

Certification Countdown



If you have questions about certifying, contact a more experienced CPC member. Most of these to-do's also apply to [Rallies!](#)

The following apply to any horse you intend to use for your certification. It does not matter whether you own the horse or will borrow/lease him for the certification.

Six Months before Certification Date

- ☐ Consider whether or not you want to rate to the next level. Do you have the desire? Will you have the time to ride? Time to study? Will you have an appropriate horse? Will he be ready?
- ☐ Review the [USPC Standards of Proficiency & Test Sheets](#) for that certificate level.
- ☐ Begin learning the bookwork and horse management knowledge required for that certificate level. This is what we cover at our unmounted meetings too!
- ☐ Start (or begin to update) and a [D Level Health Maintenance Record Book](#) for your horse.
- ☐ Take regular lessons (if you aren't already). Have your instructor review the Standards of Proficiency with you; work together to get your riding/horse knowledge to that level. We recommend 1x a week for D1 & D2s and 2x a week for D3 and up.

Three Months before Certification Date

- ☐ Really start conditioning your horse. Be fair to him; get him fit in plenty of time.

Two Months before Certification Date

- ☐ Check your tack and equipment to make sure it is safe and meets Pony Club Standards. Make sure your saddle fits you AND your horse. Replace, buy, repair or borrow anything you need.
- ☐ Make sure you have the equipment required for your certificate (e.g., bandages, longe whip and line, etc.). Practice using it! Break it in if it is new.
- ☐ By now you should have made up your mind about which horse you will ride. It is not safe or fair to the horse (or to you), to decide to use him for a certification with less than two months of preparation, ESPECIALLY at levels D-3 and above!

Six Weeks before Certification Date

- ☐ Start regularly grooming your horse. Consult your manual and the SOPs for Turnout Expectations. Inspect his mane & tail. If he has dandruff, it will take a while to get rid of, so start on it now. Throw in a bath or 2 when you can!
- ☐ Check with the District Commissioner to make sure you are a "member in good standing"; that your account is paid in full and you have participated enough for the DC to know that you are prepared for your testing.
- ☐ Will you be ready? Talk to your trainer & parents. Now is the time to honestly ask yourself if you will be truly ready for the certification by the certification date. If not, it's ok. It is better to prepare more for the next few months and take the certification the next time it is offered so you can confidently perform at the top of the standard.
- ☐ If you have questions, talk to a more experienced CPC member, District Commissioner, Certification Coordinator, or a Board member.
- ☐ If a checklist is required, make a plan to get it updated and signed by an Upper Level Pony Club member or your instructor. Turn in at your rating to the District Commissioner (DC) or Certification Organizer.

- ❑ Make sure your horse has a current negative Coggins test and shot record on file with the club. If not, get it done NOW. It can take a week or more to get back results, so don't wait!
- ❑ Check with the Certification Coordinator about attire; is the certification to require schooling or competition attire? Check your attire to be sure it is in good condition, not torn or stained, and try it on to see if it still fits! Make sure you have/can find everything you need (leather belt, hair net, Pony Club pin, armband, helmet cover, etc.) Replace, buy, or borrow what you need to meet the attire requirements. There is no reason why you cannot meet turn-out expectations at your certification!
- ❑ [Review the Standards of Proficiency again.](#) Are you on track? Go over the Standards with your instructor. Work on your weak points but don't forget to keep practicing your strong points.
- ❑ Continue to learn/review/discuss the bookwork and horse knowledge at your level. Regularly practice the "doing" parts: bandaging, longeing, identifying horses and conformation faults, etc.

Four Weeks before Certification Date

- ❑ Submit your Letter of Intent to Certify to the District Commissioner. **If the Letter of Intent is not complete before the deadline, you may have to wait until the next testing date.**
- ❑ Check your horse's feet. Do they need trimming? Shoeing? If so, make an appointment with your farrier now. Don't expect your horse to perform well with feet that were trimmed just the day before the certification.
- ❑ Intensify your review of your manual, the bookwork and your horse knowledge. By now you should know it, but keep it fresh in your mind. Have somebody orally quiz you. Practice bandaging, longeing, etc.

One Week before Certification Date

- ❑ Trim and/or clip your horse (if required). Make sure his mane and tail are tangle free.
- ❑ Finalize your Health Maintenance Record.
- ❑ Gather your attire, tack and equipment. Don't wait until the last minute to get everything together. Borrow what you can; buy what you need.
- ❑ Give your tack a thorough cleaning. Do a super good job on it now so that the night before your certification, you're not up late looking for leather conditioner and metal polish.
- ❑ Wash saddle pads, blankets, and bandages. Polish your boots.

The Day before the Certification

- ❑ Bathe and thoroughly groom your pony. Give him plenty of rest for the big day.
- ❑ Give your tack and equipment another good cleaning. Since you did an intense cleaning job a few days ago, it shouldn't take much. But don't wait until 11:00 p.m. to start!
- ❑ Pre-load as much of your tack and equipment as you can in the car or trailer. Lay out your attire for the next day. You'll be too nervous or too rushed to think about it clearly then.
- ❑ Don't forget your Pony Club pin, medical armband, and Health Maintenance Record. Pack a lunch & water bottle and hay and water for your horse.
- ❑ Get a good night's rest. You'll benefit more from adequate sleep than last-minute cramming.

Good Luck! If you've followed this countdown and have been honest with yourself about your readiness to certify, you should have no trouble!

