



Bronze, Silver and Gold Proficiency Tests

A Guide to Delivering and Assessing



Why offer the RDA Proficiency tests in your Group?

The RDA Proficiency tests form a key part of the wider RDA Education ‘**Learning through Horses, Learning for Life**’ programme, offering a valuable opportunity to recognise and reward achievement, at all levels of ability.

The RDA Proficiency test programme has been carefully designed to be as accessible as possible, encouraging participants on each step of the way. The bronze, silver and gold gradually increase in scope, allowing participants to develop their interests and skills. It offers flexible assessment methods to suit everyone, whether producing a portfolio, doing a face-to-face assessment, or a mixture of both.

Offering RDA Proficiency tests in your group can be a real motivator for all involved—not only for those working towards and actually taking the tests, but also for volunteers and staff taking part in the sessions. Setting goals with riders can form the basis for lesson plans, whether over a half term, a year or beyond, and can really help to engage and focus participants on their activities each week. Syllabus booklets can also be taken home, or back to care or education centres, so that participants can share their knowledge and experiences with family, teachers, friends, and carers (who can also help them to practice!)

Did you know...?

All resources, including certificates and pin badges are available completely **FREE OF CHARGE** to all RDA Groups!



Bronze, Silver and Gold participants can gather evidence in a portfolio, rather than sitting an assessment.

Portfolios can include posters, models, diagrams, photographs, videos—be as creative as you like!

Who can test the candidates?

Role	Bronze	Silver	Gold*	RDA Assessor training	Requires RDA person to accompany
RDA Coach Certificate from another RDA Group	✓			✓	
RDA Advanced Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓	
BHS Complete Coach Stage 3	✓	✓		✓	✓
BHS Stage 4 Coach or above	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pony Club Assessor C test	✓			✓	✓
Pony Club Assessor B test or above	✓	✓		✓	✓
PCCC Level 2	✓			✓	✓
PCCC Level 3 or above	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RDA Coach with additional external qualifications as above	✓	✓		✓	

*Gold Assessments will be arranged nationally, and assessors appointed by National Office.

These can be assessed in participants' own group. The assessor should not be their own coach, although their own coach can obviously be present. Silver and Gold would ideally involve a rider going to another venue as it can be a confidence boost for the candidates to really show off what they can achieve and that this is a challenge stretches them. However, this award aims to be more accessible, so not being able to go to another venue should not prevent riders coming forward for assessment.

ALL assessors should prepare before taking on the role, either through face-to-face or zoom training and being aware of the guidelines in this booklet.

Before using assessors, who do not have an RDA qualification, they must have attended training and have an RDA representative with them such as an RDA Coach Developer, County/Regional Coach. This is to ensure standards around inclusive language and feedback is appropriate to candidates for those experienced equestrians who may not have a wider understanding of RDA. A full brief should be given regarding communication preferences etc to all assessors. An RDA Coach who has additional BHS qualifications such as BHS Stage 4 could assess at Silver.






How do candidates achieve their Bronze, Silver and Gold Horse Care awards?

Candidates must complete the four compulsory modules (A, B, C and D) for the award they would like to achieve.

Candidates do not need to start with bronze if they can evidence silver or gold criteria at the same time. If a candidate chooses to begin with bronze they can add evidence to a portfolio, or be assessed in person, in order to attain silver or gold at a later time.

Evidence can include a project, booklet, poster, video or face to face assessment.

Candidates must also choose the following number of modules dependent on the award they are working towards:

-  Bronze: Compulsory modules plus one other module up to bronze level
-  Silver: Compulsory modules plus two other modules up to silver level
-  Gold: Compulsory modules plus three other modules up to gold level



Bronze, Silver & Gold Proficiency Tests

Horse Care

RDA 



Module C

RDA 

Module C: Feeding	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Know the rules of feeding and watering a horse	✓	✓	✓
Discuss the importance of fibre in a horse's diet	✓	✓	✓
Explain how and when you would feed hay or haylage	✓	✓	✓
Recognise different feed types for a horse (chaff, pony nuts, coarse mix, sugar beet, whole oats, crushed oats)	✓	✓	✓
Demonstrate or explain how to fill and tie up a hay net correctly and why	✓	✓	✓
Know how to prepare sugar beet for feeding		✓	✓
Explain why the rules of feeding and watering are important		✓	✓
Know which feeds to use to put on condition, give energy, reduce weight, add fibre		✓	✓
Recognise good and poor quality hay			✓



Module titles:

Module A: Describing a horse	Module B: Grooming and Presentation
Module C: Feeding	Module D: Daily care of the Horse
Module E: Horse Clothing	Module F: Tack
Module G: Horse Handling	Module H: The Healthy Horse
Module I: Farrier	



How do candidates achieve their Riding award?

