



Carriage Driving

PROFICIENCY TEST

HANDBOOK 2024

For Groups, Coaches and Assessors



RDA PROFICIENCY TESTS

Carriage Driving and Horse Care 1-4

The RDA Proficiency tests are a great way to recognise and reward achievements for everyone, no matter their ability level. These tests are designed to be easy to access and encourage progress at every stage. The tests range from Grades 1 to 4, with each level getting a bit harder, but still within reach for each person.

Offering these tests in your RDA group can motivate everyone involved, not just those taking the tests, but also the volunteers and staff helping out. Setting goals with participants can guide simple lesson plans, whether for a few weeks, a year, or longer, helping everyone stay engaged and focused. The syllabus cards can be taken home or to care and education centers, allowing participants to share what they've learned with family, teachers, friends, and carers, who can also help them practice.



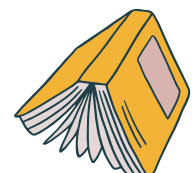
Did you know that Grade 1 Carriage Driving and Horse Care can be tested within the candidates' home group?

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



The test syllabi can form quick, simple and enjoyable lesson plans for your sessions.

The RDA Endeavour Award can be used as a confidence-building 'stepping stone' to work towards the RDA Proficiency tests.



INFORMATION FOR GROUPS

Things to consider before you begin

Ensure you have enough certificates, pin badges, or iron-on patches before the test. All resources are free for all RDA Groups and can be ordered from the RDA National Office through the Group Orders website: <https://grouporders.rda.org.uk>.

For resources in alternative formats, such as Braille overlays for certificates, contact RDA National Office at groupsupport@rda.org.uk.

Organising and Booking the Test

Who can test the candidates?

Before assessing, irrespective of RDA Coaching qualification, all proficiency test assessors must attend training before taking on the role and booking in assessment days. Please see 'For Assessors' page in this handbook for more information.



Booking the Test

Schedule the tests well in advance, ensuring all candidates feel confident and fully prepared. Allow enough time for each candidate to be tested fairly and in a calm environment. Typically, you can test about eight Grade 1 or six Grade 2 candidates per hour, but this may vary based on individual needs.

If using an external assessor, provide them with the venue details and a copy of the Proficiency Test Registration Form, including all candidate details, well before the test. Discuss and agree on travel expenses with the assessor beforehand, as these should be covered by the host group.

Check your stock of badges, patches, and certificates, and reorder if necessary. Consider the time of year for scheduling tests and prepare candidates well in advance.



Things you'll need: Make sure you have all of the equipment and supporting resources to hand, ready for the test session. Check that everything is clean and in good working order, where appropriate.

INFORMATION FOR COACHES

Register your candidates

Complete the RDA Proficiency Test Registration Form, giving details of all candidates to be tested:

- Full names (any names or nicknames/names known by)
- Age
- How long they have been attending RDA sessions
- Disability (e.g. spinal injury, visual impairment, learning difficulties, epilepsy)
- Whether they are to be tested on Carriage Driving, Horse Care or both, and at which grade.

Things to consider:

Equipment

If you are asked to provide any equipment for the test (such as a set of harnesses, carriage, 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.

Equines

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 harnessed and warmed up for the session.



Helpers

Ensure that all session helpers are well-prepared, trained in advance, and green-carded for their roles. They should encourage candidates to answer questions and perform tasks independently. In practical driving sections, the CD Coach should encourage independence, where possible, and allow the participant to confidently demonstrate 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). Ensure that all candidates are comfortably and suitably dressed for the test. 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.



INFORMATION FOR ASSESSORS

Marking Sheets and Test Paperwork

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

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

- The test date, time and venue
- Details of the candidates' known names, ages, disabilities, how long they have been attending RDA sessions and any communication difficulties, or other information that may need to be taken into consideration when assessing them
- The grades to be tested on the day, and which sections the candidates will be tested on - Carriage Driving, Horse Care, or both

Introducing yourself to candidates

Arrive early on test day and take time to introduce yourself to the candidates in a friendly, relaxed way. Use this time to quickly assess each candidate and note any factors to be mindful of during the tests.

Stick to the number of drivers registered —don't add late entries, as they may be less prepared, which could make things difficult for everyone. Typically, you can test about eight candidates at Grade 1 within an hour, and six at Grade 2, though this can vary. Practical driving sessions will take longer.





