



USA WORKING EQUITATION  
Guide to WE Tack and Attire



GUIDE TO  
WORKING EQUITATION TACK AND ATTIRE  
IN THE UNITED STATES

22 April 2024

*This guide describes appropriate tack and attire for WE competitions held in the U.S. Its purpose is to promote a greater level of understanding of the traditions and expectations of Working Equitation with respect to tack and attire and enable judges to provide greater consistency in the marks for Presentation while staying true to the spirit of the sport.*



# USA WORKING EQUITATION

## Guide to WE Tack and Attire



### Introduction

*“The Working Equitation discipline was created with the objective of enhancing the equestrian techniques developed in countries whose riders use horses in different aspects of field work. The event therefore provides an occasion for the simultaneous comparison of sporting and cultural considerations.”*

**World Association of Working Equitation (WAWWE)**

The objective is to honor the working traditions – working (field/ranch) disciplines of all countries. In today’s world, in addition to performing actual work on ranches, horses also work at a variety of sports. Even though many of these modern horse sports may have a foundation in a working discipline, they do not represent the working tradition.

The most acceptable Working Equitation tack and attire from working disciplines recognized around the world include the:

- Working Western style of the American cowboy.
- Dressage style which is used in military and working traditions throughout Europe.
- Hunt seat style
- Working nationality styles of European countries such as Portugal and Spain, or Central/South American countries such as Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil.
- Australian style of the stockman.

Riders in U.S. competitions are allowed to compete in the working tack and attire of the nationality of their choosing: it may be the rider’s nationality or the horse’s historic origins, or a working discipline of their choice.

Examples of equine sports attire which are not considered traditional working disciplines include Polo, Endurance, Eventing, Barrel Racing, Saddle Seat, Western Pleasure, Vaulting, Horse Ball, and outfits such as medieval, military reenactment, or breed show costumes.

**Note:** Requirements detailed in U.S. Rules for Working Equitation, section 1.9, take precedence over this document. In particular, use of rider protective gear will not be penalized for any outfit.

## 1. Working Western

American cowboy tack and attire is the true traditional equipment of working horsemen of the United States. This image may vary significantly from region to region; all variations are recognized and allowed.

### Attire

- Hat: Western cowboy hat shaped to personal preference, with or without a hatband and/or stampede string. Usually made of felt, straw, or palm.
- Shirt: Long-sleeved western-style shirt, with cuffs, collar, and button or snap front. Pockets are optional. Usually of conservative colors and patterns.
- Tie: a bolo, rosette, scarf, necktie, wild rag, kerchief, or pin is acceptable.
- Pants: Trousers, pants, or “jeans” or a **split-leg riding skirt** are acceptable in conservative colors.
- Belt: A leather belt with buckle is standard but not mandatory.
- Coat: Conservative vests or jackets are acceptable, but not mandatory. If worn, they should be buttoned/snapped closed.
- Chaps: Chaps or chinks are optional.
- Boots: ‘Cowboy’ or western riding boots of any length from calf to knee with a proper riding heel are required.
- Spurs: Strap-on spurs with or without heel chains, jingle bobs, or other adornments are considered standard attire. Roweled spurs must be free spinning. Spurs are not mandatory.



## Tack

All tack should be in shades of brown or black. Natural leather is preferable.

Any proper working stock saddle is acceptable. Common western saddles are roping, Wade, slick fork, reining, equitation, cutting, or trail, with or without a breast collar and/or back cinch.

Any standard saddle blanket or combination of blankets in conservative colors and patterns is acceptable.

## 2. Dressage

### Attire

A short riding jacket or cutaway coat (modified tailcoat) is acceptable. Any single-color jacket or coat is permitted, or may have subtle pin striping, checks, or tweeds. Striped or multi-colored jackets or coats are not suitable. Jackets/coats are not required.



Vests of any type are permitted but not required. Vests may be worn underneath a riding jacket or alone. A body protecting or inflatable vest specifically designed for use in equestrian sport may be worn in any trial.

White, light, or dark colored breeches or jodhpurs are permitted. Bright colors and patterns are not permitted. Contrast piping is acceptable.

Shirts may be of any color. If jackets are not worn, the shirt may not have a bold pattern. Ties, chokers, or stock ties may be any color, but are not required.



Tall boots or paddock/jodhpur boots with half chaps made of smooth leather or leather-like material are appropriate. The chaps should match the color of the boots. Boots of coordinating colors are permitted. All boots must have a distinguishable heel.

Protective headgear must be worn. It may be the same color or coordinating color with the coat and/or boots.

Gloves are optional.



## USA WORKING EQUITATION Guide to WE Tack and Attire



### Tack

Dressage tack may be black or brown. Bridles must have a browband, throatlatch, and cavesson or noseband. The headstall must be made of leather or leather-like material. Reins may be made of leather, leather-like material, or webbing.

