

Everything You Wanted to Know About I.E.L. but Were Afraid to Ask

The new IEL season is upon us and we want to wish a warm welcome to all new and returning participants. Whether this is your first IEL show or you are entering your final year of competition, here are some essential tips that will help you maximize enjoyment of your IEL experience and minimize frustration and disappointment. Our goal is to foster a safe, respectful, nurturing and enjoyable environment for everyone involved, but your cooperation is required to do so. We encourage riders, parents and trainers to read these tips so that we can all do our part.

Can I enter the shows electronically?

Yes! We know that this is the big news for which you have been waiting. There are now provisions for electronic entries, electronic credit card payment of both paper and electronic entries, and electronic late entries (a five business day grace period only and there is a late charge). There are several specific things you have to do before you can avail yourself of any of these options, and several specific things you have to do once you can avail yourself of a particular option. To find out what these things are, please go to the IEL website (www.theiel.org), where detailed yet easy to follow instructions await you. You wanted it, you got it, so use it! We will work out the kinks as we go along.

Can I still submit paper entries?

Yes, of course you can, but do try to get them in on time! While there is now the opportunity to turn in an entry five days late (electronically only), why bother? It is so much easier—and cheaper—to get your entry in on time, and there is plenty of time to do so. That said, an incomplete entry is as bad as a late entry, so don't forget to make sure your entry is complete, including all signatures and a check if required. And remember to check off the boxes for ALL the classes in which you want to participate, including the ticketed warm up. When in doubt, check off the box; you can always scratch if need be, but you can't add!

Remember that after each show you can pick up an entry for the next show in the office, fill it out and submit it then and there. Alternatively, you can print the entry from the website and mail it in, or enter electronically as previously mentioned.

We highly recommend that you keep a calendar with the dates—and rain dates—for all the shows, as well as the dates that the entries are due. Give yourself enough time to mail in each by its due date. In addition, we suggest that you make a copy of each entry just in case the original gets lost in the mail. For extra insurance, you may want to mail in your entry “certified return receipt” so you know the entry has been received on time and you have proof of that fact.

While some of you are old enough and responsible enough to take charge of getting your entries in on time, others of you are not and that is ok. Our goal is to have as many kids participate as possible, so parents and trainers, if you have kids who cannot take on the responsibility at this moment in time for whatever reason, please make sure that you get their entries in on time.

Which division should I be riding in?

That is a discussion between you, your trainer and your parents, and a decision based on your talent, training and capability. Be that as it may, the correct decision is not always made. If you ride in too low a division, you have an unfair advantage and you are not challenged. If you ride in too high a division, you will be scared and put yourself and others at risk. If you, your trainer and/or your parents have any questions about eligibility requirements and/or class specifications, please go to the IEL website and click on the Show Information Link. There you will find details about every class in each division.

We cannot stress enough how important it is to ride at the level at which you are supposed to ride. Remember, IEL shows are real shows, not lessons. Trainers, take note. And keep in mind that while you can switch divisions during a season, your points do not switch with you.

How do I check in and sign up?

This is the part that everyone dreads, but it must be done. If you are not checked in and signed up to ride, you won't ride. It's that simple. Someone—whether it is you, your trainer or a parent—has to go to the office and check you in, get your number and sign you up in a group at some point before your division runs. Do not assume that this will just happen, as if by magic.

When you are practicing the day before the show, you should find out from your trainer approximately when he or she wants you to ride within your division and who will be signing you up. The office opens at 6 a.m. the morning of the show and people start lining up at 5:30 a.m. (Yes, it can be freezing, so dress warmly. And yes, breakfast is provided.) That doesn't mean you have to be there that early, but just be forewarned that as time goes by spots fill up and the later you get there the fewer choices you will have. For newbies, here's the drill: Enter the office and go to the table on the right and announce your name and school. You will be given your number, and then it is time to head to the table on the left and find your division, whether freshman, novice, junior varsity or varsity. Then you will sign up for a group in your respective division. Remember your group number, as you will be called to ride by your group number. The lower-numbered groups go earlier; the higher-numbered groups go later. Whether you are signing up one rider, a few riders or a number of riders, the drill is the same. If you are signing up more than one person, please have all of the necessary information ready so as not to hold up the sign-up process. Please note that jumpers sign up at the jumper ring, and dressage times are assigned, so if you are doing jumpers or dressage only, there is no need to get there at the crack of dawn to sign up, though you will still need to check in and get your number at some point.

I heard a rumor that the show office will now be open the day before the show for check in. Is this true?

Yes, it is true, but please read everything in this paragraph so you know the important details. The show office will now be open for two hours on Saturday afternoon, or the day before the show (the specific hours will be posted on the IEL website) for fast track check in, but not sign up. There is a difference. During those two hours riders will be able to pick up their numbers

ONLY if they pay in full (essentially close out) at the same time. That means that Novice, Freshman, Junior Varsity and Varsity riders still have to show up Sunday morning to wait in line and sign up for their groups, but they will not have to wait at the end of the show to close out. Dressage and jumper riders will not have to wait in line at all on Sunday, either to sign in or close out. Please note that if you chose to use the fast track method, you cannot scratch classes on the day of the show.

What time do I need to be at the horse show?

General show schedules are now going to be posted on the IEL website under the Show Information Link. So that is your primary source of information for show times. Please note that the schedules will not be in the newsletters from this point on. That said, keep in mind that each discipline and division is different. In some the flat class runs first, in others the flat class runs last, in dressage you have assigned times. It is up to you to know what division you are in, what group you are in and what classes you are in and when you are going to go. Then work backwards and give yourself enough time to get to the show, get something to eat and drink if need be and get you and your horse ready and warmed up. Please remember that this is a one-day show and everyone would like to finish before dark. In order to do that, each person needs to do his or her part. That means being at the gate when you are supposed to be there, or, if you can't be there, letting the announcer know in advance so he or she can switch your order, if possible. Trainers, please try to organize and coordinate your day so that your kids aren't late to the ring.

