club activities. (See USPC Policy 0135 for complete information.) Please note: the first year is considered to be January 1 following the date of foaling.

### **Safety Considerations for Trailering**

1. An understanding of travel safety is important for parents and children.
2. Knowledge of loading and trailering and the ability to react to unusual circumstances when away from home, are of the highest importance.

### **Safety Considerations for Pony Club Mounted Meetings**

1. Flat ground for riding
2. An enclosed area for riding
3. Good footing for riding
4. Good drainage
5. Solid jumping equipment
6. Cell phone service or access to a telephone land line
7. First aid equipment
8. Adequate off-street parking
9. Mowed open space, preferably a large, fenced area (at least several acres) desirable

Additional safety information is available in Pony Club Policies, Handbooks and Rulebooks for each discipline, through the Safety Committee and the National Office. Also, please feel free to speak with your District Commissioner, Center Administrator and/or Regional Supervisor if you have questions or need additional information.

## How Does My Child Progress?

Each child joins Pony Club as an unrated member and progresses through the testing and certification levels at his/her own pace. (See the *Pony Club Tree of Learning* on the following page.) Local-level testings (D-1 through C-2, including the new Hunter Seat Equitation testings) are awarded within the local club or center. The H-B, C-3, B, H-HM/H/H-A and A are national certifications, conducted by the National Testing Committee. The following is a brief overview of each level:

### D Level

The D Level is an introduction to the fun and challenge of riding, establishing a foundation of safety habits and knowledge of the daily care of a pony and tack. The D-1 through D-3 Pony Club member learns to ride independently, with control, maintaining a secure position at the walk, trot and canter on the flat and over low fences. All D testings are awarded at the local level.

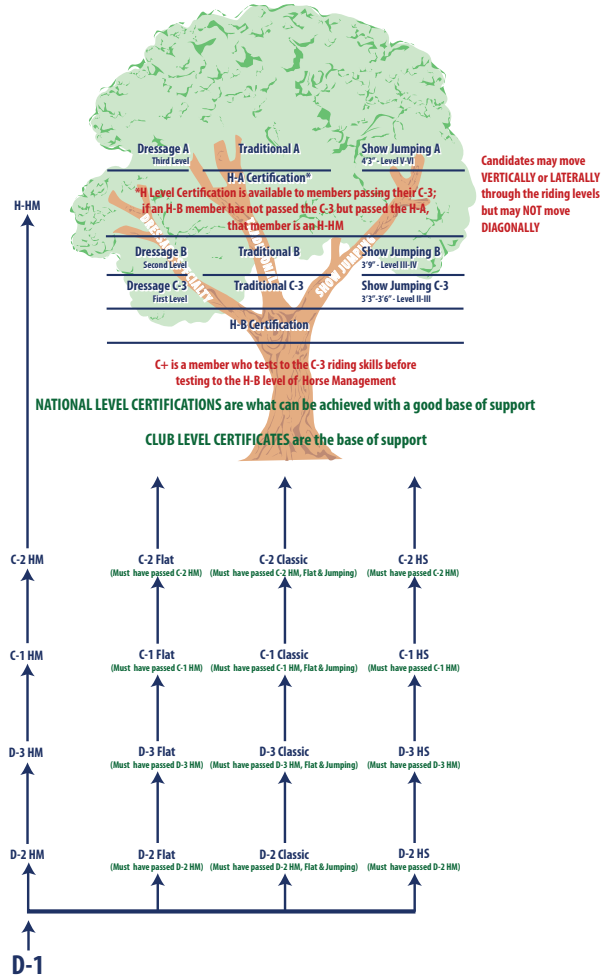
### C Level

The C Level Pony Club member is learning to become an active horseman, to care independently for horse and tack, and to understand the reasons for what he or she is doing. The C shows development towards a secure, independent seat and increasing control and confidence in all phases of riding. The C-1 and C-2 testings are awarded at the local level. The H-B and C-3 are national certifications and reflect a basis of competence in riding and horse care that will make possible a lifetime of pleasure with horses.

*D-2 through C-2 tests are divided into three sections: horse management, riding on the flat, and riding over fences. Members may progress through the levels by completing all three sections at once and obtain a classical testing level, or they may opt for the alternative testing progression and achieve testings levels within the individual sections. This allows members to progress through the testings at a pace that is suitable for them.*

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## The Pony Club Tree of Learning



### **B Certification**

The 'B' certification is for the active horseman and Pony Club member who is interested in acquiring further knowledge and proficiency in all phases of riding and horse care. The B is able to ride experienced horses with confidence and control on the flat, over fences and in the open and should be able to ride and care for another person's experienced horse, maintaining proper mental and physical condition without undoing any of the horse's education. The 'B' understands and is able to explain the reasons for what he or she is doing and contributes to the education of younger members.

### **H-HM/H/H-A Certification**

The 'H-HM/H/H-A' certification covers horse management, teaching and training. This member has the knowledge, experience and maturity to evaluate and care for a horse's needs efficiently and in a variety of circumstances and to teach riding and horse care to others.

