

The British Horse Society

BHS STAGE 1

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Please note: This document is uncontrolled once printed. Please check with the BHS Education Team for the most up to date version.

BHS Stage 1 Complete

Stage 1 overview

Start your journey to learn more about horses, whatever your career goal. Stage 1 qualifications are the best place to begin.

You will learn:

- The basics of looking after horses
- Horse behaviour and welfare
- Basic riding skills

How to achieve the Stage 1 Complete

The Stage 1 Complete qualification is awarded upon completion of the following:

- Stage 1 Care
- Stage 1 Ride and Ride Safe Award*

*You need to achieve both Stage 1 Ride and Ride Safe to be awarded the Stage 1 Ride certificate.

Age range

13 years and above.

How to train for the BHS Stage 1 assessments

We recommend you train at a BHS Approved Centre or with a BHS Accredited Professional Coach.

Find a BHS Approved Centre

Find a BHS Accredited Professional Coach

Find Training

BHS Training Hub | Facebook*

**Facebook requires users to be a minimum age of 13*

Skills Record

The BHS Skills Record tracks your training to help you prepare for your assessment. Your coach will sign your Skills Record when you are ready to take your assessment. We recommend you have this signed off before you sit your Stage 1 assessment.

Download your Skills Record

Purchase your Skills Record

What could this qualification lead to?

Employers recognise the BHS Stage 1 as a starting point for a career with horses. This qualification could help you to get your first job, working under supervision. You can also progress to BHS Stage 2.

BHS Stage 1 Care

The Stage 1 assessment will take place at a BHS Approved Riding Centre. You can train for and take your assessment at the same BHS Approved Riding Centre. After booking your assessment we will inform you of your start time for your assessment. Upon arrival at your assessment, you will meet your assessor. They will let you know the timetable for the day and provide the opportunity for you to ask any questions.

During the assessment the assessor will observe you completing practical tasks. They will also ask you questions. You will need to follow safe procedures as you would when handling horses you do not know. You will complete the practical tasks efficiently. This means completing tasks in the best possible manner without wasting time. You must treat every horse you meet with empathy and respect. Working with different types of horses will help you prepare for your assessment.

The syllabus below details the content of the Stage 1 Care. Guidance for reading the syllabus is from page 11.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
1. Know the responsibilities for working on an equestrian yard	1.1 State the **responsibilities** for working on an equestrian yard	**Responsibilities** with regards to the following: • Animal welfare • Safeguarding • Health and Safety • Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion • Data protection • Reporting lines	Discussion
2. Be able to maintain a clean stable	2.1 **Muck out** and **put a bed down**	Full **muck out** (excluding deep litter) to include: • Working safely and efficiently • Selection and use of tools • Minimal wastage of clean bedding **Put a bed down** to include: • Suitable depth • Banks	Observation
	2.2 Provide water	May include: • Bucket or automatic drinker • Appropriate positioning of bucket • Frequency of cleaning • Working safely and efficiently	Observation and discussion
	2.3 **Skip out** and **tidy** a stable	**Skip out** to include: • Selection of tools • Working safely and efficiently **Tidying** the stable to include: • Levelling the bedding • Sweeping back • Checking water	Observation and discussion
	2.4 Discuss the use of a range of **bedding** for horses	**Range = 2 or more** **Bedding** may include: • Shavings • Straw • Wood pellets • Rubber matting • Flax/hemp	Discussion
	2.5 Describe how to **maintain** a muck heap	**Maintenance** to include: • Compacting down • Keeping muck heap area tidy	Discussion

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
3. Be able to carry out routine grooming tasks	3.1 State **reasons** for grooming	**Reasons** may include: • Appearance • Health and welfare • Relationship with horse	Discussion
	3.2 Identify a range of **items** in a grooming kit	**Range = 3 or more** **Items** may include: • Body brush • Dandy brush • Flick brush • Rubber curry comb • Metal curry comb • Hoof pick • Mane and tail brush	Observation and discussion
	3.3 **Groom** a horse	**Grooming** to include: • Securing the horse • Working safely and efficiently • Use of equipment • Picking out feet • Folding rug as required • Handling horse safely	Observation
	3.4 Identify if a horse needs shoeing or trimming	May include: • Clenches • Condition of feet • Condition of shoes	Discussion
	3.5 Identify a range of external **parts** of the horse's foot	**Range = 3 or more** **Parts** may include: • Wall • Toe • Bulbs of the heel • Sole • Frog • Bars • White line	Observation
	3.6 Describe how to **groom** a horse after exercise	**Groom** to include: • Checking horse for injury • Washing or brushing off sweat • Use of cooler	Discussion
4. Be able to describe horses and know about horse behaviour and health	4.1 State a horse's **welfare** needs	**Welfare** needs (Five Domains) may include: • Nutrition (forage, water and diet) • Suitable and safe environment (stable and field) • Health (protection from pain, injury and disease) • Company (social interactions with horses and people, expressing natural instincts) • Mental wellbeing	Discussion
	4.2 Identify a range of **points** of the horse	**Range = 4 or more** **Points** may include: • Poll • Withers • Shoulder • Croup • Loins • Elbow • Knee • Stifle • Hock • Fetlock • Pastern	Observation and discussion
	4.3 **Estimate** the **height** of a horse or pony	**Height estimate** to include: • Hands or centimetres • Within 10-15 centimetres or 4-6 inches of actual height	Observation and discussion

