Course Designing for Outreach

Basics:

- ✓ Safety first! Ensure all of your standards, rails, and jump cups are sturdy, secure, and free from sharp objects like a splinter of wood or exposed nail.
    - o Avoid PVC poles manufactured for plumbing
    - o Always keep 2-3 extra poles near the ring in case of breakage
    - o Ideally, place gates on flat jump cups
    - o Avoid descending (downward ramps) oxers in the show ring and warmup areas
    - o Make sure elements have "give" and standards aren't tight with poles or "shoved home"
- ✓ Always use a measuring tape to ensure accurate spacing between fences.
- ✓ When breaking down a line to allow for under saddle classes, remove jump cups from the standards.
- ✓ Hunter and Equitation courses have 7-9 fences while Jumper courses have 8-12 jumping efforts. Always consider the size of the arena and level of riders when building courses used for multiple sections and rider abilities.
- ✓ Course diagrams must be posted at least one hour before the scheduled time of class.
    - o The plan or diagram of the course must show the order in which obstacles must be taken indicated by numbers, but apart from this, the rider is not bound to follow a compulsory track.
    - o An arrow is used on the diagram to indicate the direction in which each obstacle is to be taken.
    - o When distances between related fences in all classes, rated or unrated, are 100' or less, the distance must be included on the posted course diagram.
- ✓ A competitor is considered off course when he deviates from the course as shown by the diagram and jumps an obstacle prior to rectifying the deviation.
- ✓ In Equitation and Jumpers, riders may be permitted to inspect the course on foot prior to commencement of the class at management's discretion

Basics of Striding:

A typical horse stride is measured at 12ft. In theory, when measuring for a course, you would consider a 12ft stride plus 6ft for landing and 6ft for takeoff. However, this calculation is indicated for a 16h horse jumping at least 3' fences. It is important to realize that Outreach classes cater to cross rails riders through 3ft so this formula should be modified to accommodate varying horse sizes and rider abilities. Furthermore, courses set in smaller rings and indoor or covered arenas will naturally shorten a horse's stride so consider setting lines on a smaller step.

Courses set at 2'-2'6"
- Consider setting lines at 59' or 71' or 83'

Courses set at 2'9"-3'
- Consider setting lines at 60' or 72' or 84'

✓ When building a course for both horses and ponies together, it is helpful to incorporate more strides within a line as it is more forgiving.

Hunter Courses:
✓ A Hunter style course must have at least one change of direction. For seasoned riders or higher fence heights, 2 changes of direction are suggested.
✓ Obstacles should simulate those found in the hunting field such as:
   o Natural post and rail
   o Brush
   o Stone wall
   o White board fence or gate
   o Chicken coop
   o Aiken
   o Hedge
   o Oxer (not suggested for courses under 2'6")
✓ Every course should have a mix of verticals or oxers: verticals into a line and oxers out of a line or either as singles.
✓ For safety, the recommended width of the jumpable portion of all obstacles should 12 feet.
✓ All oxers should be ascending (ramped).
✓ Flower boxes, brush, and/or ground lines are required on the takeoff side.
✓ Space between elements within a jump should not to exceed 3".
✓ A pole should always be the highest element (not a box or gate).
✓ Most hunter courses consist of certain elements.
   o Outside lines: two fences that are setup running parallel to the long side of an arena, preferably at least 70ft from the end of the ring
   o Diagonal lines: two fences set in a line from corner to opposite corner of an arena. It requires a change of direction, in that the rider will come into a diagonal line on one lead, from a short end of an arena, and then exit the line on the opposite lead at the other short end.
   o Sometimes there is a single jump set up on a quarter line of a riding ring.
   o Occasionally, there can be singles on the long sides of an arena or on the diagonals too, as well as bending lines and in-and-outs, but we will still have less technical, more basic courses when you're setting up a hunter course.
   o More challenging elements may include a bending line, a fence with a long approach, or an in-and-out. It is essential to consider the level of rider as to not over face them resulting in a fall or injury.
✓ Handy Hunter Courses should be designed with options to simulate riding over open hunt country such as

- o Tight turn options
- o Options for different tracks
- o Hand gallop to an obstacle
- o Trot fence (no higher than 2'6")
- o Halt and/or back
- o Long approach fence

Equitation Courses:

✓ Equitation courses should appropriately challenge the riders' skills to answer the questions presented throughout the course.

✓ Consider your riders: In Maiden, Novice, or for Equitation classes for riders under 12 years of age, one change of direction is appropriate. For Open, Intermediate, or Riders over 12 years of age, at least two changes of directions is suggested.

✓ Combinations and oxers are discouraged for heights under 2'6".

✓ In Medal classes, riders may be asked to return for further Individual Testing which may include jumping a shortened version of the course or a test selected from the USEF Rule Book

✓ Most Equitation Courses will include at least two of the following parts to be built into an equitation course:

- o Bending line: A set of two fences that are set up so that the path between them has a bend in it. Riders can choose their track to best navigate the striding for their horse.
- o Narrow jump: 8' wide
- o Roll back turn: A roll back turn involves jumping one fence and making a tighter-than-normal turn to jump another fence. Depending on how the fences are set up, a rider can choose to take a more conservative route and go around other jumps and obstacles, or when they are more skilled, they can make a slick inside turn, showing off that they can make a short turn and approach look very natural and not rushed.
- o End fence: A fence that is set up on the short side of a ring
- o Long approach to a single: The rider will have a great distance to ride to a single fence. Many times, this will be the out of a line, where the course designer has the rider coming from the opposite end of the arena. Keeping the same pace and rhythm is key.

Jumper Courses:

✓ All obstacles are numbered numerically. Combination obstacles are those consisting of two or more jumping efforts placed less than 39.5' apart.

✓ All obstacles should be numbered and/or flagged.

- o When flags are used at obstacles, they must be placed at the outside extremities of the elements to be jumped, the red flag on the right, and white on the left.

✓ There must be at least one change of direction in every course, including jump-off courses.

- ✓ Start and Finish Lines: A start line must be established at least 3.65 m (12') from the first obstacle and a finish line at least 7.30 m (24') from the last obstacle, each indicated by two markers at least 3.65 m (12') apart.
- ✓ Square or ascending (ramped) oxers, never descending
- ✓ Ground lines or "fill" are not necessary
- ✓ Obstacles for jumping competitions may consist of some of the following fence types:
  - o Verticals
  - o Oxers
  - o Triple bars
  - o Combinations

The USHJA hopes this resource helps you better understand the basics of course design and better prepares you for hosting your very own Outreach competition. If you have questions regarding the Outreach program or hosing a competition, please contact Melanie Mader at outreach@ushja.org.