### **A Certification**

The 'A' is able to ride horses of various schooling levels with judgment, tact and effectiveness, to train young horses and retrain spoiled horses.

*Specialty certifications in Dressage and Show Jumping are offered at the C-3, B and A level. Please refer to the Standards of Proficiency for details on the expectations for these certifications and for specific participation requirements and recommended study guides for all levels.*



## *Reading, Riding and Responsibility* from USPC Annual Report 1979

*The 'three Rs of Pony Club' were established twenty-five years ago and have been followed since: Reading, Riding and Responsibility.*

*Reading is essential to obtain the knowledge required to properly care for and teach our horses and ponies. Much of the pain inflicted upon our four-footed friends is inflicted through ignorance; it is our duty to attempt to remedy this situation through our education program. Thousands of devoted members and alumni represent proof that we are succeeding.*

*Riding safely and skillfully means that our members will have a foundation of confidence and ability so as to be able to pursue a healthful sport throughout their lives. Pony Club offers a range of activities so that nearly every member, regardless of the skill of his or her mount, will be able to participate and make a start at this foundation.*

*Responsibility is a natural result of having the complete care of a living creature and learning to care for it properly. Consequences of acts are faithfully reflected by either a nicker of recognition or by the pinning back of ears. The competitions offered develop sportsmanship and maturity. All of these characteristics, once established, carry over into other areas of life.*

- James K. Ligon, USPC President,  
1978-80, 1987-1988

### **Pony Club Web Site:**

#### **[www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org)**

The Pony Club Web site is located at [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org). The site features current events and information as well as contacts for the national office staff and national volunteers in charge of programs. The site is constantly changing, so members are encouraged to visit frequently.

Specific discipline and instruction sites may be accessed from the front page. Links to many local clubs, centers, and regions are featured, as well as links to other equestrian Web sites.

### **Pony Club and Social Media:**

Pony Club members may take part in social media including Facebook, Twitter and the Pony Club blog: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/USPonyClub>  
<http://twitter.com/USPonyClub>  
<http://blog.ponyclub.org/>

### **Pony Club Bookstore**

The Bookstore features over 300 titles of equestrian educational materials including books on horse care, training for the horse and rider in all disciplines, Pony Club rulebooks and the Pony Club Manuals of Horsemanship. Membership pins, educational DVDs, CDs, and wall charts are also available. Books and materials are reviewed by the Curriculum and Standards Committee. Orders may be placed by phone (859/422-5522) or through our Web site at [www.bookstore.ponyclub.org](http://www.bookstore.ponyclub.org).

### **Pony Club News**

Pony Club's quarterly newsmagazine, *Pony Club News*, features articles and information on Pony Club activities around the nation and the world. *Pony Club News* also contains equestrian-themed games, and puzzles, as well as stories and poems written by members. *Pony Club News* covers major national, regional and local Pony Club events, including the Annual Meeting, Championships, Festival, clinics and special activities. The magazine is published in the winter, spring, summer and fall of each year. An enhanced, active version is also available on-line.

## *Where Do I Fit In?*

Even if you're not a horseperson, you can help your local club or center. You might consider...

- Painting and setting up stadium jumps
- Providing food and beverages at meetings or competitions
- Providing transportation for field trips
- Providing pony/horse trailering to a rally
- Assisting with fund raising projects
- Publishing the Club or Center Newsletter
- Designing or maintaining the club, center or regional Web site
- Chaperoning a team
- Jump judging cross-country fences at an Eventing rally
- Building cross-country fences
- Becoming a club officer
- Speaking at an unmounted club meeting
- Becoming a local Club Sponsor\*
- Being a mentor and role model for the members
- Joining the Pony Club Horsemasters Program
- Taking part on a regional or national committee as a member and/or officer

You may wish to study riding and horse care with your child as he or she progresses through the levels of proficiency. Pony Club 'homework' assignments can become a learning activity for the entire family!

Some families plan their family vacations around Pony Club activities such as the Pony Club Festival, held every three years at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky. Annual Championships competition take place in the summer, and the USPC Annual Meeting is hosted by a different Region each year in late January/early February.

