

Utah 4-H Horse Program



Rank Advancements

This book belongs to: _____

And my horse(s): _____

The Purpose of Rank Advancements

Due to 4-H's focus on youth development through the unique implementation and use of projects, 4-H continues to thrive as the largest out-of-school educational program in the United States. Through scientific research and study, the Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development were formed. These elements are categorized into four areas: Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery ("Big M"). These ranks are designed as a tool for volunteers and youth to set goals and progress in their chosen project areas. The required skills and experiences are benchmarks for youth participants during their 4-H experience to incorporate "Big M". Due to the progressive intensity of tasks the advancement rate is affected by age, personal development, and prior achievement. Youth should be challenged at an appropriately achievable level.

Incorporating the Rank Advancements

The rank advancements are designed to build off each other and should be completed in order.

Youth are encouraged to pass off one to two ranks per 4-H age division (junior, intermediate, and senior) and should not get discouraged if it takes several years to finish a rank. Junior and Intermediate aged 4-H youth may pass off 1 rank per year. **Senior aged 4-H youth may pass off multiple ranks per year.**

Similar skills and requirements are found at each level, however in order for a skill to be passed off, the specific event or performance CANNOT have been used in a different level. Rather, youth should be encouraged to pass off the same/similar skill in a different environment or to a different audience to truly get the most out of these rank advancements. For example, entering a portfolio in the state 4-H portfolio contest in 2020 could only count towards one rank advancement. Competing in a second state 4-H portfolio contest could then be counted towards that same requirement in the next level. **Skills and requirements for each level should be completed within 3 years of the time the youth wants to complete the level.**

Youth with multiple horse projects may choose to complete a separate rank advancement book for each horse, but it is not necessary. Rather, the book is cumulative of their entire experience regardless of which horse they used for their project.

The Utah 4-H Horse Program Rank Advancements are designed as a tool for participants to set goals and achieve mastery within their project. Designated county 4-H faculty and staff, and volunteer leaders who have completed Level 1 of the Utah 4-H Horse Volunteer Certification may proctor and sign on off these ranks. Additionally, senior aged 4-H youth who have accomplished the first four ranks, or with the guidance and assistance of a Level 1 Utah 4-H Horse Volunteer, can help all youth pass off ranks 1 – 3.

Awards and Recognition

Youth will earn a pin for each rank they pass off in a given year at the county level.

Only senior aged youth can complete rank 5 and will be recognized at the USU Horse and Livestock Symposium.

Youth with multiple horse projects that complete separate rank advancements should be recognized for each independent advancement.



Rank Advancement Level 1

This rank covers the very basics of handling a horse and being safe and successful while interacting with horses. This rank should be easily achieved by all ages, 8 - 18.

Name _____ Horse's Name _____

Club Leader _____ Phone _____

County 4-H Coordinator/Faculty _____ Phone _____

Date Completed _____

Handler/Horse Team Skills Pick 3 or more of the following	Date	Initials
Demonstrate the correct method of approaching a horse when in a stall, corral, or tied.		
Demonstrate how to properly catch a loose horse and put on a halter.		
Demonstrate proper grooming of a horse including picking hooves and maneuvering around a tied horse.		
Demonstrate a basic showmanship pattern including walking and trotting on the lead.		
Demonstrate how to bridle a horse and put on a saddle pad and saddle (with assistance if needed).		
Mastery and Education Pick 2 or more of the following	Date	Initials
Participate in an interview (from a club leader or 4-H staff) on your horse project.		
Show where the poll, throatlatch, withers, shoulder, neck, back, belly, gaskin, knee, elbow, hock, hoof, rump, girth, and point of shoulder are on a horse.		
Answer the following questions: How is a horse measured? What are three gaits of a horse? What is the difference between a bridle and halter? What are 5 standard colors of horses? Can you identify them? What are five markings on the face, and five markings on the legs?		
What are three different project areas within Utah 4-H Horse Programs? Give a brief explanation of the differences and ability to compete in multiple projects.		
Pick a horseless-horse activity and teach a demonstration to your club on participating.		
Citizenship and Personal Development Pick 1 or more of the following	Date	Initials
Submit a portfolio to county or state contest.		
Hold a leadership position in your club or at the county level.		
Participate or help plan a community service project.		
Work with a parent or club leader to set goals for your horse project and make a plan to achieve them.		