Make sure to check that any equipment or supporting resources are available and ready before you start the tests.

The Assessment

Consider reasonable adjustments and don't hesitate to get creative when communicating with candidates. Offer different ways for them to give answers based on their needs. This could include written papers, choosing from prompts, physical demonstrations, or pointing to pictures. The goal is to make them feel comfortable. There's no right or wrong way, and you may need to ask questions in different ways or use an interpreter or familiar person to help them respond confidently.

Medical Considerations:

- Take time to discuss the candidates' specific medical conditions with the coach/ therapist/carer/ teacher well before test, 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...

...as that is what matters!

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 chance to really show off what they know and impress someone new!



Training to be an Assessor

All assessors for Grades 1 - 4** should aim to attend RDA Proficiency test training at least once every three years, to make sure they're up to date with all of the current standards and syllabi. This is also a great opportunity to meet with others involved in delivering and assessing the tests, and to share ideas, experience and good practice. This can be completed online.

Training days up to Grade 4, if needed, should be coordinated within the regions. Courses for Grades 1 and 2 only can be held more locally, at county level.

****Courses for Bronze, Silver and Gold are coordinated by RDA UK. Please contact RDA National Office for more information on the advanced tests.**

Role	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Carriage Driving Coach	✓			
Regional Carriage Driving Representative	✓	✓	✓	
RDA Carriage Driving Assessors/Senior CD Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Grade 1 assessments can be done within the group, but not by the driver's own coach. In rare cases, the same coach can assess, but it's better to avoid this. Having a different assessor can boost the candidates' confidence by letting them showcase their skills to someone new.*

Grade 1: Qualified Carriage Driving Coaches and above can assess

Grades 2 and 3: Qualified Carriage Driving Coaches and above

Grade 4: RDA Carriage Driving Assessors

If you have any queries about delivery or content, please email coaching@rda.org.uk



CANDIDATE/S REGISTRATION FORM

RDA Proficiency Tests: Grade 1-4

To be completed by the RDA Group, in advance of the test

RDA Group	
CD Coach	
Test Date	
Time	
Venue	
Grade/s of Test	

Candidate Name	Age	Disability Notes*	Driving ✓	Horse Care ✓

*Make a note of any relevant factors that may need to be taken into consideration for the individual candidate on the day of the test, including possible communication difficulties.



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 1 Carriage Driving

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Demonstrate a safe, correct seat in the carriage, as far as ability allows.	1				
Demonstrate a safe mounting procedure to suit the individual.	1				
Hold the reins as ability allows, with adaptations as needed.	1				
Demonstrate beginning of control i.e. start, steer and stop, using reins and voice aids.	1				
Demonstrate walk on, turn right, then left and halt.	3				
TOTAL MARK (Max 7)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 7) x 100





PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 1 Horse Care

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Identify these parts of an equine					
Eyes	1				
Ears	1				
Mouth	1				
Neck	1				
Leg	1				
Identify these parts of a harness					
Collar	1				
Saddle/Pad	1				
Girth	1				
Breeching	1				
Reins	1				
Bridle	1				

Identify these items					
Head Collar	1				
Haynet	1				
Lead Rope	1				
Rug	1				
Demonstrate, or explain, how to approach an equine correctly and safely.	1				
Explain what an equine eats.	1				
Explain what an equine drinks.	1				
Explain where an equine lives.	1				
TOTAL MARK (Max 19)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 19) x 100



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 2 Carriage Driving

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Maintain a suitable sitting and hand/rein position, in walk and trot.	1				
Demonstrate confidence by steering straight lines, through and around widely spaced obstacles, such as cones.	2				
Show an awareness of how tone of voice can influence the equine.	1				
Show awareness of the width of the carriage and proximity to arena fence, side of track, gateway or similar.	1				
TOTAL MARK (Max 5)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 5) x 100



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 2 Horse Care

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Identify these parts of a harness					
Collar	1				
Traces	1				
Terret	1				
Tugs	1				
Belly Band	1				
Breeching Straps	1				
Loin Straps	1				
Back Band	1				
Trace Carrier	1				
Noseband	1				
Blinkers and Rosette	1				
Type of Bit Used	1				