RDA Riding Proficiency Tests have been designed to provide a progressive learning platform for riders. They can help coaches to focus on the rider's goal and offer a tangible reward at the end of each stage. The current Bronze, Silver and Gold tests have been created with National Championship and Regional Qualifier level riders in mind so that the assessor can get to know a little more about the rider's involvement in preparations leading up to a competition.

Bronze has an emphasis on the accuracy of transitions and effect of the rider's aids on the horse.

Entry requirement is to either ride at regionals in dressage or independent countryside challenge or to enter an online competition (intro to dressage) and score a minimum of 60%.

At **Silver**, the rider is expected to have been successful at a qualifier and demonstrate more independence warming an equine up for competition.

Entry requirement is to qualify for the National Championships in dressage or independent Countryside Challenge or to enter an online competition (grade 1-5 test in dressage) and score a minimum of 65%.

For Bronze and Silver, a local assessment should be arranged. We would love to hear about your candidates who have passed these awards and are happy to help.

A **Gold** stage applicant will have experienced the buzz of a National Championship or will have gained a score over 70% in an online grade test in dressage. During the assessment, the rider should be able to demonstrate their involvement with schooling the equine with an understanding of the all-important scales of training.

Entry requirement is to score over 65% in a class at the National Championships (dressage or independent Countryside Challenge) or to enter an online competition (grade test in dressage) and score over 70%. Ideally the participant should demonstrate the criteria on two different equines. Exemptions will be made if that is not appropriate due to the rider's disability (including fatigue) or the lack of two suitable equines at the time of assessment. This should ideally be held at an external venue to demonstrate the candidate's ability to cope with the unfamiliar atmosphere.

The test sheet will be required at time of application. If this is not available, a recent short video will be requested when the candidate applies to ensure they have reached the level for assessment. **Application is directly to National office.**

Gold is our very highest award, and to recognise this achievement we will look to have the award presented at a suitable national occasion.

We hope that, with the support of their coach, any participant could aim to work towards a stage appropriate for them. All stages can be completed in walk if necessary.









Information for Coaches

Face to face assessment guidelines

Make sure you think about when in the year you plan to enter your candidates for their assessment, and prepare them in plenty of time, to ensure that they are happy and confident by the date of the test. It's important to ensure that you are working to current versions of the syllabus. Booklets are available free of charge, directly from RDA National Office.

Complete the RDA Proficiency Test registration form

This helps the assessor to have all the relevant information about candidates.

-  Full names (any names or nicknames/names known by)
-  Age
-  How long they have been attending RDA sessions
-  Impact of Disability (e.g. weakness in legs means giving aids is hard work)
-  Whether they are to be tested on Riding, Horse Care or both, and at which grade
-  How they communicate best

Things to consider:

Equipment

Discuss with the assessor beforehand what equipment should be available and who is going to provide it to prevent any misunderstanding on the day. Where you are asked to provide equipment for the test (such as bridles, grooming kit etc. for Horse Care) make sure that it is clean, appropriate, in good working order and meets current RDA standards for health and safety.

Horses and ponies

Be sure that any equines to be used in the tests are capable of performing all movements needed, that they are fit and are well-presented for the test and have been suitably tacked up and warmed up for the session.

Helpers

Make sure that any session helpers have been well-prepared and trained in advance. Working with the candidates, they should aim to encourage them to be able to answer questions independently, perform movements on their own and to feel confident in demonstrating their skills.

Putting candidates at ease

On the day of the test itself, take time to introduce the assessor to the candidates (if they've not met them previously). Reassure them and give them time to relax, adjust and prepare themselves. Above all, it should be an enjoyable, positive, and rewarding experience for everyone involved! Ensure that all candidates are smartly and comfortably dressed for the test.






Information for Assessors

Marking sheets and test paperwork

Use the marking sheets provided in this pack and take time to familiarise yourself with the syllabus and standards expected at each grade.

Before the assessment, make sure you have the following information to hand, which should be passed on to you in advance by the group:

-  The assessment date, time and venue
-  Details of the candidates' known names, ages, disabilities, how long they have been attending RDA sessions, how they communicate, or other issues that may need to be taken into consideration when assessing them
-  The grade to be tested on the day, and which sections the candidates will be assessed on

The assessment is much more involved from Bronze upwards, so you will have to plan carefully how much you can fit in without candidates feeling overwhelmed or tired. Candidates may choose a mixture of face-to-face and portfolio assessment.

Where possible, try to have assessed the portfolio sections before the practical, so if you have any questions about the work submitted, you can ask on the day. This also means candidates will know on the day if they have successfully completed the award.