By signing this form, I am verifying that the exhibitor mentioned has completed these tasks in a satisfactory manner and is ready to move on to the next level.

4-H Member _____ Proctor Signature _____



Rank Advancement Level 2

This rank covers the basic skills and knowledge needed to be safe and successful while participating in a horse project.

Name _____ Horse's Name _____

Club Leader _____ Phone _____

County Agent _____ Phone _____

Date Completed _____

Handler/Horse Team Skills	Date	Initials
Demonstrate how to correctly halter a loose horse and tie safely with a proper knot.		
Demonstrate how to completely tack up your horse exhibiting best practices, mount, and ride two different gaits exhibiting proper horsemanship. *Reference the rulebook as needed.		
Pick 3 or more of the following		
Demonstrate how to mount your horse, walk, trot, halt, back up, and dismount.		
Demonstrate the proper method of lunging a horse at two gaits both ways, and changing direction.		
Demonstrate how to prepare your horse for a showmanship class including grooming.		
Participate at a county 4-H horse show earning a red or blue ribbon in Showmanship.		
Participate at a county 4-H horse show earning a red or blue ribbon in Horsemanship.		
Mastery and Education	Date	Initials
Pick 4 or more of the following		
Create a poster on a horse project related topic and present to your club.		
Participate at a county or state 4-H Horse Bowl Contest.		
Ask your leader to interview you on your horse project .		
Participate in one of the horse classics or a county or state 4-H contests event giving a public speech or demonstration on a horse related topic (discuss age appropriate options with leader).		
Attend a Regional or State 4-H Horse Clinic with or without your horse.		
Go to a non-4-H horse show or event and observe, taking notes to share with your club.		
Name and locate 30 different points of the horse.		
Name and locate the external parts of the hoof and explain how to avoid two or more common ailments.		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Mastery option.		
Citizenship and Personal Development	Date	Initials
Pick 2 or more of the following		
Submit a portfolio to county or state contest.		
Hold a leadership position in your club or at the county level.		
Participate or help plan a community service project.		
Work with a parent or club leader to set goals for your horse project and make a plan to achieve them.		

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4-H Member _____ Club Leader/4-H Staff Signature _____

Rank Advancement Level 3

This rank is for handlers that have owned or leased a horse for three or more years. Youth that are junior and intermediate 4-Hers should be able to obtain this rank. Level 2 must be completed to achieve a Level 3 Rank.

Name _____ Horse's Name _____

Club Leader _____ Phone _____

County Agent _____ Phone _____

Date Completed _____

Handler/Horse Team Skills	Date	Initials
Pick 7 or more of the following. Repeated skills from Level 1 or 2 MUST be re-done in the current year.		
Compete at the State 4-H Western, Working Ranch, or English Horse Show.		
Demonstrate how to mount your horse, walk, trot, halt, back up, and dismount.		
Demonstrate the proper method of lunging a horse both ways and changing directions, at all three gaits, and over ground poles.		
Earn a blue ribbon at a county, region, or state 4-H show in at least 2 different judged events (can be at different shows, but must be different events).		
Demonstrate a proper, simple lead change in both directions.		
Demonstrate smooth downward transitions lope to jog, jog to walk, and lope to walk, jog to halt.		
Participate in one or more events or clinics for a project that you have not previously participated in such as a working ranch horse gathering, English, Mustang Challenge, etc.		
Teach your horse a trick. (Discuss age appropriate options with leader)		
Go for a trail ride.		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Handler/Horse Team goal.		
Mastery & Education	Date	Initials
Pick 5 or more of the following. A limit of 3 options can be the same (but completed again) from previous years.		
Attend a regional or state 4-H horse clinic with or without your horse.		
Design a pattern for two or more different events and have your club members perform them for practice.		
Go to a non-4-H horse show or event and observe, taking notes to share with your club.		
Participate in any of the Utah 4-H Horse Classic Events (Triple Crown) in 3 or more different contests (i.e. horse judging, horse bowl, and horse demos).		
Get a blue ribbon or equivalent on a regional or state 4-H horse written test.		
Participate in a county, regional, or state 4-H Horse Quiz Bowl Contest		
Write a paper with at least 500 words on a horse husbandry and health		
Participate in County or State 4-H contests giving a public speech or demonstration on a Horse topic (discuss age appropriate options with leader)		
Name and locate 30 different points on the horse and define at least 6 blemishes and unsoundness seen in horses.		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Mastery option.		



