



Guide to the
Registered Journeyman Farrier™
Examinations

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***The Guild of Professional Farriers
Guide to the
Registered Journeyman Farrier™ exam.***

This Guide exists to aid farriers who are preparing to take the RJF™ exam and Examiners who will be administering it. The RJF exam is designed to recognize the knowledge and skills that a competent, full-time farrier should already have, so the guidelines listed here will probably describe the way you normally shoe horses in the field. They are not hard and fast rules, nor are they the only aspects of farriery that might be considered by the Examiner.

The exam has three phases...

A **written phase** that may cover any and all technical aspects of applied farriery.

A **forgework phase** for which you should produce a sample shoe board ahead of time. The board must include the following handmade, modified plain, or modified rim keg shoes:

-Welded straight and eggbars.

-Some device to raise the heels (affixed wedge pad, wedged shoe, blocked heels, patten shoe, etc.).

-Some device to immobilize the hoof wall (like multiple clips, a continuous clip, or some kind of high density cast if the applicant can demonstrate and explain how to use it to the Examiner's satisfaction).

-A device to apply controlled frog pressure (like a heartbar shoe, a properly carved Thera-Flex or similar insert. Lilly pads on their own do not meet the requirement since the range of preinstallation adjustment is negligible).

-A toe-weighted shoe and a side-weighted shoe.

-Attached calks (welded or brazed-on toe or jar calks, or drill & tap calks, or drive-ins)

-A device to provide hard-surface traction. (Such as borium)

The Examiner may request that one shoe from the board be reproduced at the time of examination.

And a **live shoeing phase**, during which the applicant will be required to shoe a horse all around with handmade shoes of a style and type suitable for the horse. Ample time is allowed to complete the work.

The Written Test:

There will be ample time to read and consider each question on the exam. Each of the multiple choice questions has a “*B and C*” and “*All of the above*” type option. If the correct answer is “*B and C*”, just “*B*” will **not** be accepted. So be careful.

In the diagram sections, be sure not to select a joint when a bone is what should be indicated or vice-versa. Pay attention to the questions... A common error in most written exams is to answer a question other than the one that was really asked.

Most of the information in the written exams is covered in popular textbooks like Doug Butler’s *Principles of Horseshoeing* and magazines like *ANVIL* and the *American Farriers Journal*. But do not forget what experience in the field has taught you. It will apply to some of the questions.

You will need to know practical anatomy, biomechanics (what each part does), special shoe uses, and be ready to answer any question you might encounter in practice.

Forgework Guidelines:

Shoes for the shoe board should be prepared just as though they were going to be applied to a client’s horse. All shoes must be functional, and a high degree of workmanship is expected.

Consistent use of the “easiest way out” when it comes to shoe fabrication may give the Examiner reason to suspect that the applicant’s skills are lacking. Applicants should keep this in mind when fabricating their shoe boards.

Shoes should not be fastened to a board in any

way that prevents them from being removed for inspection.

General Live Shoeing Evaluation:

As a general approach to evaluating, the Examiner will look first for harmful mistakes. If he finds a single thing that is just plain bad (full-web sole pressure, knife quick, failure to cover the buttress, sharp edges exposed, etc...) he won't need to any look farther. This certainly isn't journeyman-level work, and will be failed.

Then the Examiner will look for functional flaws that aren't immediately harmful. (A shoe heel that extends a little over the frog. Maybe a 3/16" difference in paired hoof lengths without conformational justification. A hint of daylight between the shoe and hoof at one quarter...) These are the kinds of flaws even very good working farriers occasionally suffer in the real world, and one or two such faults might be tolerated in the test... But not many.

Finally, the Examiner will look for workmanship. Things that have little or no direct consequence to the function of the shoeing job, but show an attention to detail and give the job a look that clients will respect. (Neat fullering, even nail spacing, attractive clinch shape, polished hoof finish...) If the shoeing job has no functional flaws, a few short-cuts in workmanship might be tolerated. But if there are one or two minor functional flaws, the overall workmanship had better be very nice to make up for it. Even if there

are no functional flaws in the job, “chronic” poor workmanship can be grounds for failure.