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
	4.4 Identify **colours** and **markings**	**Colours** may include any common horse colours. **Face markings** may include: • Blaze • Stripe • Star • White face • Snip **Leg markings** may include: • White markings (socks and stockings are acceptable) • Ermine marks	Observation and discussion
	4.5 Identify **signs** of good and poor health	**Signs** may include: • General body condition • Coat condition • Eyes and nose • Appetite • Droppings • Movement and stance	Observation and discussion
	4.6 Describe **routine checks** to monitor health and welfare	**Routine checks** to include: • Morning checks • Evening checks • General observations throughout the day	Discussion
	4.7 Outline the **signs** of a horse being overweight or underweight	**Signs** in relation to key areas of the horse's body: • Crest • Ribs • Quarters • Importance of looking from all angles • Awareness of Fat/Condition scoring	Discussion
	4.8 Describe the horse's **natural instincts**	**Range = 2 or more** **Natural instincts** may include: • Herd animals • Flight, or fight or freeze • Grazers How natural instincts may affect horses when: • Turned out • Stabled • Startled • Left alone	Discussion
	4.9 Describe horse behaviour that may suggest it is not safe to approach	May include: • Body language • Facial expressions • Movement and stance • In the stable • In the field	Discussion
5. Be able to use rugs appropriately	5.1 Identify a range of **rugs** and their use	**Range = 2 or more** **Rug** types may include: • Turnout rug • Stable rug • Cooler • Fly rug Know when a rug is not required	Observation and discussion
	5.2 Put a rug on and take a rug off	To include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Consideration for horse • Rug secured • Handle horse safely	Observation

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
	5.3 Assess the **fit** of the rug	**Fit** to include: • Length • Depth • Length of straps • Common places to check for rubs and sores	Observation and discussion
	5.4 Describe the **consequences** of a poor fitting rug	**Consequences** may include: • Horse welfare • Damage to rug • Safety	Discussion
6. Be able to tack up and untack	6.1 Identify **parts** of the **saddle** and **bridle**	**Parts** of the **saddle** may include: • Cantle • Pommel • Seat • Saddle flap • Skirt • Stirrup bar **Parts** of the **bridle** may include: • Noseband • Cheekpieces • Brow band • Headpiece • Throatlash	Observation and discussion
	6.2 **Tack up** and **untack** a horse with a saddle and bridle	**Tack up** and **untack** to include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Securing the horse • Handle horse safely • Handling of rug if required • Carrying and storage of tack	Observation
	6.3 Put on a **martingale**	Running **martingale** to include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Securing the horse • With bridle and saddle	Observation
	6.4 Put on a pair of brushing boots	To include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Velcro attachment • Front or hind boots	Observation
	6.5 Check **tack** for safety	Areas of **tack** may include: • Stirrup leathers • Cheek pieces • Reins • Girth straps	Observation and discussion
	6.6 Outline **checks** to make on tack for comfort before riding	**Checks** may include: Bridle • Bit • Noseband • Throatlash Saddle • Saddle too big or too small • Pommel too low • Saddle not central • Girth Martingale • Neck strap • Attachment to reins Saddle pad • Suitabilty and fit Brushing boots • Size	Discussion and observation

