

Look Good, Ride Better

By Sharon Biggs

Cleanliness is most important in horse and rider turnout, and it shows that you respect the judge, the sport and yourself. Polish your boots and take off mud, manure and hay. Remove shavings from the horse's tail. Braiding is not required, but it does give a more finished look.

"Tie up hair, use a hair net—men with long hair, too," says Janet Brown-Foy, a United States Equestrian Federation "S" judge and Fédération Equestre Internationale "I" judge. "If you have a bun, then pin it down so it doesn't bounce around. This is distracting. If your horse is steady on the bit, white tape on braids is OK, if not, don't do it; it just causes more distraction. Wear gloves because it finishes the look: white gloves if your hands are steady, black if not."

Brown-Foy also mandates a clean saddle pad that fits the saddle and horse. If you like to put logos on your saddle pad, know the rule. If you have too many large logos, you may be eliminated. Also, go easy on the rhinestones. "They are getting a bit out of control," Brown-Foy says. She recommends not adding sparkle to saddle pads or gloves. "Easy on the dangly earrings, too," she says. "Make sure the stock tie is tight, so it doesn't come loose! Remember, the rider shouldn't distract from the horse's performance."

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