Citizenship and Personal Development	Date	Initials
Pick 3 or more of the following		
Submit a portfolio to county or state contest achieving a blue ribbon or equivalent score.		
Hold a club or county leadership position.		
Participate in a county wide community service project.		
Organize a community service project for your club.		
Help organize a horseless activity for new 4-H members, friends, or neighbors.		
Work with a parent or club leader to set goals for your horse project and make a plan to achieve them.		

By signing this form, I am verifying that the exhibitor mentioned has completed these tasks in a satisfactory manner and is ready to move on to the next level.

4-H Member _____ Club Leader/4-H Staff Signature _____

Rank Advancement Level 4

This rank is for 4-H youth that have been showing and raising horses for several years and have developed excellent skills and knowledge about their horse project. Level 4 is a good goal for senior aged exhibitors to strive for. The requirements for this level do not need to be completed within the same year (unless they are repeats from previous years), but have to be completed within at least 3 years of the time the youth is seeking to obtain this level

Level 3 must be completed to achieve a Level 4 Rank

Name _____ Horse's Name _____

Club Leader _____ Phone _____

County Agent _____ Phone _____

Date Completed _____

Handler/Horse Team Skills	Date	Initials
Pick 12 or more of the following. Repeated skills from Level 4 MUST be re-done in the current year.		
Participate in one or more events that you have not previously participated in such as a Working Ranch Horse Gathering, English horse show, or Mustang Challenge.		
Compete in the Utah 4-H State Two-Handed or In-Hand Show earning 1 or more blue ribbons.		
Compete in the Utah 4-H State Western Individual Show earning 1 or more blue ribbons in the judged events, and at least 1 blue ribbon in the speed events.		
Compete in the Utah 4-H Hunter Show earning 1 or more blue ribbons		
Compete in the Utah 4-H Working Ranch Horse Gathering earning 1 or more blue ribbons or equivalent score.		
Perform a showmanship or trail pattern at liberty with your horse without luring with food.		
Teach your horse a trick (different from tricks used in previous levels).		
Care for, keep records on, and personally train a horse for at least nine months.		
Complete a breeding project demonstrating an understanding or responsible and ethical horse breeding. Breeding projects include sire selection, breeding, foaling, and weaning.		
Demonstrate safe and proper hobbling and highline tying, as you would use on when hunting or trail riding.		
Demonstrate how to properly tack up and drive your horse or pony either on the ground or in a cart/wagon.		
Demonstrate how to properly load and balance a pack on a mule or horse.		
Teach your horse a skill that would be useful for someone with disabilities and demonstrate to your club, or create a social media post.		
Demonstrate a proper dally		
On horseback, pick up a bucket or jacket from one location and move it to another.		
Open a permanent gate, go through, and close it behind you.		
Teach your horse a new skill on the ground (teach to bend, yield to pressure, etc.)		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Handler/Horse Team goal.		