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
	6.7 State the **reasons** why tack should be checked for comfort and safety	**Reasons** may include: • Horse welfare and wellbeing • Safety of horse • Safety of rider	Discussion
	6.8 **Clean** a bridle	**Clean** may include: • Stripping bridle • Cleaning and applying leather dressing (saddle soap, cream or spray) • Washing bit • Putting a bridle back together correctly	Observation and discussion
	6.9 State the **reasons** for cleaning tack	**Reasons** may include: • Comfort • Care of tack • Safety	Discussion
7. Be able to handle a horse	7.1 Discuss how **correct handling** effects the horse	**Correct handling** may include: • Empathy • Consistency • Respect • Clear and timely aids	Discussion
	7.2 Handle horses safely	To include: • Awareness of horse behaviour • Be able to react accordingly • In the stable • Outside the stable	Observation and discussion
	7.3 Put on a headcollar and tie a horse up	To include: • Approaching horse • Safe and efficient procedure • Checking fit of headcollar	Observation
	7.4 Hold a horse for treatment or inspection	To include: • Holding and positioning horse • Positioning of handler • Awareness of horse behaviour and reactions	Observation
	7.5 **Lead** a horse in walk and trot in a bridle	**Leading** to include: • Leading horse out of stable • Leading horse in walk • Turning the horse • Leading horse in trot • Appropriate positioning of handler • Safe handling of horse • Awareness of horse behaviour and reactions	Observation
	7.6 Describe how to **turn out** and **catch** a horse	**Turning out** may include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Individual horse • Group of horses • Awareness of dangers • PPE to wear • Positioning of horse and handler • Releasing horse **Catching** to include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Approaching a horse • Awareness of horse behaviour • Awareness of other horses in field	Discussion
	7.7 Identify a range of routine **field checks**	**Range = 3 or more** **Field checks** to include: • Regularity of checks • Fencing (boundaries) • Water • Shelter • Gate and gateway • Ground conditions • Poisonous plants- ragwort, oak, yew, foxglove, sycamore	Discussion

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
8. Be able to provide food and water to a horse	8.1 Explain a range of **rules of feeding**	**Range = 2 or more** **Rules of feeding,** may include: • Feed plenty of roughage • Feed little and often • Use good quality feed • Feed according to workload and bodyweight • Make changes to feed gradually • Feed something succulent daily (food with water content for example grass) • Avoid exercising one hour after cereal-based meals • Maintain a consistent routine • Practise good hygiene	Discussion
	8.2 State the **importance** of providing clean water to a horse	**Importance** to include: • Health • Welfare • Weather conditions • Following work • Amount horse drinks in a day	Discussion
	8.3 Identify a range of common **horse feeds**	**Range = 3 or more** **Horse feed** may include: • Coarse mix • Cubes • Chaff • Sugar beet- unsoaked and soaked • Soaked feed • Balancers • Hay • Haylage • Succulents and how to prepare (for example carrots)	Observation and discussion
	8.4 Identify **signs** of good and poor quality **feed**	**Signs** to include: • Appearance • Smell **Feed** to include: • Forage • Bagged feed	Discussion
	8.5 Describe how to **prepare** feed	**Preparation** to include: • Following instructions • Using a feed chart • Soaking feed • Soaking hay	Observation and discussion
	8.6 Provide a haynet to a horse	To include: • Safe and efficient procedure • Weighing haynet • Tie haynet up safely	Observation
	8.7 State a range of **methods** for providing forage	**Range = 2 or more** **Methods** may include: • Providing forage in the field • Providing forage in the stable	Discussion
	8.8 Describe how to maintain good hygiene in feed areas	May include: • Feed room • Feed store • Cleanliness • Preventing vermin • Cross contamination (for example use of supplements or medication) • Buckets and utensils • Storage	Discussion

BHS Stage 1 Ride

The Stage 1 Ride assessment will involve you riding two horses, one after the other. You will be in a group of up to six horses and riders. The horses you ride may be forward going or laid back. There will be a caller in the arena to give you instructions for a variety of ridden exercises.

You must ride with sympathetic aids and with respect for your horse and the other riders in the arena. Riding different types of horses will help you prepare for your assessment.

The syllabus below details the content of the Stage 1 Ride. Guidance for reading the syllabus is from page 11.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
1. Prepare horse and tack before mounting	1.1 **Check** the tack for safety and comfort before mounting	**Checks** to include: • Comfort for horse • Saddle • Bridle • Girth • Stirrups	Observation
	1.2 Position horse in preparation for mounting	To Include: • Lead horse • Position horse at mounting block • Safe positioning of horse and handler	Observation
2. Be able to mount and dismount from a horse	2.1 **Mount** and **adjust** girth and stirrups	**Mounting** to include: • Safe procedure • Control of horse • Use of mounting block • Comfort of horse **Adjust girth and stirrups** to include: • Safe procedure • Whilst mounted • Comfort of horse • Keep feet in stirrups* **Unless candidate has been granted a reasonable adjustment*	Observation
	2.2 **Dismount** and adjust tack	**Dismount** to include: • Safe positioning of horse • Safe procedure • Adjust tack for comfort • Prepare horse to be led out of the arena	Observation
3. Be able to ride horses in walk, trot and canter under supervision	LEARNERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO RIDE TWO HORSES IN THIS SECTION		
	3.1 State the **reasons** for warming up and cooling down a horse	**Reasons** may include: • Preparation for work • Recovery • Horse welfare and wellbeing	Discussion
	3.2 Ride in a **balanced and secure position** with stirrups	May include: • Walk, trot and canter on both reins • Maintain control when riding as part of a group or independently • Control, position and use of short whip (75 centimetres/30 inches or less) **Balanced and secure position** to include: • Basic security in saddle • Non-restrictive to horse	Observation
	3.3 Ride showing respect and consideration for the horse and other riders	To include: • Use of sympathetic aids • Awareness of other users of the school • Following the rules of the school	Observation

