

Para Equestrian Information Sheet

About the sport

Para equestrian debuted at the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics. It is a multi-impairment sport in which athlete and horse become one.

Athletes perform a series of prescribed movements with their horse (a dressage test). Judges score the dressage test based on the accuracy of the movements, fluidity, harmony and overall impression of the performance. Athletes are judged on the accuracy and quality of their riding, their horse's behaviour in gaits and halts, artistic finesse and other aspects of their performance. All Para equestrian events are mixed, with athletes competing together across five classes. Athletes can use compensating aids depending on their sport class or individual needs.

Who can compete?

Para equestrian is open to athletes with recognised underlying health condition causing an eligible impairment. Athletes are required to submit medical reports and meet the minimum impairment criteria to compete.

Para Equestrian Eligible impairments

Eligible impairments	Description	Minimum Impairment Criteria
Muscle weakness/Impaired muscle power	Muscle weakness or paralysis from conditions such as muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, nerve damage, spinal cord injury or other spinal conditions or change in muscle origin/insertion.	Greater than 15% loss of power, in at least one upper and/or lower limb
Impaired Passive Range of Movement	Restricted movement or tightness in a joint/s from conditions such as joint fusions and other restricting conditions.	Greater than 15% loss of range of movement in at least one upper and/or lower limb

Eligible impairments	Description	Minimum Impairment Criteria
Limb Loss/ Limb length difference	Total or partial absence of bones or joints, or significant difference in limb length, as a consequence of trauma, illness, or congenital deficiency.	Loss of length must be significant, usually around 7cm or more with a greater than 15% loss of power, or range of movement in at least one upper and/or lower limb.
Short Stature	Reduced standing height and limb length from an underlying health condition such as include achondroplasia, growth hormone dysfunction, and osteogenesis imperfecta.	Height less than 129cm Note: Cannot be internationally classified until the athlete is 18 years old (reached musculoskeletal maturity)
Co-ordination impairments – Hypertonia/ Spasticity, Motor Ataxia, Dyskinesia	Impairments from neurological conditions such as acquired brain injury, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis that affect co-ordination and smoothness of movement and balance.	Greater than 15% loss of coordination in at least one upper and/or lower limb.
Vision Impairment	Impairment of the eye structure, optic nerves or pathways, or vision area of the brain, resulting in a loss of vision in both eyes. Caused by conditions such as albinism, macular degeneration, macular or cone rod dystrophy and retinitis pigmentosa.	Visual acuity loss in both eyes (how far they can see) with best corrected vision. Vision is less than or equal to 2.60 (log MAR 1.5-2.6 inclusive); or Visual field restriction in both eyes (how wide they can see) of less than 10 degrees diameter with best corrected vision.

Para Equestrian Sport Classes

Sport Class	Description (Guide Only)
I	Athletes have impairments affecting all limbs and trunk. They perform walk-only tests and limit the sharpness of their turns due to balance challenges on the horse.
II	Athletes have either trunk impairment with a minimal upper limb impairment, or moderate impairment of the trunk, upper limbs, and lower limbs. They perform walk and trot tests. In Freestyle Tests, they may demonstrate canter work and lateral movements in walk and trot.
III	Athletes have impairments in both lower limbs with minimal or no trunk impairment, or moderate impairment across the upper limbs, lower limbs, and trunk. They perform walk, trot, and canter tests. In Freestyle Tests, they may demonstrate lateral work and single flying changes.
IV	Athletes have impairments affecting both upper limbs, all four limbs, or short stature, as well as those with unilateral impairments or visual impairments (B1). They can circle, walk, trot, and canter tests with lateral work and flying changes in Freestyle.
V	Athletes have mild impairments (movement, muscle strength, or limb deficiency). They perform advanced movements including walk, trot, canter, lateral work, canter half-pirouettes, and 3-4 time flying changes in Freestyle Tests. Grade V also includes athletes with visual impairment equivalent to (B2).
Not Eligible	
Not Eligible (NE)	Rider does not meet the minimum criteria for the Para equestrian sport classes but may still be able to compete. Contact Equestrian Australia for more information

Each grade has different approved compensating aids available to athletes based on their specific impairments and functional abilities.



Find out more

To get involved or for more information contact:

Equestrian Australia

W: www.equestrian.org.au

E: info@equestrian.org.au

To obtain a classification contact classification@equestrian.org.au

Note: The classification information provided is intended as a guide only. Only authorised classifiers are able to provide a formal classification in accordance with the rules of the sport. Not all classes may have events at the Paralympic Games.

