

WINNING IN THE PERFORMANCE RING

By George Clements - Judge

The object of any performance class is to exhibit to the judge a well-trained and willing lama. Performance classes are designed to demonstrate the intelligence and versatility of the lama. As the handler and lama negotiate the course they should work as a team. The flow should be smooth with little or no pause between obstacles and it should be evident to the judge that there is a high degree of confidence and trust between the handler and the lama.

The following are “**APPROVER PERFORMANCE CLASSES**” as defined in the ALSA Handbook.

1. Obstacle – This class will require the completion of a bridge or ramp, one or more jumps, backing, change of pace and a flexibility maneuver such as a weave. There will be additional optional maneuvers depending on the level of the class
2. Pack – For a young llama you may use a training pack, llamas over 37 mo. require a pack system. All packs must have two cinches and the halters need to be adjusted to allow the lama to graze and chew. You will be required to put on / take off the pack and load in a trailer as well as manageability and maneuvering.
3. Public Relations – Here you are demonstrating your lama’s ability to perform well in public places such as schools, nursing homes, parades, etc. You will be required to pick up a foot or show the llamas teeth, load in a vehicle, climb stairs or a ramp, stand for petting and back in a confined area as well as additional obstacles.
4. Pleasure Driving – In this class you will use a two or four-wheel cart hitched to a single or team of llamas. You will be asked to drive at three different paces, back and change direction. The judge will also inspect your turnout.
5. Obstacle Driving – You may use a two or four-wheel cart with either a single or team hitch. You will be ask to do the same things as Pleasure Driving with additional obstacles such as water, weaving, encountering animals or people, stopping/standing, etc.

OPTIONAL CLASSES

1. Costume –The object is to demonstrate how well your lama will tolerate items touching them. You and your llama are dressed in a theme (Adding music and narration gets you additional points). You want to cover as much of the lamas as possible including legs, head and face. Adding objects that hit the legs or drag on the ground also help you place well. The costume must be durable enough to hold up in the ring and the llama must tolerate it well.
2. Pack Trials – Here you will be in a natural environment such as a wooded trail. You and your llama will be required to cover a measured distance and complete a number of obstacles such as streams, hills, logs and narrow paths. This is a timed event.

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General Rules for All Performance Classes:

1. As in Showmanship, you may not have any names or logos on you or your lama.
2. Your attire should be informal but neat and conservative. *You must have shoes that cover the entire foot or you will be dismissed from the ring.*
3. Your lama should have a clean, well fitting halter and matching lead.
4. You may only use voice or hand commands; no food or clickers allowed.
5. As in Showmanship you will be docked points if you receive coaching from the sidelines.
6. **IF YOU ENTER OR PRACTICE ON THE COURSE BEFORE THE CLASS YOU WILL BE DISQUALIFIED FROM THAT PORTION OF THE COURSE OR THE ENTIRE CLASS.**
7. If you go *off course* (taking an obstacle out of order, taking an extra obstacle or skipping an obstacle) you cannot place higher than any exhibitor who completes the entire course correctly.
8. You must make one attempt at each obstacle even if you know your lama will not do it.

WHAT TO PRACTICE FOR

Remember you are demonstrating the level of trust and cooperation that exists between you and your lama. As you practice the following you are striving to attain the **perfect image** of what this would look like. You will be deducted points for anything that is not perfect. For example if you are haltering your llama, the perfect image might be that the llama would stand quietly as you approached, lowered the head to accept the halter and didn't move while the halter was put on. The judge would deduct points if you had to catch the lama, hold the lama while haltering or struggled to get the halter on. As you think about each of the following, consider what the perfect example would look like and work toward that in your training sessions.

