

Ready, steady, win!

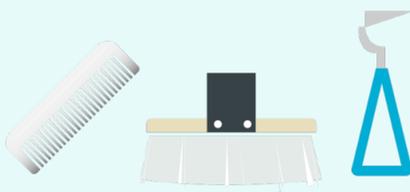
If you want to go from also-ran to top of the class this season, Petplan Equine has advice to help you finish in the ribbons.



Set a goal

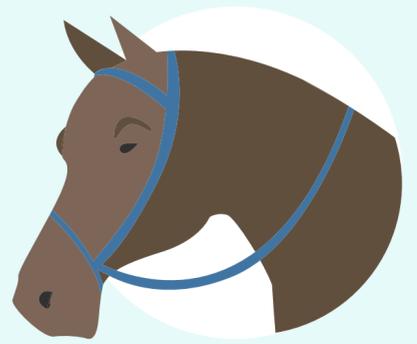
Setting a date for your first competition will give you a clear goal to aim for. Use the time from now to bring your horse up to full fitness and to work through any schooling issues you may have. If you are going to affiliate, register with the relevant societies.

SMARTEN-UP YOUR ACT



It may not be fair, but when it comes to competition, being turned out perfectly can make all the difference

In showing, being immaculately turned out is a requisite. But even in other disciplines, it's worth putting a bit of time and effort into your overall appearance. Is your tack spotless? It is time to give your horse a thorough bath and trim? Do your competition clothes still fit well and look smart? After all, if you look like a winner, you'll feel like a winner, and that could just give you the confidence boost you need to perform at your best.



HEALTH CHECK

Ensure your horse is in optimum condition. Ask your vet to give him an MOT, including checking his back and teeth, and ensure that his worming and vaccination programmes are up to date. A review of his diet may help, too – if you find that your horse is sluggish, runs out of energy or is too excitable at competitions, a change in feed might help. Most big feed companies have a helpline, so ask for advice.

TACK FOR GOOD

A good general-purpose saddle is fine for lower-level competitions, but as you move up, you might want to invest in specialist tack. A neatly cut showing saddle will show off your horse's shoulder and improve his overall appearance in the ring, while dressage and jumping saddles are designed to give you the correct seat for those disciplines.

1

Book in regular appointment with a professional saddle fitter

at least once a year, or more often if your horse is young or changes shape. If his saddle doesn't fit well, it may cause him discomfort, and affect his performance.

2

Saddle designs can vary widely so try as many different types as possible to discover what best suits your needs.

3

The saddle must fit you as well as your horse. The right one will make it easier for you to maintain a good seat.

5

Riser pads and gel pads can be useful, but they shouldn't take the place of a properly fitting saddle.

4

If you use a numnah or saddlecloth make sure it fits properly and doesn't slip down and put pressure on the withers and spine.