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Guidance on the content to be learnt during training and sampled during assessment	Assessment Method
	3.4 Maintain a **balanced position** in walk and trot without stirrups	To include: • Crossing over stirrups **Balanced position** to include: • Non-restrictive to horse • Basic security in saddle	Observation
	3.5 Maintain a **balanced position** in trot and canter in a **light seat**	**Light seat** to include: • Adjusting stirrups for light seat **Balanced position** to include: • Basic security in light seat position • Non-restrictive to horse	Observation
	3.6 Maintain a **balanced position** over **trotting poles**	**Trotting poles** to include: • Single pole • Three poles in line (straight line and on diagonal line) **Balanced position** to include: • In light seat • In rising trot	Observation
	3.7 Ride **transitions** between the paces	Upward and downward **transitions** to include: • Halt • Walk • Trot • Canter	Observation
	3.8 Ride simple **school figures**	**School figures** may include: • Changes of rein • Turns and circles • Riding across the arena	Observation
	3.9 Outline the **aids** for riding transitions and turns	**Aids** may include: • Leg • Rein • Body position • Clear and timely aids • Consistency of aids	Observation and discussion
	3.10 Ride on the **correct trot diagonal**	**Correct trot diagonal** to include: • Correcting and changing diagonal when needed and when changing rein	Observation and discussion
	3.11 State the number of beats within the **pace** and the sequence of footfalls	**Pace** may include: • Walk • Trot • Canter	Discussion
	3.12 Recognise correct canter leads	To include: • Recognising if the inside foreleg is appearing to lead	Observation and discussion

Guidance for reading the syllabus

Learning Outcome

The content of the syllabus includes learning outcomes. These are statements that describe significant and essential learning. Learning outcomes identify what the candidate will know, understand and be able to do.

Assessment Criteria

The content of the syllabus includes assessment criteria. Assessment criteria identify what is expected from the assessed work. Assessment criteria should be clear, specify the standard that must be met and what evidence will be used to show achievement of the broader learning outcome.

All assessment criteria will be assessed. Candidates must achieve all assessment criteria to 'pass'. Achieved learning outcomes can be 'banked'. The candidate is only required to resit learning outcomes that have not been achieved.

Assessment criteria are made up of two essential parts – the command verb and the subject matter:

1. 'command' = instruction
   'verb' = what it is you are to do
2. 'subject matter' = the topic

At Stage 1, the command verbs used are:

Assess	To judge the value of
Describe	Paint a picture in words. Does not include reasoning
Discuss	Talk about the topic
Estimate	Form an approximate judgement or opinion
Explain	A description with reasons. Often starts with 'because'
Identify	State or recognise, usually from a visual prompt
Outline	Identify the main features
State	Provide information in a brief uncomplicated form

Guidance

Guidance offers more information about the assessment criteria. It identifies content that will be learnt during training and sampled during assessment. A candidate should be familiar with the content to prepare for assessment.

- The detail provided in the guidance gives examples of the subject content. When preparing for your assessment try not to limit your learning only to the points listed but work with your coach to gain a rounded view of each subject.
- Where 'to include' is stated, this means all content listed must be learnt during training and may be assessed on the assessment day.
- Where 'may include' is stated, this means all content listed must be learnt during training, along with others. Some or all may be assessed on the assessment day.
- Where a specific number in a range is stated, this means the full list must be learnt during training and a minimum of that specific number may be assessed on the assessment day.
- An assessor will decide the number of aspects in the list to be assessed. This is so they can be secure in their assessment of your knowledge and skills.

Assessment method

How the assessor will collect evidence against the assessment criteria. At Stage 1 they will either observe the candidate carrying out a practical task or they will ask the candidate questions.

Get in touch

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