

Vaulting Club Structure and Management

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HOW TO FORM A CLUB

Why form a club?

- Why not just let the person who is in charge, run things and make all the decisions?
- *The most important reason is to share the work and responsibilities.*
 - If your program is run by one person and that person gets “burned out”, you no longer have a program.
 - Have a meeting with the horse owner and facility owner to determine their level of commitment and interest.
 - Present your goals and proposed contributions to the program.
 - If club members volunteer to help with the day-to-day demands of running a program, the head coach, horse owner or facility owner will feel that their contributions (usually the largest) are appreciated and that the families involved share his or her commitment to the sport.
 - A club also allows members to input their concerns and ideas.

How to form a club

- If you plan to form a 4-H, Pony Club or Camp vaulting club, your organizational format is pre determined by the rules of your parent organization.
- You should be able to get all the materials and information you need by contacting the national or main offices of those organizations
- The resources of the American Vaulting Association are at your service
 - Email nationaloffice@americanvaulting.org (mail 8205 Santa Monica Blvd., #1-288, West Hollywood, CA 90046-5912 or phone 323-654-0800 if you cannot access the internet).
 - Visit the AVA Website (www.americanvaulting.org) to find vaulting clubs with which to network and many other resources to help you.
 - Phone coaches and managers to begin a dialogue about how to begin your club.
 - The AVA will be happy to put you together with another club to “mentor” your organization and activities
- The American Vaulting Association offers a variety of books, videos, and other materials which will help.
- Your group may include experienced managers, directors or just incredibly organized individuals. Reach out for the existing expertise you have available.
- Talk with managers of other youth organizations.
- Most vaulting clubs are started at a private facility by one or two enthusiastic parents.
- Networking is vital.

What do your members want?

- The first step is an introductory meeting of your group’s members to find out just how they want the club to function.
- This includes finding out how much time the members are willing to commit for helping to run the program.
- Be prepared by gathering as much information about the expectations and logistics of the proposed program as possible.

What do members want? (continued)

- Prepared material for the introductory meeting could include:
 - A few goals or priorities for the members
 - A variety of realistic time vs dollar commitments

- A copy of another club's constitution and bylaws; realistic dollar and time needed to meet the goals.
- Be prepared to answer some of the most commonly asked questions
 - How much will it cost? (Budget)
 - *You CAN create a program with your resources*
 - *Be creative and inventive.*
 - *A simple spread sheet computer program can show "what if" clearly.*
 - How much time will it involve? (Schedule)
 - *Week end AND week day practices may be needed to serve all families.*
 - *Families unable or unwilling to spend time helping should be asked to contribute cash so that the ones who do work, don't feel overused.*
 - *Schedule the jobs which need to be done by volunteers (working horses, cleaning tack, etc.)*
 - Who will be in charge? (Organization)
 - *It is vital to be VERY clear about who is in charge of the horse and the facility use.*
 - Decisions about the vaulting practices don't mean anything if there are misunderstandings about horse use.
 - *Who will collect money for practices and events?*
 - *Who will decide which vaulters will compete and at what level?*

Budget - Annual Expenses

- You can make educated guesses.
- Be general or present price ranges.
- Nothing is carved in stone until you prepare a contract for your members to sign.
- Horse
 - Includes horse rent, stabling, feed, farrier, training
 - You must specify what the club will cover.
 - A minimal veterinarian bill could wipe out a club.
- Facility
 - Includes arena rent, footing, storage or other space rent, insurance
 - The owner may have other users of the facility so be clear about how your program interacts with others.
- Coaches
 - Calculate payment to coach(s) per class times number of practices for the year
 - You may want to start out with one practice per week and move to two or three when school is out.
- Equipment
 - Includes surcingle, barrel, tack, exercise equipment
 - If you do not need to purchase any new equipment, create a fund for repairs and maintenance.
- Communication
 - Mailing of a monthly newsletter or creation of a website with monthly updates
 - The better communication you have, the less problems you will have with your members
- Competitions
 - Decide how much (if any) the club will subsidize club activities
 - Team and/or individual entries

Budget - Annual Expenses (continued)

- Coach and longeur travel, housing and feeding
- Horse transport, stall costs
- Payments to parent organizations (AVA/USEF, USPC, 4-H, etc.)
- Try to anticipate. Financial surprises are not fun.

Budget - Annual Income

- Club Membership fees
- Fund raising activities

- Donations (contact the AVA for information about becoming a “Non-Profit” organization).
- If you find you cannot support the program you want with the funds you anticipate, consider scaling back (less practices, less horses, recreational vs competitive programs, etc.)
- Some issues which may come up are:
 - How to handle families with more than one vaulter
 - How to prorate costs across the year for a seasonal program
 - How to handle costs for initial purchases like a barrel which may be paid for over several years.
 - Consider offering some discount to families who have more than one vaulter. If you can afford it, offer discounts for volunteer help.