If the applicant wishes, the Examiner should go over the job and pick it apart with him, pass or fail. It was explained to one applicant that very minor sole pressure on one foot combined with rather ugly (but functional) fullering put his job on the borderline. But his good horsemanship with a spoilt horse swung judgment in his favor. (It also didn't hurt that he managed to do a really great job of cold-fitting the hind clips, or that the paired hooves were perfect mirror-images.)

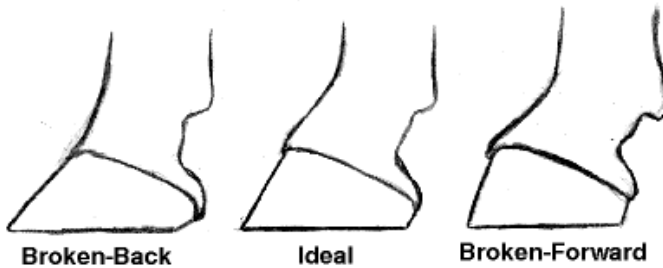
Specific Live Shoeing Guidelines:

(The word “must” in a sentence indicates that non-compliance may be considered grounds for failing the entire shoeing job. The word “should” indicates something that may be considered a fault, but not grounds for failing the job by itself.)

Sole trimming: Normally, only the loose sole should be removed. If the horse has a thick retained sole, more aggressive sole trimming may be needed. Trimming the sole should not significantly reduce protection of the hoof's internal structures, and must not expose sensitive tissue.

Frog trimming: Loose or ragged pieces of the frog may be trimmed away for hygienic purposes. The sides of the frog may be trimmed to allow better cleaning access to the commissures. Prolapsed frog tips may be trimmed to identify the true frog apex. Trimming the frog should not significantly reduce protection of the hoof's internal structures, and must not expose sensitive tissue.

Hoof angle: Unless it was determined before the work began that a shoeing method would be employed to bring the point of breakover back, the hoof/pastern axis must not be broken-back. The hoof/pastern axis should not be more than slightly broken forward. Insomuch as conformation will allow, paired hooves should have comparable angles.

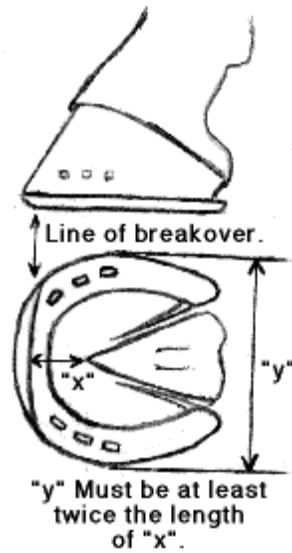


Toe Length: The toes of the hooves should be trimmed to a length appropriate to the breed, type, and use of the horse. Insomuch as conformation will allow, paired hooves should have equal lengths.

Nailing (solar view): All nails should be placed forward of the widest part of the hoof. Nail heads should be seated well into the shoe, and should leave sufficient head exposed for secure clinching. Extra space between the first and second nail holes on each branch may be allowed if quarter clips are to be used. At least two nails must be used on each branch. At least three nails per branch should be used on average or larger sized hooves.

Shoe placement: From the solar viewpoint, the frog should point to the center of the shoe, and a line through the center of the frog should also cut the shoe into equal halves. The distance from the tip of the frog to the line of breakover must not be greater than half the width of the shod foot at its widest part.

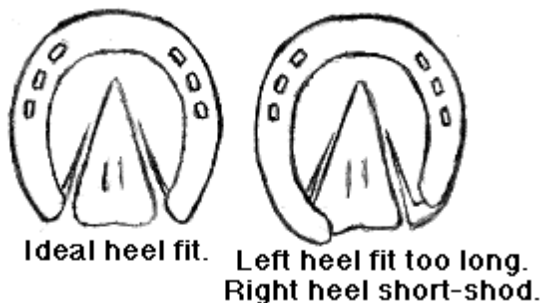
Viewed from the sides, the clinched shoe should be in continuous contact with the wall. It must at least be firmly in contact with the wall at both heels, unless it was agreed that a heel should be “floated” before the work began.



Sole pressure: The shoe must not press against the sole of the hoof. Ideally, it should be possible to slide the corner of a business card between the inner edge of the shoe and the sole of the hoof from one bar around to the other.

