

Things to think about when walking the course

Source Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-country_equestrianism

Questions

Name	Description
Type of fence	certain obstacles, such as a coffin or drop, need to be approached in a more collected, slower manner than other obstacles, such as a very wide oxer or a single brush fence.
Footing	to determine when they may need to slow down, which shoe studs would provide the best traction, and to alert them to footing changes which may surprise their horses (such as bluestone on the takeoff and landing of a jump, which back some horses off).
Lighting	light and dark questions occur when the horse must gallop into or out of woods or through shadows. Because the horse's eyes do not adjust quickly to light, great care must be taken on the approach to fences that are set near the boundary of a drastic change in light.
Terrain	fences ridden up or downhill require a particular type of ride, as do fences with a drop on landing.
Line	the particular route a rider is going to take over an obstacle. This is especially important for combinations involving skinnies and corners, as a rider that can not hold a line will have a glance off from the horse, or from combinations that need to be angled to make the striding or to save time.
Striding	between combination obstacles, to indicate whether the rider needs to shorten or lengthen the horse's stride. Striding will vary according to the height and width of the obstacle, whether it is in water, on a hill, or going up or down a bank.
Openness	areas that are more open, such as a field, generally encourage forwardness from the horse. Galloping tracks through the woods, especially if they are windy, lose forwardness from the horse.
Course layout	courses that are "gallopy" with plenty of room between fences can help encourage a horse that is less brave, as the rider has plenty of room to get him forward and into a rhythm. They also give the rider a chance to make up time. Fences that are jumped towards other horses (such as toward warmup or stabling) generally make a horse more confident and eager. Additionally, the layout of the various "questions" a course designer asks can help build a horse's confidence: for example, a combination into water at the beginning of a course will help set up the horse for success for a more difficult drop fence into water later on in the course.
"Bogey" fences	obstacles that may be of concern to a particular horse or rider (for examples, some horses are less brave when jumping into water or over a ditch). These need to be ridden with extra confidence from the rider.
Distractors	this includes livestock that are pastured near the course (such as cows and sheep), decorations on the fences which may scare certain horses, flags, etc. At the larger venues, such as the CCI**** events, crowds can be very distracting to some horses.