

## Where to Begin

You may consider beginning this sport with a competitive ride.

Competitive riding is paced at a rate of 5 to 7.5 miles per hour. If you have a horse ranging in age from 4 years to 7 years this is a more compatible rate of speed for that age range. Some Arabs for example, do not mature until 7 years old. Heart rate and respiration are developed quite quickly in this sport, but it takes at least a year of competition to strengthen the tendons and ligaments of your horse's legs. These are very important parts of your horse's anatomy. If these are developed with care you should be able to do mile after mile on your mount.

Distances can range from 25 to 30, 35, 40 and 50 miles in a day. If you choose to do longer distances than 25 miles, these increments allow you to increase distance at a reasonable pace.

The limited distance endurance level was initially introduced into this sport as a stepping-stone to encourage individuals to move up to 50 mile endurance rides. It can be easy for a new horse and rider to get caught up in the moment of a limited distance ride. Competitive riding is done at a controlled pace and will teach both the new excited horse and the rider the control needed to keep you going for miles and miles.

Remember any horse can run like the wind but we all need to know how to walk first. These are just a few facts to consider before choosing at which level you wish to compete.

Submitted by Julie Roe