

New Information Regarding Safety Stirrups

In an effort to standardize and simplify the safety equipment rules, the GMT has compiled this list of approved safety stirrups styles.

This is your opportunity to make certain that the stirrups that your athletes will use at the show will be approved at the gate. If you think there could be any question, please send a picture and description of your stirrups to SOGA for approval.

Using this list will reduce the time that athletes who are already mounted will have to wait to enter their class by eliminating any discussions at the gate regarding equipment.

We will **not** re-assign classes to give time for random tack changes. If an athlete is brought to the arenas with any stirrup style not on the list, even if they are considered “safety stirrups”, **he/she will not be allowed to enter that class.** Athletes must also wear hard soled, heeled (min 1/2” heel) shoes or boots.

There is no standard definition of “safety” stirrups. There are “safety” stirrups made for the experienced horseman and specific applications that DO NOT meet our criteria for Special Olympics.

*Safety stirrups are not just for beginner riders anymore. Many safety stirrups on the market today are designed for experienced, able bodied riders. Olympic level riders now ride in “safety stirrups”. Many of these stirrups are not designed to **promote the immediate** release of the riders’ foot in case of a fall, just **allow** for a more likely release than standard stirrups and many rely on a proper proactive response from the rider to be beneficial.*

GMT members, coaches and staff have discussed the needs of the athletes and the types of stirrups available in the market and designed a “standard for performance” that a safety stirrup must meet.

The stirrup’s design must either:

1. Prevent the toe of the rider from moving forward so far that the heel of the rider loses its proper position BEHIND the stirrup.
2. Actually come apart in a way to allow the foot to easily slide from the stirrup.

These actions must occur without any proactive movement by the athlete.

There are several designs of safety stirrups on the market that we do not feel appropriate for the majority of athletes. The following designs are **not** approved for use at the show.

- Detachable Stirrup: as the stirrup rotates (as in a fall) it completely detaches from the leather.
- A “bent leg” design where the sides are merely bent to form a “path” for a foot to slide thru.
- A stirrup designed to so the foot pad will flex downward (commonly called an equitation stirrup.)
- The Ridge design where the tread is elevated in the front to discourage the foot from sliding forward.
- The “flexible leg” stirrup where the stirrup legs would bend but not completely release the foot.

Therefore, based on the sheer number of new designs that would not be appropriate for our needs, it is virtually impossible to create a list of “approved” and “non-approved” stirrups. It seemed more fitting to require that every stirrup that is used to function in a manner described below.

The stirrups shown are representative of its type. There are many manufactures of each design.

In addition, remember that safety stirrups need to be the proper fit to the foot. Too large or too small and they become ineffective.

- 1) **Peacock Stirrups:** Identified by a rubber band on the outer side of the stirrup designed to give way and allow a foot to fall from the stirrup out the side.



- 2) **Breakaway stirrups:** Come in English and Western models. Are designed to release when pressure is applied laterally preventing the rider from being dragged after falling from the horse. The middle bar is designed not to release unless the toe of the foot is pointed upwards, as it does when a rider falls from the horse, hooks the bar and applies lateral pressure. The middle bar will then release, freeing the foot from the stirrup.



- 3) **Sidestep Safety Stirrups:** designed to “open up” as the foot rotates upward at any angle. Allows total freedom for the foot to fall in any direction.



- 4) **Tapaderos or caged stirrups:** which involve a type of covering over the front of the stirrups. This barrier prevents the rider's foot from slipping all the way through the stirrup.



These aluminum endurance stirrups feature a safety nose with padding and a guards to keep the your foot directly in the stirrup



Toe Stoppers, attaches to regular stirrups