Saddles are an English-style modeled for dressage.

An El Campo saddle (made by DP Saddlery), black or brown, plain or two-tone, is considered legal under USAWE guidelines. It is also legal as a USDF dressage saddle.

The saddle pad can be a square or a fitted pad. White pads, with or without colored trim, or pads of conservative colors are acceptable.

Dressage tradition is that manes are braided.

### **3. Military**

Current and retired members of the armed services and police units may ride in the uniform of their service. All riders in uniform must wear a hat or protective headgear.

#### 4. Hunt Seat

##### Attire

A short riding jacket should be in muted shades of brown, green, or gray. Tweed, small check, or herringbone patterns are allowed. Navy blue or black jackets are also allowed.

A neutral-colored show shirt is worn with a choker, muted color necktie, or a stock tie fastened with a horizontal pin.

Breeches may be buff, canary, tan, rust, or white.

If a vest is worn, it is traditionally yellow or a muted check.

Tall field or dress boots are worn. Boots may be black or brown.

Helmets are worn. Gloves are traditional, in a neutral color or brown. Spurs are optional.

The rider's hair is kept contained, usually in a net or bun.



##### Tack

Tack should be brown leather.

Bridles are plain, with no 'bling.' Snaffle, pelham, or full bridles with cavesson nose bands are traditional.

Saddles are of the forward cut (jumping or all-purpose) style. Saddle pads are white and should match the shape of the saddle.

Hunt seat tradition is that manes and tails are braided.

## 5. Portuguese

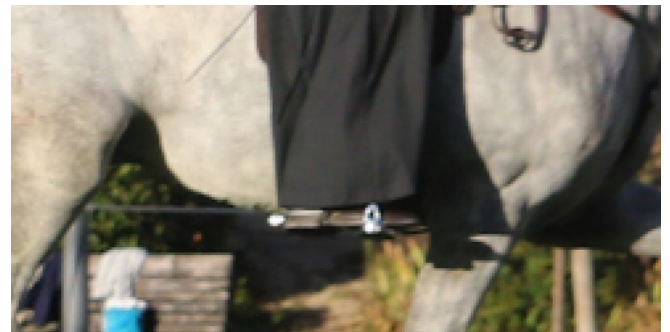
### Attire

The jacket is cropped short at the waist and can have a variety of collar styles or be collarless. Sleeves are cuffless and may have a stripe of fabric with buttons. The jacket can come in a variety of fabrics as long as they are in neutral or gem tones. The fur collar is appropriate in cold weather.

Pants are straight cut without a cuff, falling to the ankles. Pants should never be shorter than the length of the saddle. Skirts/pants should be a neutral color. The skirt should be no higher than the rider's ankle and no lower than the heel.

The waistband is high, with three buttons visible above the waist and two small pockets.

Spurs should be Portuguese styled, entering onto the boot where the leather and heel meet. Spurs can be slip on or buckle style.



### Tack

Example of different Portuguese tack and attire; all are appropriate. Each is wearing a traditional bridle, breastplate, and *xairol* (fur that sits behind the saddle). Horses are braided including the forelock; this is standard and any less is frowned upon. Tack sets are a variety of shades of brown, or all black; they should not be mixed black and brown.



The first rider is in a traditional Portuguese saddle; the rest are in a Portuguese Working Equitation saddle (*Relvas*).

A DP El Campo saddle may be considered a modified Portuguese saddle and used with Portuguese attire, but it won't earn as high a presentation score as a traditional Portuguese saddle.



Appropriate double bridle and bits for WE. Bridle has rectangular buckles. Oval buckles are also appropriate.



The Portuguese tradition is that manes and tails are braided. Free flowing manes are a distraction and can prove difficult to manage if they get caught on something.

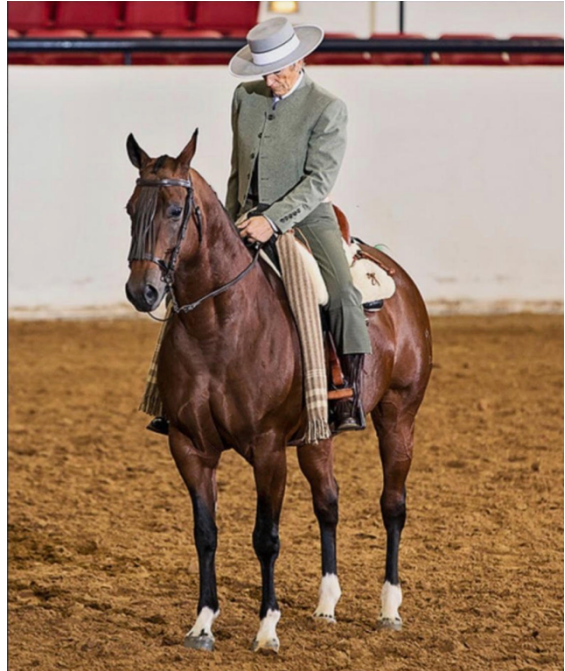
## 6. Spanish

### Attire

The Vaquera style jacket has a rounded collar and no lapels. To be correct the jacket has five buttons at the front and five on each sleeve. Only the top button should be buttoned (it is considered incorrect to ride without the jacket buttoned). The jacket should be a conservative or muted color. Neon colors are not permitted.

