



RDA Proficiency Tests

Grades 1-4

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. Grades 1-4 gradually increase in scope, allowing participants to develop their skills gradually. Every participant should be able to achieve Grade 1 Riding, and many will make good steady progress through further awards when things are presented in a way that suits the participant.

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 cards 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, pin badges are available completely **FREE OF CHARGE** to all RDA Groups!

Just order on the Group orders website in plenty of time for your tests.

Training aids and worksheets are also available and can be printed A3 by special request for participants with a visual impairment. Download from the Proficiency test page or order from Group orders.

Please contact RDA National Office for alternative certificate formats, including **Braille**

Who can assess the candidates?

RDA Coaches are trained to a high professional standard, which is well-recognised in the equestrian world, so we are confident in all our coaches' ability to assess participants at Grades 1-4. Therefore, any RDA Group Coach or RDA Coach can assess Grades 1-4. It is a valuable experience for participants if a coach other than their own can do the assessment, but we recognise this is not always practical, so don't let the lack of another assessor hold you back. Assessors should be familiar with the guidelines for assessment, by attending online or face-to-face training, or by reading the guidelines in this assessor handbook. Assessors for Bronze and Silver must have attended training, and assessors for Gold will be selected nationally. Assessors' travel expenses, where applicable, should be reimbursed by the host group. This should be discussed and agreed with them before any assessment arrangements are made.



How to support participants to achieve their awards?

Candidates do not need to start with Grade 1 if they can evidence prior learning. For example, if a student comes from another riding school or has done a course or a badge elsewhere which covers similar material, they could start at Grade 3 or 4. The Grade 1 syllabus has an A or B option, as some participants may be doing riding so the tack option is less relevant. Choose which fits best for your participants. Feel free to award a further certificate if they complete the other section!

GRADE 1 RIDING & HORSE CARE

SYLLABUS CARD RDA

RIDING

- Sit happily and maintain a balanced position at halt, in walk and during changes of rein, with help if needed
- Hold the reins, or make an attempt to hold the reins
- Demonstrate a simple exercise that has been learned

HORSE CARE

EITHER Syllabus A

- Show that you know these parts of a horse or pony: EYES, EARS, MOUTH, NECK, LEG
- Show that you know these parts of a saddle or bridle: REINS, BIT, GIRTH, STIRRUPS
- Show how to approach a horse or pony correctly and safely

OR Syllabus B

- Show that you know what a horse eats
- Show that you know what a horse drinks
- Show that you know where a horse lives



Worksheets for Grades 1-4 are available from group orders or to download on the Proficiency Test page.

GRADE 2 RIDING & HORSE CARE
WORKSHEET 2: Revision RDA

Activity Name: _____
 Use this worksheet to show that you know some of the basic tools we might find in a grooming kit.
 Draw lines or arrows to match the names of the tools to the pictures below.

dandy brush hoof pick body brush
 plastic curry comb



The training aids are available to give information. Be creative with how you use these, feel free to use them to make posters or games. Maybe some of your volunteers can come up with some ideas?

GRADE 3 RIDING & HORSE CARE
TRAINING AID RDA

The basics of grooming

We need to take very good care of our horses

Horses need to be groomed regularly, to make sure they stay healthy

Grooming is very good for horses' skin. Brushing the whole of a horse's body keeps the coat smooth and glossy and removes loose hair, dust and dirt

Picking out the horse's hooves with a hoof pick removes dirt and keeps its feet clean and comfortable. It's also a good time to check that the horse has not hurt or damaged its feet in any way

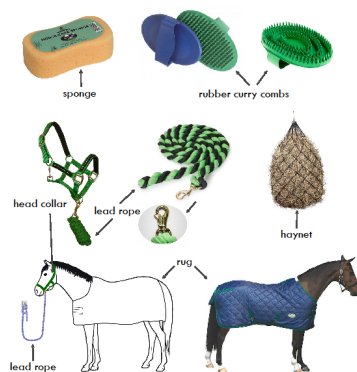
Grooming the mane and tail with a brush removes knots and dirt, and keeps the horse looking neat and tidy



January 2019

GRADE 3 RIDING & HORSE CARE
TRAINING AID RDA

More tools and equipment



January 2019

Achievement sheets are a great way to show parents/carers and schools exactly what participants have achieved. A walk-only version is available too.

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 goals and offer a tangible reward at the end of each stage.

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. The tests are designed to assess an increasing amount of control and independence from riders. Participants may use a mechanical horse for all or part of their riding award if this is noted on the certificate.

GRADE 4 RIDING
 I have passed! RDA

My name is _____

I belong to the _____ RDA Group

I have passed my RDA Grade 4 Riding Proficiency Test

To do this I have had to:

- Ride independently in an enclosed space and show a practical seat at halt, in walk and in trot; attempting to apply the correct aids, as far as my disability has allowed
 - Demonstrate control in walk and in trot
- Ride a figure of eight in trot, or trot over poles placed on the ground around the arena, in rising trot or light seat position









Information for Coaches

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 assessment. Syllabus cards are available free of charge either to download on the Proficiency Test page of myRDA, or as hard copies from the Group Orders website. Order all the certificates and badges you think you will need, this is the coaches' responsibility, not the assessor's.

Complete the RDA Proficiency Test Registration Form

This form is available on the Proficiency Test page of myRDA. 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/Condition (e.g. e.g. weak legs make applying leg aids tiring)
-  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 from the website 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, how any condition affects them, 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

Equipment

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

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).

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 picking out hooves themselves

The participant could demonstrate with a model 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 hooves safely.

Alternatively, they can talk another participant or volunteer 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 put their hand in the correct position).

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 impact of the candidates' specific conditions where necessary with the coach/therapist/carer/ teacher well before the assessment.
- You will be assessing 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 condition and any challenges they may face. Bear this in mind when marking.
- Be aware that mental tension or stress can sometimes cause confusion and increased muscle tone, which can intensify the effects of some conditions. 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 lots of 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!



Great Ideas suggested in 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
- The Endeavour Awards can be used as stepping stones between grades, or for where a part of an award has been achieved.
- Have participants working towards higher grades teach some of the horse care




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 who are 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 -Assessment can be quite tiring for candidates

-  Things to try – break it down into sections and assess part one week and the rest the next week






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 maybe even an assessment

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 eg The Manual of Horsemanship
-  The British Horse Society Bookshop -eg The BHS Stage 1 Workbook
-  Both The Pony Club and the BHS have You tube channels with some useful videos
-  Ask questions on the RDA Coaches Facebook page
-  Sticker books on horse care can be a useful way to practice

ASDAN links

Participants can take part in ASDAN at the same time as preparing for grades 1-4 and can use evidence for both qualifications. Simply put a copy of the certificate as evidence in the ASDAN portfolio.

Contact the Team at RDA National Office for any further help. Please also share your stories of how participants have enjoyed working towards their grades and any pictures you have permission to share as we love to see the achievements of participants.