Take time to introduce yourself, and get to know your test candidates

Arrive in plenty of time on the day and take time to meet and introduce yourself to the candidates, in a relaxed and friendly way, before the test starts. Use this time to make a quick assessment of them and make a note of any possible limiting factors that you will need to be sensitive to, when working with them during the tests.

It is recommended that you keep to the number of riders registered for the tests (don't allow late additions to the list, as it could mean that the candidates aren't as well-prepared and this could prove difficult or uncomfortable for them, as well as the others taking their tests).

Equipment

Check that any equipment or supporting resources are available to hand before you start the tests.



Consider different ways of approaching the questions

Don't be afraid to use your imagination and creativity in your communication with the candidates, offering different options for giving answers, depending on their individual needs. For example, choices and alternatives as prompts, physical demonstrations or asking them to point to pictures of tasks being done correctly are ways in which you can help the candidates feel comfortable in conveying their answers. There is no right or wrong way and it may mean posing questions in different ways, approaching the questions from different angles, before they feel confident in giving you their response. Using an interpreter or familiar person to relay the questions can really help in certain circumstances, as the candidates may respond more confidently to them. Allow plenty of time for participants to answer before deciding to rephrase a question as some may need a significant amount of thinking time and rephrasing the question can be confusing.

For some participants, it may mean that the coach is best placed to ask the questions and you can observe from a distance. Use the participant's normal way of communicating. They should be reassured that at any time they can ask for the question to be repeated.

Reasonable Adjustments

Candidates may not be able to demonstrate some elements due to their disability. You can do an alternative task or think of a way to assess it differently.

E.g. A candidate struggles with adjusting stirrups

Silver Riding *Demonstrate or explain how to check girth/adjust stirrups (if used) when mounted*

The participant could demonstrate from the ground with a saddle on a saddle horse or mechanical horse if safer/more convenient for them. This could be because they use a wheelchair, or a walking aid and it would not be safe around the horse. They may not be able to reach down to the girth safely but can show from the ground what needs to be done.

Alternatively, they can talk another rider through the task, or watch a rider do it and comment if there was something that they might like to be done differently to make it safer (e.g. if the rider forgets to keep their foot in their stirrup whilst adjusting the stirrup leathers).

Essence of the test – the tests are designed to let riders show off increasing control over the horse's rhythm and direction. If a rider does not trot or canter, they can still go all the way up to Gold level.



Medical considerations

- 🧑 Take time to discuss the candidates' specific medical conditions with the coach/ therapist/carer/ teacher well before the assessment where possible.
- 🧑 You will be testing the candidates' ability, so make sure you bear in mind the effort they have made in responding to the questions or when doing physical demonstrations.
- 🧑 Look at the ways in which candidates manage their own disability and any limitations they may face. Bear this in mind when marking.
- 🧑 Be aware that mental tension can cause confusion and increase muscle tone, which can intensify the effects of a disability. Candidates should be able to relax and enjoy themselves, so do what you can to put them at ease and lighten the atmosphere to make it a pleasurable experience and give them the chance to be the best they can be on the day. They will have worked hard towards the tests and it's their opportunity to shine and really show off what they *can* do.

Candidates with learning difficulties

- 🧑 Think of creative and imaginative ways to present the tests to the candidates.
- 🧑 Be patient! Make sure that the candidates understand each question. Allowing time for them to respond, and be prepared to re-phrase, repeat, break down the questions or look at different approaches to appeal to them, as necessary.
- 🧑 It's fine to ask an interpreter or simply someone who is familiar to the candidate, to pose questions on your behalf, when prompted by you. Sometimes simple shyness or unfamiliarity can affect confidence and put them at a disadvantage.
- 🧑 Bear in mind, though, that some candidates may respond more positively to new faces, as it gives them the change to really show off what they know and impress someone new!



Great Ideas for training sessions





- 🧑 Make shoe box stable models to demonstrate mucking out
- 🧑 Use magazines to cut out pictures to make posters
- 🧑 Relate daily care of horse to personal hygiene
- 🧑 Start with extremes for the basics E.g. Recognise different foods – start with forage vs. coarse mix, then can get more nuanced when thinking about needs of different types of horses
- 🧑 Notice there is a spectrum from **Know** the rules, **Recognise** the different feeds, to **explain** why the rules of feeding are important, know which foods put on condition, add fibre etc.
- 🧑 You can use extremes of types of horses and their needs such as a Shetland pony and a racehorse




Challenges – and ways to overcome them

Challenges which have come up in training sessions and ideas for solutions from coaches:


Challenge - Participant gets nervous around new people and ‘freezes’

-  Things to try- Coach asking the questions, assessor in the background
-  Practise showing off to others from the group but less familiar e.g. volunteer from a different sessions
-  Have a mock assessment
-  Riders test each other, treat it as a chance to show off



Challenge – Finding Assessors as your group doesn’t have any Advanced coaches nearby

-  Things to try – Ask a local BHS or Pony Club qualified coach to come on a training course with you (you may even recruit a potential new coach!)