Mastery and Education	Date	Initials
Pick 15 or more of the following.		
Write a news story or article to be published in the local newspaper or newsletter.		
Write a literature review of a controversial topic using scholarly sources		
Create and write a blog with a minimum of 15 posts related to animal husbandry and horse ownership, equine careers, or other horse related topics.		
Help organize a county or state horse classics contest.		
Run a summer project club related to the horse project (minimum of 6 hours).		
Create a lesson plan and teach your club on one of the following topics: health, first aid, nutrition, show-day grooming, or a horse project related event.		
Help plan a countywide or regional horse clinic and teach at least one class on grooming, training, or an event specific clinic.		
Get a blue ribbon or equivalent on a state level 4-H horse written test.		
Attend a clinic or workshop on proper saddle fitting and teach what you have learned including at least 5 different types of saddles and blankets and their uses.		
Demonstrate how to properly clean and condition your tack.		
Participate at in the state Horse Bowl Contest winning a blue ribbon OR winning first or second as a team.		
Participate at State 4-H contests giving a public speech or demonstration on a horse related topic (discuss age appropriate options with leader).		
Volunteer or work at an equine hospital/veterinarian clinic for 20 or more hours.		
Volunteer, shadow, or intern for an equine farrier, acupuncturist, or massage therapist for 20 or more hours.		
Explore a horse related career and set up a job shadow. Report on your experience in a presentation, blog post, or article to share with your club.		
Know and be able to demonstrate a complete veterinarian general wellness exam including soundness.		
Be able to groom your horse head to toe as close to industry standard for a judged event as possible.		
Attend classes and receive a certificate for some equine trade (farrier, dentistry, chiropractic's, AI, etc.).		
Work with your veterinarian to give your horse their vaccinations.		
Create a complete first aid kit for both your barn and your horse trailer. *reference Horse Program Study Material Volume 1		
Get your horse's hay and feed tested and make adjustments as necessary to provide proper nutrition.		
Research proper pasture management and evaluate your pasture, and make a plan to improve if needed.		
Research waste management and its relation to water quality, and evaluate your facilities for best practices. Make a plan to improve if needed.		
Participate in the Utah State Fair with an indoor exhibit related to horses.		
Create a small business related to horses keeping accurate records for 6 months.		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Mastery option. *2 goals may be created and used as 2 separate requirements. List them both at the end of this rank.		

Citizenship and Personal Development	Date	Initials
Pick 5 or more of the following.		
Submit a portfolio to the state contest achieving a blue ribbon score		
Hold a county or state leadership position		
Help organize a state wide community service project		
Recruit and enroll one or more new members to your 4-H club.		
Volunteer and assist in putting on a county, regional, or state Horse Show.		
Contribute to your club, county, or state program by taking photos, posting to social media accounts, or other forms of publicity		
Organize and lead a horse project club as the main volunteer leader focusing on youth leadership and service		

By signing this form, I am verifying that the exhibitor mentioned has completed these tasks in a satisfactory manner and is ready to move on to the next level.

4-H Member _____ Club Leader/4-H Staff Signature _____

Rank Advancement Level 5

This rank is for 4-H youth that have truly excelled in their horse project. Youth that complete Level 5 are prepared to move from the 4-H program into the world of adulthood. These individuals have developed skills pertinent to various careers within the horse industry and are prepared to give back to the community. Level 5 is the highest level and is the hardest to obtain.

The requirements for this level do not need to be completed within in the same year (unless they are repeats from previous years), but have to be within at least 3 years of the time the youth is seeking to obtain this level

Level 4 must be completed to achieve a Level 5 Rank

Name _____ Horse's Name _____

Club Leader _____ Phone _____

County Agent _____ Phone _____

Date Completed _____

Handler/Horse Team Skills	Date	Initials
Pick 12 or more of the following. Repeated skills from Level 3 MUST be re-done in the current year.		
Demonstrate how to safely load and unload a horse in a trailer, including a straight load and slant load.		
Compete in the Utah 4-H State Two-Handed or In-Hand Show earning 1 or more blue ribbons.		
Compete in the Utah 4-H State Western Individual Show earning 1 or more blue ribbons in the judged events, and at least 1 blue ribbon in the speed events.		
Compete in the Utah 4-H Hunter Show earning 1 or more blue ribbons		
Earn a blue ribbon at a State 4-H Horse Show, or at a breed show with 5 or more exhibitors, in Showmanship at Halter.		
Earn a blue ribbon at a State 4-H Horse Show, or at a breed show with 5 or more exhibitors, in Western Horsemanship, equitation, ranch riding, or western trail.		
Earn a blue ribbon at a State 4-H Horse Show, or at a breed show with 5 or more exhibitors, in a speed event.		
Demonstrate how to perform a western sliding stop or an English square stop from the lope or canter.		
Demonstrate a correct western spin, pivot, or English pirouette.		
Demonstrate the ability to trot and canter over ground poles while maintaining an even cadence, with two different stride lengths.		
Demonstrate proper flat and over fences position at all three gaits.		
Complete one of the Dressage tests posted on the Utah 4-H website receiving a 55% or better at a 4-H or open show.		
Demonstrate your ability to control your horse by executing a large fast circle and then transitioning into a smaller, slower circle. Present both directions.		
Demonstrate lengthening of stride on the rail, transition to a canter or lope, a hand gallop, and back to a canter or lope in both directions.		
Using an overhand loop or calf loop, rope and catch a simulated calf three times in a row at a distance of 12 feet (on horseback).		