Sample Budget

- 10 vaulters participating in two practices per week for four months:
- Horse (stabling, feed, farrier, training) \$1000,
- Facility (insurance, arena rent, storage rent, footing) \$1000,
- Coaching (50 practices at \$20 per practice) \$1000.
- Competition subsidies, transport, etc. \$400
- Total expenses = \$3400
- Per vaulter per month $(\$3400/10)/4 = \85

Schedule

- Plan an organizational meeting to introduce members to each other and raise the most basic issues
 - A pizza night or some other event to encourage *FAMILIES* to come will ensure more participation.
 - You can show respect for everyone’s busy schedules by being prepared with lots of take-home material.
- Your first club meeting should choose officers, appoint groups to work on organizational matters like the scope of the club’s activities and fees.
 - Committees should be given very specific responsibilities and DEADLINES.
 - It is far better to write up a proposal and have it changed than to not have any proposal at all.
- Vaulting practices including the names of the vaulters and specifically the days and times for each vaulter to come to practice.
 - It is helpful to make this schedule for at least three months ahead.
 - Prepare a roster of team members so that they can carpool and organize themselves.
 - The more clear and specific you are with your calendar, the better.
 - Families need to have plenty of time to plan.
- Any demonstrations, competitions or other events should be listed on the schedule as soon as possible and the schedule should be posted at the practice site *AND* distributed to all families involved as soon as possible.
 - A member may be put in charge of an event.

Schedule (continued)

- That person should contact the organization requesting the demonstration, interact with the coach to prepare the demonstration, organize transportation, anticipate costs, and remind the participants about the event
- *DO NOT* use the vaulters for communication to parents. Messages — even written material — get confused, lost and generally ignored. Communicate directly with parents.

Organization

- The constitution and bylaws of your club will define the areas of responsibility for the members.
- The head coach may (or may not) be given final authority over choosing team members, the club (officers, board or entire membership) may be given authority to hire (and fire) coaches).
- Contact the AVA or a local club to get a sample constitution and bylaws.
- Some clubs have prepared detailed documents on what is expected of their coaches/vaulters/parents/horse owners/facility managers/club officers. Any organization should be

set up in a way that works for the people involved.

- Look at what other clubs have done.
- Club officers should include:
 - President
 - Vice President (to serve when the President is not available)
 - Secretary (to take minutes of meetings).
- These officers form the decision making core of the club.
 - Your officers should be your most dedicated members.
 - If these people do their jobs, the club will probably run well.
- The general membership may be asked to vote on items, but the officers may make decisions on their own.
- Committees may be appointed to handle fund-raising, uniforms, demonstrations, or other areas of responsibility.

Types of Vaulting Clubs

LEVEL 1 - Recreational Vaulting

Vaulting at a very casual level in a limited drop-in/camps/recreation department program.

- Includes vaulting classes to enhance riding skills.
- The American Vaulting Association offers a variety of books, videos, and other materials which will help to aid the equestrian or athlete interested in experimenting with vaulting techniques.
- Visit the AVA website: www.americanvaulting.org.
- Find some other clubs through the AVA.
- There might be some interest in having an experienced vaulter or coach to give a clinic or two.

LEVEL 2 - Beginning Recreational Vaulting Program

When families feel the need to expand beyond the limited, casual vaulting program for more, and better vaulting classes they may think about starting a club.

- The club may begin as simply as a phone tree or car pool to make sure youngsters get to practices more regularly.
- As parents start networking, needs will become apparent and some solutions will present themselves.
- See the material on How to *Form a Club*
- You will probably need to do some fund-raising
 - Bake sales, food booths, car washes, candy sales, whatever you can come up with
 - Network with your members to find out what they are willing to do.
- You will also be doing more publicity: recruitment and education:
 - Post flyers at local libraries, feed stores, stables, gymnasiums, schools, etc.
 - Offer demonstrations at local events, schools, parades, etc.,
 - Prepare press releases and mail to local media
- Consider joining the AVA as an Sustaining Member, an Affiliate Club or a regular Club Member.
 - Membership will insure that you receive important communications and the bimonthly *Vaulting World* magazine
 - The AVA offers many resources for individual and club members.
 - You will find membership forms at <http://home.att.net/~avafest> -->resources -->forms. You may also find the current AVA rules describing the various membership options at this website.
- Hold regular club meetings to air issues and plan:
 - Meet at least once a month to keep everyone in touch.
 - Communication is the key to a well-run club. Open, frequent, and accurate communication between all parties — club officers, members, vaulters, coaches, managers, etc. — is the best way to insure

that everyone is working toward the same goal: the growth of character and skills through the sport of vaulting.