*\*Sponsors are parents and other adults who have expressed an interest in the welfare of the club. They are active in the club, attend all sponsors' meetings, cast their votes for club officers and aid the DC in planning, organizing and running club activities.*

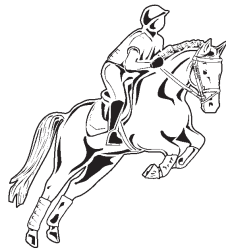
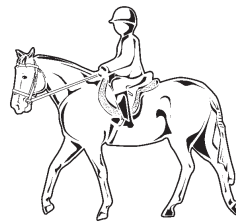
## Other Important Information

### Membership

It is the policy of Pony Club to admit as local club or center members all interested young persons who comply with the requirements for membership regardless of race, color, gender, religion, or national origin. In order to become a member of a club or center or to maintain membership status, each individual must pay annual, regional and national dues. Each club or center may set a minimum age for joining if it so desires, but no person may remain a member of a club or center after December 31 of the year of his or her 25th birthday. **Dues and fees are non-refundable.**

### Mounts

Ownership of a horse or pony is not a prerequisite for membership. Arrangements for obtaining a suitable mount is the responsibility of the parents. Stallions or mares with a foal at their side are not allowed for any Pony



Club activities. Horses and ponies must be at least five years of age for Pony Club activities (see Pony Club Policy 0135 for complete information). *Please note: The first year is considered to be Jan. 1 following date of foaling.*

## How is Pony Club Different?

Through the Pony Club formal instructional program, members have the opportunity to learn about horses and their care.

Specific riding activities include Dressage, Eventing (dressage, stadium jumping, cross-country), Mounted Games, Show Jumping, Polo, Polocrosse (combination of polo and lacrosse), and Tetrathlon (riding, running, swimming, shooting). A favorite non-riding activity is Quiz, a competition in which Pony Club members match their knowledge of all things equine.



Although Pony Club emphasizes instruction over competition, members do compete with one another at local, regional and national rallies. (The term “rally” is used because Pony Club competitions are not merely competitive; they’re educational, too.) Many Pony Club members do compete (and take supplemental riding lessons) outside Pony Club. *At Pony Club rallies, there is very little help from parents. Teammates help each other (with qualified adults nearby).*

An important part of any rally is horse care, which is judged and is highly competitive. The bottom line is this: Pony Club members learn to ride and care for their mounts safely and well; in addition, they become thinking, responsible people... and have fun.

But Pony Club is much more than just horses and riding. Members set and achieve goals and develop leadership skills. Here’s what one member has to say:

*As cliché as it sounds, it becomes clear to me as I enter my second year of college that I truly would not be who I am without Pony Club. Over the years I’ve learned irreplaceable lessons, and continue to see the positive effects of Pony Club in each new stage of my life, whether it be in the arena, the classroom, or the workplace. The skills you learn follow you out of the barn and into life—it definitely has in mine.*

Emily Mixon, H-B, Red Rock Pony Club  
Rio Grande Region

## *A Glossary of Pony Club Terms*

**Championships** – competition for riders/teams qualifying at regional and/or inter-regional rallies in any discipline

**Cross-Country (XC)** – prescribed jumping course in the open over fixed obstacles and natural terrain

**Dressage** – (means 'training') – education of the horse through prescribed movements and patterns on the flat (no jumping) from level to level

**Eventing** – activity or competition composed of Dressage, Cross-Country and Stadium Jumping

**Festival** – triennial opportunity held at the Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington, KY, which combines the annual National Championships with several days of education offerings. Fun for the entire family!

**Horse Management** – care of horse in accordance with Pony Club Standards

**Quiz** – Pony Club unmounted competition to test horse knowledge

**Mounted Games** – gymkhana event

**Mounted Meeting** – scheduled club riding activity

**National Examiner (NE)** – examiner at the certifications for H-B, C-3, B, H-HM/H/H-A and A level

**National Youth Board** – The National Youth Board (NYB) is a small group of twenty dedicated older members of the United States Pony Clubs, that functions to increase communication between the organization's government and its members. In addition, the Board provides USPC Committees with a member's insight into aspects of the organization under consideration, as well as bringing forth ideas and proposals regarding issues that the National Youth Board feels need further attention. The National Youth Board was created in 2009 by delegates from the 2008 National Youth Council.

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**National Youth Congress** – Each year, regions select a representative to participate in this national meeting of youth members. The National Youth Congress (NYC) is Pony Club's way of recognizing C-3 and up members, between the ages of 18 and 21, providing them with an extraordinary opportunity for growth and development through a national conference held during the Pony Club Annual Meeting. Youth members and alumni participate in workshops, seminars, lectures and networking.

**Polocrosse** – a combination of polo and lacrosse

**Rally** – mounted or unmounted activity/competition among Pony Club members at the local, inter-club/center, region, inter-region, or national level

**Testing/Certification** – level of proficiency, level of achievement in riding and horse care OR the test conducted at the local level (D-1 through C-2), or certification conducted at the national level (H-B, C-3, B, H-HM/H/H-A, or A)

**Show Jumping** – prescribed jumping course in an arena over obstacles that are not fixed.

**Stable Manager** – non-riding member of a rally team

**Standards of Proficiency** – written summary of the levels of achievement in riding and horse care

**Tack** – term includes saddle, bridle and other horse equipment

**Tetrathlon** – activity or competition comprised of running, riding, swimming and pistol target-shooting

**Turnout Inspection** – check of rider and mount for cleanliness and safety

**Unmounted Meeting** – scheduled Pony Club activity that focuses on Horse Management and does not include riding

