

What is Eventing?

Eventing is, in a nut shell, the Equestrian version of a triathlon. Typically thought of in 3 phases (although there really are a few more): dressage, cross country, and stadium jumping.

There are variations on the theme, such as Two-Phase events or Combined Tests, where the two phases of the event take place on the same day. There are all Three Phase tests where all three phases occur on the same day, however in these cases, the tests themselves are much less demanding than a Three Day Event. Because of the variety of "flavors", a rider interested in this sport doesn't need to jump right into a full fledged Three Day Event.

In a three day event, Day One is Dressage. The test is evaluated according to the horse & rider's harmony and precision, plus the demonstration of the horse's suppleness and obedience to the rider's requests. The challenge for many Eventers is demonstrating a quiet relaxed dressage test with a horse that is on the muscle, which is critical for later phases of the event.

Day Two is Endurance & Cross Country. The primary objective of this phase is to prove the horse has speed, endurance and jumping ability. The Endurance test includes 4 phases: phase A & C are called Roads and Tracks; phase B is the steeplechase; and phase D is the Cross Country phase, which is the best known phase of Day Two. Each of these phases is timed at the recognized level of competition. Phases A through C run back to back. After Phase C, the horse has a compulsory 10 minute rest in the vet box, allowing a panel of judges and veterinarians to check the horse's general condition and soundness. The panel can choose to pull the horse from competition if he is not determined to be fit enough to continue safely.

Those that pass the vet check move on to the Cross Country phase of the Endurance test. This phase generally consists of 24 to 36 fixed obstacles and the course is ridden at a gallop.

Day Three is Show Jumping. The final test of the event takes place in a jumping arena with flat footing and jumps that can be knocked down, in comparison with the cross country phase that can be over a variety of terrain and over solid fences. The third day is not simply a jumping competition, it is intended to demonstrate the horse has stamina and is sound enough and fit enough to jump another round.