A waistcoat matching the color of the coat is also worn; it should have five buttons on the front and all should be buttoned.

Pants are a somber color, either gray striped, black, or a color to match or complement the jacket. The pants rise high into the waist with suspenders. Pants may have either turned up white cuff or have a mid-calf panel with *caireles* (decorative ornaments) inserted in the buttonholes. Spanish pants are worn shorter, with the cuff between mid-calf and ankle.



Boots are natural leather; brown, never black.

A long-sleeved plain white shirt with no frills is worn under the jacket. The top button must be buttoned. Ideally, the sleeves of the cuff are just visible, protruding beyond the sleeves of the jacket.

A colorful scarf or sash is worn around the waist, knotted with the ends traditionally tied around the suspenders with no loose ends. This outfit is worn with brown shoes or short boots with *polainas* (Spanish half chaps).

Hats have a wide, flat, and stiff brim and crown. The color should complement the clothing color. If a chin strap is used, it goes under the chin, not the neck.

The outfit is the same for both men and women.

### Tack

Bridles may be black or brown, with or without a throatlatch. Plain leather is preferred. Buckles are traditional black Spanish style. A mosquero should be used; the mosquero can be made of leather or horsehair.

The bit is blackened steel. Bridle reins should have the end of the rein wrapped around itself to make one continuous rein.

The Spanish tradition is that manes and tails are braided.



Saddles can be Vaquera (see previous page) or Alta Escuela style (shown here). The saddle is rectangular in shape and covered with sheepskin, having a raised, rounded cantle at the back. It has a canvas underside and is placed directly on the horse without a saddle pad. The colors of the leather showing at the cantle or pommel may be dark brown, black, or natural. The stirrups are blackened steel, triangular in shape. Vaquera should be worn with a crupper; the crupper strap matches the color of the saddle. A crupper is not obligatory for Alta Escuela.

A DP El Campo saddle may be considered a modified Spanish saddle and used with Spanish attire, but it won't earn as high a presentation score as a traditional Spanish saddle.

## 7. Australian Stock Horse

### Attire

- Hat: Western style felt hat or ASTM/SEI-approved safety helmet.
- Shirt: Light to medium colored shirt. Plain, striped, or checked pattern is acceptable.
- Tie: Tie can be plain colored or striped.
- Jacket: Plain colored or tweed hacking jacket (not leather or suede) or V-neck sweater or vest. Jackets may be removed in hot weather.
- Pants: Light colored, stockman-cut trousers, jodhpurs, or jeans are permitted.
- Boots: Elastic-sided riding boots or high-top boots worn inside trousers. Boots must have a heel. Spurs are optional.



*Note:* Bright colors are not appropriate.

### Tack

- Australian-style bridle with single leather or webbed reins. Closed or split reins may be used. Hackamores and bosals are not permitted.
- Australian-style stock saddles and fender saddles are permitted. Western saddles or saddles with a horn are not permitted.
- Stockman's breastplate is optional.
- Square-cut, understated saddle cloths are appropriate.
- Entry numbers may be presented in a breastplate holder, on the saddle cloth, or the bridle.





## USA WORKING EQUITATION Guide to WE Tack and Attire



### Guidelines for Scoring

- Consider completeness, appropriateness, and continuity of the working outfit; cleanliness of tack and attire; cleanliness of the horse; and turnout and condition of horse.
- Do not be afraid to use the full scale, especially if a rider has made an extra effort with respect to their turnout.
- A non-working outfit but otherwise well-presented should earn a mark no higher than 6.
- Mixing traditions or styles will result in a mark no higher than 5.
- Any dirt/stains on the horse should be a negative mark.
- An unbraided horse may earn a lower mark for Dressage, Spanish, and Portuguese presentations (this is a more serious infraction for Spanish and Portuguese).
- A piece of tack (e.g., bit, saddle) allowed by the Rulebook or this Guide but not traditional for the discipline presented may earn a lower mark.

It is up to the judges to become educated about tack and attire of these working traditions. This should not be an area where personal preference influences the marks.