Your first step in training for performance is to establish a good working relationship with your llama. If your lama trusts you, then you are well on your way to a blue ribbon in the performance ring. Here are some of the most common obstacles you will find in the performance ring:

1. Putting or removing a halter
2. Putting on or removing a pack or adding things to a pack
3. Standing in a confined space and picking up a foot, showing the lama's teeth or grooming the llama
4. Walking through water, inner tubes, a dead fall or tires
5. Backing straight, on a curve or at a right angle
6. Loading in a van, car, trailer or truck
7. Opening, going through and closing a gate or door
8. Meeting other people, a dog, cat, goat, horse or other living thing
9. Dealing with inanimate objects such as opening an umbrella, looking in a mirror, looking at a large stuffed animal or having a flash picture taken
10. Taking one or more jumps in a row.
11. Going under or through things that are hanging down
12. Standing or turning around on a small platform
13. Sidestepping along a board or row of cones
14. Standing in a circle or box and doing a 360 degree turn without stepping out of the circle

BEFORE YOU ENTER THE RING

There are several things you need to consider. First study the class pattern and memorize the direction and sequence of the obstacles. (**Don't rely or watching other exhibitors! They may not follow the pattern properly.**) Then be sure to pay close attention in the walkthrough that the judge will do before the class starts. Ask questions as to how the judges wants you to complete each obstacle. For example in a backing exercise where should the lama's feet be at the beginning of the maneuver or how close should the lama be when looking in a mirror?

Remember your lama can't perform at it's best if something is distracting it. Check the fit of the halter. Make sure you go to the potty pile before entering the ring and if flies are present, use fly spray on the legs. They can't do well if a fly is biting them. If your lama is attached to another llama, it may not want to be away from it. Make sure they cannot see each other while you are in the class.

ON THE COURSE

As you walk through a Performance Class you will not hold the lead as you do in a Showmanship class. The left hand still looks the same. The excess lead is coiled in a figure eight and held waste high. The right hand holds the lead so it runs through the hand in a smooth line from the left hand to the lama. The thumb is parallel to the lead and facing toward the left hand with the lead running out the back of the hand. The arm is almost straight down at the side keeping your hand away from the llama's head and avoiding a short lead. There should always be slack in the lead except when giving direction. If the lead is pulled tight or the hand moves up on the lead the judge will deduct one or two points for each at each obstacle. On a ten event obstacle course having a short and tight lead (the most common mistakes made on a performance course) could cost you 20 to 40 points out of a possible 100 points. So you can see that practicing just these two things will make a big difference in your placing on the performance course.

Another thing that the judge will be looking for is the rapport that exists between you and your lama. If your lama is moving with the ears down or back, if the llama is looking around and not paying attention to the course, if the lama is moving very reluctantly, if you have to pull or push your lama or if the lama refuses an obstacle, then you will also lose points. This is not something you specifically practice rather it evolves as you develop a relationship with your lama. The judge would like to see evidence that a bond of respect and trust exists between you and your lama. The best thing you can do to prepare for a performance class is to expose your lama to as many different situations as possible and as you practice always act as if you are in the ring. If you are sloppy during practice then your lama will be the same way in the show ring. Remember to also vary you practice routine so your lama doesn't get bored or set in their ways.

For a complete explanation of scoring see the last page of this handout.

INCOMPLETES REFUSALS & OFF COURSE

There is a lot of confusion as to what these are and how they affect scoring in a performance class. Starting with the least serious and working up lets examine each.

INCOMPLETES – will result in a loss of points depending on how serious the problem. If all four feet of your llama enter an obstacle but some part of the obstacle is not finished it will be ruled an incomplete except when less than four feet are required as in a side pass. (Examples: not backing all the way, missing a pole in a weave, not changing pace when requested, taking only one of two jumps, going off the side of a bridge) If your llama doesn't complete an obstacle you may, depending on the rules of the course, be permitted to try again. Usually you must enter at the point of the incomplete as opposed to starting over again. So, if your llama takes the first of two jumps you may be permitted to go back and try the second jump over with an appropriate loss of points.

Always ask the judge about their policy on incompletes at the exhibitor's meeting. If you forget, you may ask the judge if it happens while you are on the course. The judge will have the option of answering or they may say that they cannot tell you anything once you have started.

REFUSALS – result when the llama plants all four feet refusing to move, or it will not respond to pressure on the lead to move, if it steps to the side to avoid the obstacle, or if it steps back from an obstacle. This includes placing fewer than four feet on the obstacle when four are required. You will receive a zero score on the obstacle.

Another good question to ask at the exhibitor's meeting is how many attempts are permitted before you must move on and how many refusals you can accumulate before being asked to leave the course. Most judges allow two attempts at each obstacle. You may be asked to leave the course after three refusals except in youth classes.

