

Samples of Questions to Ask a Potential Instructor:

Questions

- How long have you been instructing riders?
- What level of rider do you instruct?
- Do you have lesson horses available?
- Do you allow “trailer in” for lessons?
- Do you travel to other barns or facilities for lessons?
- How would you describe your teaching philosophy?
- What type of riding do you do currently? What type of riding have you done in your past?
- Have you ridden Dressage? At what level did you/do you ride?
- Who did you study with for Dressage? (Check out the person they studied with)
- Have you shown Dressage? Where? What level? What scores have you achieved? What awards have you received? (Many instructors do not or did not ever show. A show record is not a qualifier to advertise in this section, nor stated as a sole determiner of an individual’s quality.)
- Have you given Dressage lessons? What level did your students achieve?
- Tell me about the Dressage training pyramid?
- Have you heard of Western Dressage?
- What do you know about Western Dressage?
- What is your philosophy about working with a Western saddle?
- Do you hold any certifications with other organizations? (American Riding Instructors Association, Certified Horsemanship Association, International Riding Instructor Certification, USDF Instructor Certification)
- Have you ridden Western? What type of Western riding have you done (Western Pleasure, Reining, Trail Classes, Ranch Horse, Gaming, etc.)?
- Who did you study with for Western events? (Check out the person they studied with)
- Have you shown in Western Classes? If so, what classes? What awards have you won? (Many clinicians do not or did not ever show. A show record is not a qualifier to advertise in this section, nor stated as a sole determiner of an individual’s quality.)
- Have you given Western Riding lessons? For which events?
- Tell me about your students...

- What is the highest level that your students have achieved? What awards have they won?
- Do you review goals with students/clients? Do you help students set goals?
- Do you have any published materials such as books, DVD/videos, Articles, Instruction/Training Manuals, other publications?
- Do you have a website and/or social media page?

Observe

Watch a few lessons with the instructors you are interested in.

- Are they clear in their instruction and teaching methods?
- As an observer can you understand what is being asked of the student?
- Are the instructor's methods comfortable to you and your learning style?
- Do the students and horses look happy?
- Are the students having fun?

Reference Checking

Ask to speak with three (3) or more of the instructor's clients. When interviewing the clients ask them:

- What they like best about the instructor?
- Have they progressed in their riding? If so, what progression have they made?
- Does the instructor help them review and set goals for their riding?
- Are they happy with the instructor?
- Do they have fun with the instructor?
- Do they have any concerns about the instructor?

Ask your vet, farrier and others about their opinion of the instructor that you are considering.

Selecting a "perfect" instructor can be a challenging process. The listed questions and resources are not exhaustive and only one of many tools for evaluating important areas in considering an instructor to help you further the skills of you and your horse.

Many published guidelines will advise that as you seek an instructor you should evaluate the area(s) in which you and your horse need assistance or would like to improve. Be conscious of your strengths and weaknesses. Since Western

Dressage merges traditions from the Western events and Classical Dressage, finding an instructor to complement the discipline area in which a horse and rider have *less* experience *may* result in a more rounded educational basis toward Western Dressage.

As Western Dressage is an emerging discipline there is no certification and limited references in place to validate an instructor. As with any equine activity there is a risk of individuals offering “Western Dressage” clinics, instruction and training who may not have the qualifications which you desire. The Western Dressage Association® of America strongly recommends that you thoroughly research individuals; have a list of questions which are especially important for your goals; speak to and try out a minimum of three (3) instructors; and follow your instincts to make your selection. If an individual does not feel right, try another instead.

This document is intended as one of many resources to assist the horse person with their decision making process. This piece is not exhaustive to this subject and not universally inclusive, as it does not cover related topics, like the financial, business and organizational aspects involved in hiring an instructor. This piece is planned as part of a series of reference type documents, which cover various aspects of this process.

The preceding reference questions and articles provide samples of how to find an instructor and/or clinician, as well as examples of information to request from that person. Again this is not an exhaustive set of resources and the Western Dressage Association® of America takes no liability for the contents of these questions and articles.

Articles Regarding How to Find an Instructor:

- <http://www.equiworld.net/uk/training/meredithmanor/instructor.htm>
- <http://equestrianhow2.com/2012/01/05/how-to-choose-a-riding-instructor/>
- <http://americashorsedaily.com/selecting-an-instructor-2/>