With proper equipment, catch and tie two calves scoring 70% or above out of 100 points at a 4-H or open ranch gathering.		
Compete in the Senior aged division, placing in the top 3 as an Overall Exhibitor at a State 4-H Horse Show or in the top 3 as an overall exhibitor for a year-end ranking at a county level, with 30 or more exhibitors.		
Compete in an open or breed specific show placing in the top 3 of at least 10 exhibitors or receiving a title, in any event.		
Demonstrate three or more basic first aid skills.		
Organize and go for a trail ride with friends, family, or your club.		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Handler/Horse Team goal. *3 goals may be created and used as 3 separate requirements. List them at the end of this rank.		
Mastery and Education	Date	Initials
Pick 15 or more of the following.		
Write a news story or article about your 4-H horse project to be published in the local newspaper or a newsletter.		
Write a literature review of a controversial topic using scholarly sources		
Create and write a blog with a minimum of 20 posts related to animal husbandry and horse ownership. If a blog was created in Level 4, write an additional 10 posts for a total of 30 posts.		
Create responsibly sourced content to educate about the horse industry on social media. Share with your county Extension office and horse councils to post.		
Help organize a county level horse contest such as horse judging or horse bowl.		
Run a project club related to the horse project (minimum of 6 hours).		
Create a lesson plan and teach your club on one of the following horse topics: health, first aid, nutrition, grooming, or one of the horse classic events.		
Help plan a county wide or regional horse clinic and teach at least one class on grooming, training, or an event specific topic.		
Get a blue ribbon or equivalent on a state level 4-H horse written test.		
Design a pattern for a horse show and submit to your county horse program.		
Participate in three or more of the Triple Crown Horse Classic events as an individual or on a team.		
Participate at a state level 4-H event outside of the horse project area with a horse related project (sewing, world of work, etc.).		
Volunteer or work at an equine hospital/veterinarian clinic for 40 or more hours (20 additional hours from level 4).		
Volunteer, shadow, or intern for an equine farrier, acupuncturist, or massage therapist for 40 or more hours (20 additional hours from level 4).		
Work with a trainer to halter break a foal (or mustang yearling) and compete in an open or 4-H show.		
Work with a farrier to learn to trim your horse's feet. Be able to demonstrate the process without help.		
Know and be able to demonstrate a complete veterinarian exam using information found in the AYHC Horse Smarts Books.		
Become a volunteer and registered therapy team through Pet Partners (youth 16 years or age and older).		
Work with your club leader or county staff to come up with your own Mastery option.		

Citizenship and Personal Development	Date	Initials
Pick 4 or more of the following.		
Submit a portfolio to the state contest achieving a blue ribbon or equivalent score		
Hold a county or state leadership position.		
Help organize a state wide community service project.		
Help organize a horse show or exhibition at the county level.		
Contribute to your club, county, or state program by taking photos, posting to social media accounts, or other forms of publicity.		
Hold a leadership position in an equestrian organization outside of 4-H.		
Visit clubs in your county or surrounding counties and teach a workshop on leadership, sportsmanship, or service learning.		
Work with a parent or club leader to set goals for your horse project and make a plan to achieve them.		

By signing this form, I am verifying that the exhibitor mentioned has completed these tasks in a satisfactory manner and is ready to move on to the next level.

4-H Member _____ Club Leader/4-H Staff Signature _____

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