- Safety:
 - Each facility should have a liability release form which includes the club and its officers.
 - A first aid kit and ice should be accessible at all practices, coaches should have Red Cross CPR training
 - Current, complete Release forms and Consent to Treat forms should be accessible at your practice location.
 - First Aid supplies should be in all traveling kits.

LEVEL 3 - The Competitive Vaulting Club

As your club moves into the more complicated realm of competitions, you need to adjust your club activities. You will be moving to more practices over a longer season.

- More fund raising activities will be necessary
 - Look into grants by local organizations and the AVA
 - Fundraise for specific events,
- More volunteers will be needed to help trailer, prepare on-the-road kits, groom for events, braid vaulters' hair, etc.
 - Parents should be assigned specific 'helper' duties for each competition
- Do more publicity, recruitment and education
 - Contact local press and media before an event
 - Send press releases and results after the event
- Schedule meetings of participants before a competition
- Hold a meeting with your competition entries committee and your coach to prepare entries
- Hold a vaulting "Play Day" or mock competition
- Learn more about the AVA and vaulting
 - Read the *AVA Rulebook* carefully.
 - Revisit the AVA Website www.americanvaulting.org
 - Visit the AVA membership site at <http://home.att.net/~avafest>
 - Check the calendar and clinics list for events of interest
 - Check the membership list to be sure your memberships are in order
 - Check the horse numbers list for your horses
 - Browse around the site to learn more about vaulting activities.
- Hold an AVA Medal Test
- Become involved in your AVA Regional activities
- Offer to help at a competition
- First Aid supplies should be in all traveling kits.

LEVEL 4 - The Mature Vaulting Club

Mature vaulting clubs often hold year-around programs. They expand their activities to encompass a wider range of vaulting events. The monthly cost to vaulters may actually go down as the operating expenses are spread over the entire year. As the club grows, it's goals move further away from the current season. Coaches may be building teams for competitions over two years in the future. Good horses and better equipment become more important. The club may consider purchasing a horse.

- Club Organization
 - Committees: Competition Management, Exchanges, Horse search, Grants
 - Be sure to include an active vaulter among your officers
 - Consider a youth forum or committee to include vaulters input
- Budget:
 - Create a scholarship fund to assist talented vaulters

- Create a horse purchase fund
- Club Activities:
 - Expand horse training to dressage
 - Hold mini camps and clinics to introduce vaulting to the local equestrian community and other athletic groups.

Level 4 (continued)

- Some club members should attend AVA Regional meetings and the AVA Annual Meeting
- Hold a competition (in the members section of the AVA website, review the competitions managers material).
- Plan an exchange with a domestic or foreign vaulting club
- AVA and USEF
 - Read the AVA Rulebook even more carefully.
 - It is vital that you ask your questions of the right person!
 - Have your appropriate vaulters sign up for the AVA Friendship Team
 - Read the USEF Rulebook carefully.
 - Certain rules and benefits apply to USEF members.
 - Visit the USEF Website at www.usef.org
 - Have one or more of your members run for the Regional and/or AVA Boards of Directors
- Explore expanded insurance for “omissions and errors” for events. Review your releases.
- Have some of your older vaulters train with medics for injury prevention

LEVEL 5 - The International Vaulting Club

Vaulting clubs with international aspirations must refocus their activities. Without losing the base of lower level vaulters, the club must reach further and higher than any members dreamed possible to compete on an international level. These clubs should be thinking about “giving back” to the sport through clinics, membership on AVA/USEF committees and Boards, and other creative ways of helping the vaulting community.

- Create international fund to help vaulters’ and coaches’ costs
- Explore horse transport to Europe and/or horse leasing in Europe
- Have top level vaulters clinic to raise funds, explore corporate funding
- Contact major media for stories about international competitions
- Meet with other clubs with international experience to learn more
- Attend a CVI or other international vaulting event
- Get to know the persons in charge of international competitions at the USEF/USET
- Read the FEI rules more carefully
- Visit the FEI Website regularly
- Review your safety protocols and network with other clubs for improvements
- Larger clubs may afford to have relatively independent groups (trot vs canter) or teams and that may work well.
- It is important to hold club meetings and “all-club” events to keep everyone in touch.
- The beginning vaulters must have the opportunity to appreciate the work of the top level vaulters so that the entire club may share the stated goals.