Heel fit (from above): The shoe must be fit full at least the thickness of a nickel at the heels, and must extend behind the buttresses at least the same amount. The shoe may be fit longer, to extend back under the bulbs and/or to a line ‘dropped’ through the cannon bone. If the heel quarter(s) of the hoof are contracted, the shoe may be fit full (up to 1/3 the width of the web) to provide support. Any time more than a nickel's thickness of metal is exposed, the edges must be sufficiently boxed.

Heel fit (solar view): The shoe must extend backwards at least to the widest part of the frog. The buttresses must be covered. The shoe should not extend over the frog itself, or interfere with hoof-pick access to the commissures.



Clinch height: Clinches should be $\frac{3}{4}$ " or higher, and all clinches on each foot should be nearly equal in height insomuch as is possible considering old nail holes and other flaws in the wall. Clinches under $\frac{3}{4}$ " high might not be considered a fault if the nails were started sufficiently coarse to allow secure "fishhook" nailing.

Finishing: The finished hoof wall should be straight from coronary band to the shoe surface, with no flares. The outer wall may be rasped before and/or after the shoe is nailed on, but should not appear bull-nosed or dubbed unless a squared-toe shoe or derotational approach was agreed upon before the work began. Rasp marks should be kept to a minimum. The clinches should be smooth and similar in shape and size, but should not be rasped too thin to be serviceable. All exposed metal on the hoof side of the shoe must be rounded and free of any sharp edges. The finished hoof should have a neat appearance. Use of a clear sealant is optional, but non-clear finishes may not be used.

Clips: When required by the Examiner, clips should be approximately as high as the shoe stock is wide. Clips must be either set into the wall or fit firmly against the outside of the wall. When set into the wall, clips may be burned into place, or a tool may be used to cut a seat into the wall to receive the clip. Each clip should be sufficiently thick for useful strength, but should not take excessive metal from the web of the shoe. Clips may be started with any tool and method the applicant wishes to employ.

Fullering: When required by the Examiner, fullering the stock before it is turned and creasing it after it has been turned will be considered equal for testing purposes. Fullering must be deep enough and clean enough to allow crease nail puller access to the nails. Fullering should taper neatly to a close near the heels. When the toe is not fullered, the fullering for each branch may start abruptly before the toe nail hole, or may start with a neat taper. A secure seat must be provided for the nail heads, and a forepunch may be used after the fuller.



Either style of fullering
is acceptable.

Live Shoeing Procedure:

Before shoeing begins, the applicant will be given as much time and space as is available to examine the horse, both before and after any old shoes have been removed. He may ask to have the horse walked or trotted for observation. The applicant will then report to the Examiner any defects or unsoundnesses that may affect the shoeing job, and make his recommendations as to how the horse should be shod according to its conformation, use, type, condition, etc. The applicant and Examiner will then work out a detailed written plan for how the horse is to be shod, with the Examiner having the final say in what will be required. The applicant will be allowed to see this written plan before shoeing begins, and to refer to it during the work.

The Examiner will judge the finished shoeing job on a pass/fail basis, with the written plan as a guideline.

Examination Clinics:

Ideally, an Examination Clinic should be a two-day event. Individuals, Guild Chapters, farrier or equestrian groups may sponsor and organize the clinic in conjunction with the Guild. Write or email the Guild for clinic organization details.

A Guild Registration Examiner must be in charge of the testing. If the number of applicants warrants, he may enlist the aid of established Registered Journeymen Farriers as examination assistants. Farrier students and interested horsemen should be welcome to attend the event for educational purposes, but should not be allowed to crowd or otherwise bother applicants when they are taking the exams.

The first day of the event should be used as a chance for the Examiner and applicants to get comfortable in the facilities. The Examiner may conduct a general hands-on clinic, and will evaluate the applicants' shoe boards. The applicants will reproduce the selected shoes from their boards.

The first afternoon/evening of the event should close with the administration of the written examinations.

The live shoeing exams should be administered the second day, along with any make-up shoe board exams.

The second afternoon/evening could be used for second-chance written exams. (New versions.)

Testing fees:

Other than regular membership dues, the Guild does not charge for examinations. The organizers of the Examination Clinic may charge a clinic fee to cover costs including the Examiner's travel expenses.