Challenge - Assessment can be quite tiring

-  Things to try – do some sections using the portfolio option and some face to face




Challenge – We don’t have access to the stable yard for participants

-  Things to try – ask another local group if you can visit and do some training and gather evidence for your portfolio by taking pictures/videos etc
-  Videos can be included in the portfolio by uploading as an unlisted video to You Tube, then including a QR code in the folder.

Challenge - Volume of horse care to assess face to face

-  Things to try - Set up stations round the yard or arena and move round each one.

Resources to help

-  Pony Club resources e.g. The Manual of Horsemanship
-  The British Horse Society Bookshop -e.g. The BHS Stage 1 Workbook
-  Both The Pony Club and the BHS have You tube channels with some useful videos:
The Pony club has ones on: adjusting stirrups whilst mounted, how to turn out, applying a tail bandage
The BHS has ones on: How to put on a rug, how to clean a bridle













ASDAN links

Participants can take part in ASDAN at the same time as preparing for Bronze, Silver and Gold and can use evidence for both qualifications. Simply put a copy of the evidence in both portfolios.



Portfolio

A portfolio is just a folder which gathers together the evidence that the candidate has learned about the topics. It should demonstrate that the participant has taken part in the activities themselves.

-  Photos of the candidate actively doing the task, preferably with a description written by the candidate or scribed by the Coach or Activity leader
-  Videos of the candidate doing the task, or describing how to
-  Videos or photos of the candidate teaching others the topic for example how to tie up a hay net
-  A poster describing the topic e.g. the rules of feeding
-  Evidence of internet research e.g. what terms they used to search, some brief examples of what they found and what they learnt from the information - not just pages and pages printed off
-  Evidence of books or magazines used
-  A model e.g. of an ideal field, or the parts of the hoof made from plasticine
-  A PowerPoint presentation or a simple webpage
-  Copies of social media posts which show the participant completing the task
-  Witness statements from experts who have been observed or consulted e.g. the participant watches the farrier at work, asking and answering some questions. The farrier then writes a brief statement saying that the candidate observed them at work, was able to describe a well-shod horse and recognise the tools.
-  Evidence the candidate has completed a game or quiz, either on person or online which tests certain area
-  The candidate could create a game, quiz, worksheet or some revision notes for others on a certain area

This is not an exhaustive list, the portfolio does not need to contain all these types of evidence, nor should something be excluded because it is not on the list. Be creative!

Evidence needs to show how the participant was involved. For example, a series of photos showing them mucking out, from gathering tools to putting them away, rather than just a picture of a neatly finished bed. For any item which can't be physically included in the portfolio, such as a model, just include some photos of the finished article.

Witness statements

Please explain to anyone from whom you request a statement that this is going towards an RDA portfolio and only forms part of the evidence picture about a candidate, so they don't need to feel under pressure. It can be as simple as a handwritten sentence or two or a longer report.



Process for assessment

Ensure you have the correct certificates and badges ready in time for presentation. These are available free from National Office.

Bronze and Silver Horse Care

When the portfolio is ready for assessment, contact your Regional Coach to help find an assessor for Bronze and Silver to arrange postage or collection. If you are posting, it would be advisable to take a copy of each page before sending in case of difficulties with postal services. You could also just send a scanned copy by email, although the candidate may feel that the original has more impact and better reflects the work they have put in.

The assessor should give you an idea of the timescale till outcome. They should provide comments directly to the candidate, to the coach themselves and also send any feedback which would be useful for National Office directly back to help inform guidance for other coaches.

Groups are responsible for agreeing whether a fee will be paid to the assessor or not, and whether this is passed on to the rider or not. Travel expenses should be paid for by the group.

Gold Horse Care

Contact National Office when you are nearing completion for advice and so an assessor can be appointed. You will be advised how to get the portfolio to them. A scanned copy should also be provided to National Office.

The group/region should cover travel expenses for a face-to-face assessment, a fee will be paid to the assessor directly from National Office as this is organised centrally.

Bronze and Silver Riding

Contact your Regional Coach if you need help finding an assessor. Groups are responsible for agreeing whether a fee will be paid to the assessor or not, and whether this is passed on to the rider or not. Travel expenses should be paid for by the group.

Gold Riding

Contact National Office when your participant is nearly ready for advice and so an assessor can be appointed. There will then be a discussion about the venue and the candidate's ability to ride a strange horse or more than one horse.

The group/region should cover travel expenses for a face-to-face assessment, a fee will be paid to the assessor directly from National Office as this is organised centrally.

Direct Entry

Participants can go straight in at Silver or Gold, as they will have to show they have covered the previous material.

