


[Emerging Athletes U21](#)

# Tips When Applying to Participate in the USEA Emerging Athletes 21 Program

By John Bourgoin | February 8, 2023

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*The USEA's Emerging Athlete U21 Program (EA21) application process asks applicants to submit in writing a reflection on their past and current riding experiences. Applicants are being asked to develop a written history that provides the selectors with an opportunity to get to know each applicant from a personal perspective. Combined with submissions of videos and interviews that may be conducted with an applicant's trainers and coaches, along with performance records, selectors will gain a more complete portrayal of the candidate's horsemanship and riding skills.*

Look carefully at the “Selection Criteria” listed on the application. Your Selectors will be looking not only for evidence of your riding skills and accomplishments but for a well-rounded individual who is committed to the welfare of the horse in this challenging sport. The USEA EA21 program is an early stepping stone for our youth members to gain educational experience in a clinic format with experienced USEA ECP Certified instructors. It is a “talent search” for young event riders to participate in future team competitions.

Demonstration of being a “team player” isn’t only about getting to wear a red coat. It is about discovering that reaching your goals is a team effort, working together with family, coaches, trainers, farriers, veterinarians, and just as importantly the peers that share your passion for horses in this sport.

The Selectors are looking for what you are bringing to this sport not only as a competitor but ultimately as an ambassador to eventing. You are the future of the USEA, and with that comes the responsibility to continue the hard work riders, officials, and volunteers have been doing for you.

Writing about yourself can often be challenging. Finding your voice on the page might feel as though it should be different than when you are just talking about yourself and your experiences with another person. It doesn't need to be. Your voice is unique to you; use it to share your strengths and the challenges you have experienced throughout your development as an event rider.

Reflect on your past, what is happening currently, and what your hopes are for the future. Be brave about your successes and promote your abilities regarding your horsemanship skills and your understanding of what it means to be a "team player," along with your riding skills.

As you prepare to write:

**PLAN** (brainstorm)

Organize and group items that you think go together.

- Riding and working around horses (your strengths, challenges)
- Barn work responsibilities (jobs)
- Influencers (mentors, parents, trainers, Pony Club, 4-H, etc.)
- Commitment (to your horse(s), riding, competing, time spent)
- Goals (how you envision your future with horses)
- Reasons for applying to be a part of the EA21 Program

**GATHER DETAILS** about the items on your list.

Be specific, keep your statements short with keywords that will develop into your "story."

**DRAFT** (for each of your main topics)

Organize your statements and ideas into sentences that reflect your voice.

Think of having a conversation with someone about your sport and what it entails on a daily basis.

**READ IT ALOUD** (to yourself or maybe someone else)

How does it sound? Did you say what you meant to say? Are your descriptions /details orderly?

**EDIT**

Have you checked names, dates, grammar, and punctuation?

Have you checked format (divisions, headings, lists, spacings)?

**TAKE YOUR TIME**

This is a serious, competitive process. You need to be sincere, thoughtful, reflective, genuine, and professional in your written application. As in any high-powered application, you need to promote yourself.

Remember the selectors may not know who you are.

**MAKE THE APPLICATION YOUR OWN**

Use others as resources and sounding boards, always remembering that this is to be YOUR application, in YOUR voice.

## **About the USEA Emerging Athlete U21 (EA21) Program**

The purpose of the USEA Emerging Athletes U21 program (EA21) is to identify and provide consistent quality instruction to the next generation of elite event riders. The aim is to create a pipeline for potential team riders by identifying and developing young talent, improving horsemanship and riding skills, and training and improving skills and consistency.

The USEA Emerging Athletes U21 Program was launched in 2022 with a model of five summertime regional clinics taught by selected USEA Eventing Coaches Program (ECP) coaches, leading to a winter national camp consisting of selected Young Riders from the regional clinics. Athletes who are 21 years or younger, are current members of their USEA Young Rider Area program, and are established at the Training Level or higher, are eligible to apply for the EA21 program. [Click here](#) to learn more about the USEA EA21 Program.

EA21

Young Rider Program

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