

Equestrian Games

The equestrian games challenge you and your horse with activities similar to those used to train horses and riders in the Middle Ages. Most games require a basic authorization (a test to show you can safely handle your horse and a weapon). Some games require special equipment, including safety equipment for both horse and rider, and additional authorizations based on the skills required.

Some of the games can also be done with a horse and cart, with a passenger handling the weapon. The driver must authorize (demonstrate driving ability), and some games may be modified for safety.

- **Behead the Enemy**

Six poles are set 21 to 30 feet apart, in a straight line. The end poles are 'start/finish' and 'turn around' poles. The four center poles hold 'heads' that can be knocked off with a wooden or padded sword. The object is to weave through the poles while swinging at and knocking the heads off as you pass them. At the far pole, turn around and race straight back to the start/finish line. Your score is based on time and how many heads you knock off, with a penalty for breaking gait.

- **Reeds**

Ten poles are set in two parallel rows, with a 4' lane between them. 'Reeds' (usually lengths of dowel rod) are placed atop each pole, varying in height from 10" high to 2" high. The rider rides down the lane, and attempts to knock each reed off. The poles are staggered so the rider can swing alternately left and right. Points are awarded for each reed knocked off without touching the pole, with the shorter reeds worth more points.

- **Ring Spearing**

Three T-shaped stands hold two rings on each arm. The rings vary in size from 6" diameter down to 1" diameter. With a long spear, the rider makes two passes, and tries to collect as many rings as possible. Spearing the larger rings is easier, but the smaller rings are worth more points. Point values may be multiplied if the spearing is done at a trot or canter.

- **Pig Sticking**

One or more targets (often made of foam) are placed on the ground to represent pigs. The goal is to ride past and stab one with a spear, and then hoist your 'pig' into the sky for all to see!

- **Spear Throw**

A short spear is thrown at a target. This can be done either at a standstill or in motion.

- **Quintain (Mock Jousting)**

A large stable base holds a T-shaped arm that spins when hit. One arm holds a target and the other a counterweight. The objective is to ride past and hit the target with a long, blunt lance hard enough to get the arm spinning, and get out of the way before being hit by the counterweight. Most often scored based on the number of spins of the arm.

- **Double Quintain**

A double quintain has two targets, allowing two riders to each approach their target from the opposite direction. The object is to see who hits the target (or who hits it first) with their lance. A good step in training for actual jousting (see below).

- **Birja**

A hoop is placed on a pole at a height of about 5'. The goal is to pass a stick (most often 3' long) through the hoop and catch it on the other side, without breaking gait or knocking the hoop off.

- **Tippet Tag**

Riders wear a 'tippet' on each arm above the elbow, that will come off when tugged on. Riders attempt to remove each others tippets. This can be played as a team event, or have a single winner.

- **Buzkashi**

A 'headless goat' is the center of this game. A stuffed fabric goat, traffic cone, or other such item can be used. There are two teams, and each team has a goal area. To begin, both teams race to the center of the field, and try to grab the 'goat' first. Once a team has possession, they must pass it between team members three times, and then get it to the opposite team's goal. If the goat is stolen by the other team the 'pass count' starts over.

- **Daiku**

This is a Japanese medieval team game, played with balls and long "rackets", that is similar to polocrosse. Get your team's balls into the target zone before the other team.

- **Cavalry Drills**

Riders ride in formation (shoulder to shoulder) through straight lines, turns and crossing through other lines of horses. This can be done as a demonstration, especially if Royalty is in attendance at an event. Teams of riders can also compete.

- **Quests**

Riders go through an obstacle course that may have elements such as tarps, gates, stepping over poles, etc. Most quests also involve one or more of the above games, such as Reeds, Rings, or Quintain. Quests allow the rider to demonstrate their horsemanship and riding skills, as well as 'skill at arms'.

- **Mounted Archery**

This is target archery using a recurve or longbow. Riders may shoot standing still, or in motion, as the horse moves along a special lane. In the driven version, the passenger is the archer.

- **Mounted Crest Combat**

A 6 inch crest is placed on each riders helmet. Riders attempt to knock off each others crests with padded weapons.

- **Mounted Armoured Combat**

Rider swing padded 'swords' at each other, in this mounted version of combat. The target area is from the waist up and riders are not allowed to hit the horses.

- **Light Foam Jousting**

This is an advanced activity. Parallel lanes are set up for the riders, who ride towards each other with special lances tipped with foam (such as extruded insulation foam). The object is to hit your opponent's shield or shoulder area with the foam tip. Points are awarded for breaking the foam tip on the opponent.