What time does my group go?

The announcers can help you answer that question. But be polite when you ask. The announcers have a lot to do other than tell you what time your group goes. At the very least, wait until they are done announcing before you ask your question.

When do I learn my course?

Before you go into the ring! Do we really need to say this? Yes we do! Because so many riders get to the gate and don't know their course and their trainers are frantically reading it to them when they should actually be in the ring riding. This wastes precious time. Keep in mind that when your group goes, all of the riders in your group (there are usually five) do the hunter course then move on to the handy hunter course and finally the equitation course before the next group is called. So know your hunter course when you get to the ring and use the time in-between classes to learn your next course. And, of course, you can familiarize yourself with all of your courses before you ever get to the ring.

What about warming up in the rings?

If you are doing the ticketed morning warm up in your respective show ring, please make sure that you show up at the appropriate hour and the appropriate ring. Remember that you are not the only person doing the warm up, so try to be efficient with your practice and get in and get out so others may do the same. Do not touch the jumps! These courses are set for the show. Be respectful of other riders and announce yourself if there is the potential for course collision. When warm up time in your ring is over, it is really over, so please vacate the ring when it is time to move on. If you are warming up in the warm-up area adjacent to your ring before your group goes, there may be a crowd, so keep your eyes and ears open and respect the rules of the road, so to speak. If you don't know what those rules are, ask your trainer!

How do I put my pedal to the “medal?”

The medal classes—which are held for the Junior Varsity and Varsity divisions only (there is a cumulative point freshman medal final at the last show, but not individual medal classes at each show)—are different. They are not part of the group ride and therefore require a different form of sign up. Please keep track of when your medal class goes and make sure to sign up on the order-of go sheet with your ring announcer and then make sure to show up when you are supposed to go.

Do manners matter?

Of course they do. IEL promotes sportsmanlike behavior. No name-calling, gossiping, taunting, booing, sabotage, willful spooking of horses or anything of that nature. It will not be tolerated. And that goes for friends and family, too. Let's all be supportive and compassionate. And if you can help out a fellow rider, do! If someone needs something and you can loan it to him or her, loan it, whether it's duct tape, a safety pin or a saddle pad. We are all in this together. Don't forget to be polite to the announcers, your trainers, your grooms and your parents. They deserve your gratitude and respect.

So what are the rules?

We encourage common sense when it comes to you and your horse. No running, no screaming, no music, no riding while listening to music, no crowding the in-gate, no bothering the judges EVER, no driving through crowds of horses, no smoking, no drinking, no doing drugs and no dogs. Needless to say, those rules apply to all friends and family who may be attending the shows. And please remind those friends and family that horses spook easily, so they should make sure to deposit their trash—especially large plastic bags—in the appropriate receptacles; they should give themselves plenty of room when walking behind horses; and they should be respectful of others when cheering, photographing and talking on their cell phones.

It goes without saying, but we will say it anyways: Do not bring a lame or sick horse to the show. It does no one any good. Also, do not put your horse in more classes than it—or you—can handle. You should always put you and your horse's well-being before points. Always.

What should I wear?

You should dress for IEL as you would for a rated horse show. For hunters and equitation that means tan britches with a belt, a rat catcher, a dark coat and tall boots. If you are doing jumpers, you have more leeway in the shirt department, and if you are doing dressage, it's white dressage pants and a white dressage shirt with a dark coat. But whatever you are wearing, make sure that you have your school saddle pad and that your helmet is ASTM/SEI approved and that the chinstrap is secured at all times while mounted. Safety is our first priority.

What about eating and drinking? We'll throw in sleeping for good measure too.

Don't forget to eat something healthy before your ride. This is a sport, and you need to nutritionally fuel your body and mind before you take charge of a large animal. There is a snack bar where you can buy food, and it is quite possible that there will be snacks at your school tent, but if you don't have time for all that, eat something at home or bring something to the show. Also, if it is hot, stay hydrated. That means water or sports drinks, not soda. And get a good night's sleep the night before a show. Nothing clouds the mind more than being exhausted, and a cloudy mind makes for sloppy round.

Is this supposed to be fun?

Yes, it is!!!! Sure, you want to win. Who doesn't? But don't you want to have fun too? Relax and enjoy the experience. Hang with your teammates, make new friends, cheer everyone on. Have a great day. Be the best rider—and person—that you can be. That's the IEL spirit.

What about points?

For hunter, handy hunter and equitation classes, ribbons are awarded (up to twelfth) when a division is completed, which means after all the riders have gone and the judges have submitted their scores. If you are still at the show at that point you can pick up your ribbons; if you have left you can arrange for someone else to pick up your ribbons, or you can check the results online and claim your ribbons at the next show. For flat classes, ribbons are awarded at the end of each class while everyone is still in the ring; for jumper and dressage classes, ribbons are awarded after each class is completed and the times or scores have been recorded. Each ribbon has a different number of points, and your points are added up and recorded on the IEL website. There is an ceremony at the end of the season in which awards are given to the school with the most points and individuals with the most points both within divisions and overall.

What about Coachella?

Now that Coachella is on two weekends, you don't have to miss I.E.L. to attend your favorite music festival. Coachella is no longer a good excuse to miss I.E.L.

We hope this F.A.Q. guide was able to answer your questions. If you still have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us at iel@theiel.org