

Some things to remember...

During the performance, you'll find that horses often like to hang out by the in gate. Too much of this will count against the horse's overall score. Usually, the assistant is stationed near the in gate to prevent the horse from stopping there or to help them move away with a shake of the whip. Another issue is when the horse stops to sniff at manure left by another horse in the ring. A brisk shake of the whip in that direction is usually enough to get them moving again.

Don't overdo it!

During some performances, you'll see some exhibitors and assistants – and horses! – running around the ring like crazy. There is no need to chase the horse during the liberty time. Let them settle into a nice, ground sweeping trot when you can. Use your whip to help them change direction, not to make them gallop – they'll decide to gallop on their own without your help. Be subtle in your movements when you can by simply pointing the whip, using your body language, etc.

Disqualification

The following are grounds for disqualification:

- The horse cannot be touched by the whip or the exhibitor or assistant during the liberty time.
- The assistant cannot touch the horse at any time during liberty or the 2-minute catch.
- A fall of horse during liberty or catch time will disqualify the entry.
- If the horse leaves the ring during liberty or catch time, the entry is disqualified.
- "Baiting" – the use of grain, treats, hay, clickers, etc. – cannot be used at any time.
- If the horse is not caught and haltered by the exhibitor within the 2-minute catch time, the announcer will call "Time" to signal the end of the catch time. At that point, the assistant may help, since the horse is already disqualified.

Practise!

Be sure to have a reasonably sized space that is enclosed and where the horse can't escape. Take off your horse's lead rope (leave the halter on for now), let him loose and after a minute or two, call him over to you. When he lets you catch him, scratch him where he likes it and make a fuss over him. Eventually work up to where you remove the halter and put it back on at the catch. To rate his speed and direction, use your whip and body language to signal a change, and again make a positive fuss when he gets it right.