Show a basic understanding of the order in which the parts of the harness are put onto the equine, and why	4				
Identify these colours					
Bay	1				
Chesnut	1				
Grey	1				
Piebald	1				
Skewbald	1				
Identify these basic markings					
Blaze	1				
Snip	1				
Star	1				
Sock	1				
Name, or identify by using, the following parts of a grooming kit					
Dandy Brush	1				
Body Brush	1				
Metal Curry Comb	1				
Plastic Curry Comb	1				
Hoof Pick	1				
TOTAL MARK (Max 30)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 30) x 100



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 3 *Carriage Driving*

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Demonstrate control of direction by steering round and through a course of at least 5 pairs of cones in trot.	2				
Drive simple movements from a dressage test in walk and trot – circles, across the diagonal, up the centre line.	2				
Carriage Driving Theory and Practice					
Demonstrate, or direct an assistant, how to harness up/unharness, showing an understanding of the reasons for the order in which it is done, and the functions of the parts.	2				
Identify and discuss the parts of the vehicle					
Wheel	1				

Shafts	1				
Axle	1				
Tug Stop	1				
Swingle Tree	1				
Trace Hooks	1				
Quick Releases	1				
Rein Rail	1				
Ramps (where applicable)	1				
Demonstrate, or explain, how to store the reins after dismounting from the carriage.	1				
Demonstrate, or explain, how to correctly and safely lead an equine, wearing a blinkered bridle, away from the carriage after they have been taken out of the carriage.	1				
TOTAL MARK (Max 17)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 17) x 100



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 3 *Horse Care*

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Identify these parts of an equine					
Those in Grade 1 and 2*	5				
Frog	1				
Wall of Hoof	1				
Sole	1				
Crest	1				
Flank	1				
Elbow	1				
Dock	1				
Fetlock	1				
Muzzle	1				
Explains the needs of an equine					
Feeding	1				
Watering	1				

Grooming	1				
Name, or identify by using, the following parts of a grooming kit:					
Those in Grade 1 and 2*	1				
Rubber Curry Comb	1				
Sponge	1				
Demonstrate, or explain, that you know how to correctly and safely pick up and pick out a hoof.	1				
TOTAL MARK (Max 21)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 21) x 100



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 4 *Carriage Driving*

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Hold the reins with the correct hand position (adapted as required) in walk and trot whilst carrying the whip, if possible.	1				
Demonstrate or explain Coachman style rein handing.	1				
Execute accurate transitions from working trot to walk and halt, and vice versa, at markers in the arena.	2				
Drive through a simple dressage test and cones course of a minimum of 10 pairs cones. Drive a simple obstacle.	3				
Where venue allows, drive along tracks showing awareness of safety measures and support team roles.	2				

Carriage Driving Theory and Practice					
Demonstrate or explain how to take care of a harness.	1				
Demonstrate or explain the procedure for harnessing up, unharnessing, putting to and taking out.	4				
Discuss the correct fit of a harness.	2				
Explain the care of an equine after a drive, with special reference to potential pressure points.	2				
Explain the balance of the vehicle, the equine's pulling power, and how differing surfaces affect this.	2				
TOTAL MARK (Max 20)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 20) x 100



PROFICIENCY TEST SHEET

GRADE 4 Horse Care

RDA Group	
Assessor	
Test Date	

Candidate Initials

SYLLABUS ITEM	MAX MARK				
Demonstrate an understanding of equine behaviour and show this on approaching and handling an equine.	2				
Identify the basic food for a stable kept equine					
Hay	1				
Nuts	1				
Mix	1				
Demonstrate or explain how to groom a stable-kept equine	1				
Identify additional grooming kit items needed					
Water Brush	1				
Stable Rubber	1				
Tail Bandage	1				
Recognise the different types of bedding and the reasons for using it					
Straw	2				

Shavings	2				
Wood Pellets	2				
Paper	2				
Recognise mucking-out equipment and how to use it					
Wheelbarrow	1				
Fork	1				
Shavings Fork	1				
Broom	1				
Shovel	1				
Explain the reasons why an equine may need a farrier.	3				
Demonstrate or explain how to catch an equine, lead in hand and know how to tie up correctly.	1				
Identify these parts of an equine					
Those in Grade 1-3*	14				
Stifle	1				
Chesnut	1				
Ergot	1				
Chin Groove	1				
Point of Hip	1				
TOTAL MARK (Max 45)					
PERCENTAGE %					
PASS (Pass 60% or above)					

Overall percentage = (total mark ÷ 45) x 100