OFF COURSE – requires the scorekeeper to place you below any other exhibitor who completes the course correctly. If you forget to take an obstacle, take an additional obstacle, take an obstacle out of sequence or just skip an obstacle you are scored as being *Off Course*. For example, if you complete nine obstacles with perfect 10's and forget the last obstacle your score would be 90. If there are twenty other exhibitors in the class and they all complete the course correctly you would be ranked number 20 even if your score was the highest in the class. This is why it is so important to study the pattern before going into the ring and pay close attention to the walkthrough. If there are obstacles on the course that are not being used, such as a bridge that is too heavy to move, they should be marked with cones blocking the entrance.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Each obstacle on a performance course is worth ten points. The exhibitor with the most points wins the class. In the event of a tie, the judge will have determined tiebreakers to determine the final placing.

When you are in a Showmanship Class a flat lead will fit in your hand easier and looks neater but a flat lead doesn't always tie well. If you are asked to tie a quick release knot or need to tie your llama to put on a pack the lead may come undone. It is for this reason that a round lead is better in Performance Classes.

Most performance classes require the exhibitor and the llama to walk through water. Bring an old pair of shoes or boots and you will save your good show shoes.

STAYING SAFE - is always an important part of any llama activity. In the performance ring there are several things the judge will be looking for.

- ❖ When you make turns of more than $\frac{1}{4}$ revolution always use a haunch turn moving the llama away from you. *Never pull the llama toward you.*
- ❖ When backing, avoid standing directly in front of the llama; it could move forward knocking you down. The proper way to back is to stand on the left side of the llama facing the rear with the lead line in your left hand. Hold the lead just below the snap and guide the llama right or left.
- ❖ Never walk backwards as you lead your llama through an obstacle.
- ❖ Never duck under the lead line to change position
- ❖ Never reach under the llama to pick up a foot
- ❖ Never stand directly in the path you are asking the llama to move in. For example, stand off to the side when asking your llama to exit a trailer.
- ❖ Don't allow your llama to jump off a bridge, stairs, ramps or out of a trailer.
- ❖ Never place your hand on the snap. If the llama jerks its head the snap can open and your llama is gone!
- ❖ Never loop the lead around your hand – if the llama spooks it can drag you
- ❖ It is important that your llama doesn't get out in front of you as you move through the course. Extending your left hand in front of the llama may help prevent this. You also want to think about the direction you are moving. Anytime you move in the direction of the llama it is easy for the llama to get two or three steps out in front of you. For example, if you make a 180-degree turn to the right you will need to pull the llama back to keep even with it. Study the course layout and look for places where this could happen and be prepared to deal with it.

SCORING PERFORMANCE CLASSES

This is a sample of how a judge might score a performance class. Remember every judge uses his or her own system. Just use this as a guide for practicing.

ERROR	POINTS OFF
<u>General errors</u>	
Short or tight lead	1-2
Stop, or hesitate	2-3
Inattentive animal or handler	1-3
Hand on snap	3
Pulling the lama	2-3
Dangling lead (below knee) easy to do if you are bending over	1-2
Lead looped around hand	2-3
Irritated lama	2-4
<u>Backing errors</u>	
Fighting head	2-4
Touch sides	1-2
Step out	2
Zig Zag line	2-3
Out of boundary	2
Turning before end or step over end	2-4
Pushing lama	3-5
Touching lama	2-4
<u>Handler errors</u>	
Wrong decision	1-2
Wrong direction	3-5
Too far in front of lama	3-5
Inappropriate attitude	2-3
Turn wide or close	2-3
Acting in unsafe manner	1-2
Walking backward	3-5
<u>Jump errors</u>	
Poor form or steps over	2-3
Touch	2-3
Knock down	3-5
<u>Bridges/ramps/steps</u>	
Off the side	5-7
Leap off the end	3-7
Form or missing a step	2-4
<u>Pack errors</u>	
Improperly placed / loose	2-5
Does not accept the pack well	3-5
Improper cinching	2-5
Dangling straps / pack compartment not closed	2-3
Improper loading in the pack	3-5
Improper knot tying - loose	2-5
<u>Llama errors</u>	
Out of control	3-6
Nervous or agitated	2-4
Rushing ahead of the handler	3-5
Inattentive or bored	2-3

Each obstacle is scored separately so the same mistake will be counted off at each obstacle. For example, an open pack compartment would cost you 2-3 points per obstacle.