

What Is Color Guard?



The mounted color guard team consists of four (4) riders carrying four (4) flags, one of which must be an American Flag. The mounted team of four must know and observe proper flag protocol at all times. The team begins by entering the arena for a full inspection of all items on each horse and rider, from head to toe. Matching is highly stressed in Color Guard; therefore, teams will need to match as many items as possible to achieve the highest marks within their class.

After inspection, a team will proceed walking along a set pattern in the arena. They will be expected to execute a proper flag salute, and negotiate six 90 degree turns along the course as though they were in a parade route. The team will be judged on their equitation, spacing, alignment, and how well they negotiate the turns. Horses are expected to be calm and quiet during inspection and display good manners during the march.

Color Guard Reference Materials:

[Course Pattern](#) | [Flag Protocol](#) | [Mounts, Dress, Flags & More](#) | [Competition Tips](#)

Competition Tips:

GROUND CREW: A sharp, diligent ground crew is essential to color guard teams. The ground crew provides support and assists the team to be ready for judging. To name a few jobs, they:

- Check each rider, horse and tack, to ensure everything is clean and ready to be judged
- Check each rider/horse to see that items match, that nothing has been forgotten
- Make adjustments, tighten girths, wipe down boots, remove debris from horse, etc.
- They ensure the team is ready and lined up on time for inspection
- Check flags to make sure they are aligned and straight, and that the eagle, if any, on the American Flag is facing into the wind.

JUDGING AREA: When the team receives the signal to move up to the judging area, the team should do so promptly and settle their mounts (leave enough room between horses for judges to walk between the horses for inspection). At this point your team captain will be asked if the team is ready to be inspected. Once, the team captain acknowledges that the team is ready judging begins.

INSPECTION: When the judging begins, riders come to full attention and no one on the color guard team should speak to anyone. Sometimes a judge may give direction or guidance to a team, or ask a question. If the judge has an assistant, the judge may relay this through an assistant. If so, any response should be directed back to the judge through their assistant. For example, a team may be asked to open ranks (riders side pass to increase space between horses), and close ranks (riders side pass back to their original positions). Where competition is “stiff”, this could be a tie-breaking maneuver.

PARADE: Once the inspection is done, the team will be instructed to begin, and/or ride the course. The team must execute a proper salute to the judge(s) at the designated area, and maneuver through left and right handed turns as in a parade route. The team will be judged on their equitation, alignment, spacing, manner of horses, and execution of maneuvers and/or turns. Judging ends when the team crosses out of the judging area.



Mounts, Dress, Flags & More

MOUNTS: Although matching as to size, color, and breed is preferred, the level of applied horsemanship is imperative. Horses should be healthy, in good flesh, with a healthy coat, clean, well groomed, clipped, and feet in good condition. If one mount is unshod, all should be unshod, if one is shod, all should be shod. Horses should display good manners and soundness during all phases of the judging. Mounts are also judged on conformation. Points may be deducted for a severe conformation defect where it impedes the horse's natural mobility. Minor injuries are acceptable if being properly treated and there is no attempt to mask the wound

DRESS/UNIFORMS/ATTIRE/COSTUMES: Clothing should be attractive and distinctive, clean, neat, and pressed. Matching is stressed. Shirts must be long sleeved. Uniforms should fit riders properly. Ties, hats, belts, and riding boots are required, and matching is stressed. "Costumes" are allowed providing they are all the same theme. Matching is stressed. Specific riding disciplines, professional, non-professional, or culture based teams should wear their appropriate attire, i.e., riding habit, uniform, costume of the culture. Gloves are preferable, chaps and jewelry are optional, but if worn, matching stressed, and should be worn by all four (4) riders. Teams should pay attention to small details, i.e., length of pant leg, cut of chaps (if worn). Additional adornments such as belts, belt buckles, hat bands, conchos on belts, chaps, any hair or boot adornments, spurs, spur straps should match and be worn by all four riders. Clothing color/hues should also match.

FLAGS: Flags are to be clean and in good repair. Flags that are dirty and torn or frayed may be penalized. Restraining the ability of the flag to remain unfurled may be penalized. The four (4) required flags may be any combination (American, State, organizational, other), provided the American flag, (required), is carried to the extreme right. All other flags to be carried from right to left by position of importance out of respect for that country, state, or organization. Flag poles and flag boots are to be clean and in good repair, matching preferable. Flag boots should be attached securely and properly and adjusted so that the flags of the four riders are level at the top of the poles. American flag poles are to have eagle tops (eagle must face forward into the wind), while the other poles must have matching spears, pikes, or balls. Spears will be carried in a like manner (cutting the wind or flat against the wind). The American or "National" flag is to be given the utmost respect during all phases of a competition. A proper flag salute is expected during the "line of march" portion of the Color Guard class.

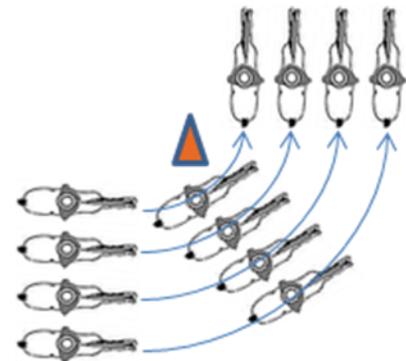
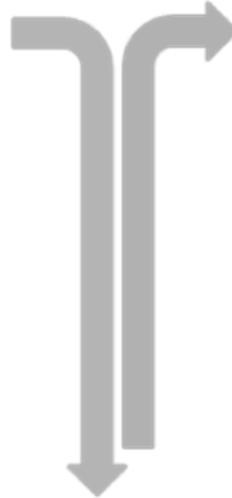
TACK & EQUIPMENT: Tack and equipment must be clean and in good repair along with proper application. Matching is stressed. Points may be deducted if tack is too loose, too tight, or is improperly applied or does not fit properly. All horses are expected to be shown in the bridle; differences can be penalized. All tack and equipment should represent one particular riding discipline, i.e., western, English, side saddle, cavalry, etc. Combinations of tack and equipment can be penalized.

DECORATIONS: Tail bobs and mane decorations such as flowers, streamers, ribbons, foreleg adornments are allowed. Matching is stressed. No decoration should be placed in a manner to impede the natural movement of the horse, or cause a safety hazard. All decoration should be securely attached. Decorative clipping is allowed. Matching stressed. Glitter is allowed. Matching stressed. The use of paint is not recommended. Changing the natural color of body hair, mane or tail, may be penalized at the judge's discretion. Any attempt to cover differences in horse color markings, confirmation results, or injuries can be penalized.

COLOR GUARD COURSE



Note: The American Flag is never dipped or preceded by any other flag.



Flag Salute

(continue moving)

At the first cone team performs a Flag Salute. Flags (NEVER the American Flag) shall be dipped when command is given by the team captain. Team members dress right. On command, flag poles are snapped back into upright position before team reaches the first turn.

When given the signal team parades at a Walk

Judging Begins



Inspection