

## What to Expect at a Pony Party

©2006-2012 Tim aka PonyGroom  
contact [ponygroom@gmail.com](mailto:ponygroom@gmail.com)  
<http://fetlife.com/Ponygroom>

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When ponies and trainers get together to play, a wide variety of extraordinary things might happen. Those of you who have experience with BDSM play parties might not at first realize that a different set of rules applies. So, here are some explanations of the differences.

First of all a little terminology.

*What's a pony?* A pony is a human pony who is one in their heart.

*What's Tack?* Tack is everything that touches the skin of a pony. You will see a wide variety of tack: leather, rope, latex, PVC, bits, tails, and more. the sheer variety can be confusing at times.

*What's a Sulky?* A sulky is a two-wheeled cart with a seat for a person, meant to be pulled by one or more ponies. Human ponies can pull sulkies meant for use by small horses.

*What's a Handler?* Someone who handles a pony, guiding and directing them.

*What's a Trainer?* A handler who teaches a pony.

*What's a Groom?* A handler who cares for a ponies needs: cleaning, preparing for show, exercising, and sometimes doing basic training.

*What's a Stable Hand?* Someone who helps with the setting of a Pony Party.

*What's an Owner?* Similar to Master in the Master/slave set of terminology. An Owner is someone in a dominant role in a long term relationship with the pony.

## Ponies at play

What do they do? Get tack on and off, get groomed, practice gaits, learn tricks, exercise, give rides, pull sulkies, and show off. They play with each other as permitted to by their handlers, they get put into a parade, and they get new tack fitted. This is a short list. What they do at a party depends on their level of training, available equipment, and the skills of the handlers. No two parties are alike.

An important thing to know about ponies at play is that many of them enter a head space when they don their tack, and remain there until the tack comes off. While they are there, they are not aware of the world as normally they would be, they usually react to things as if they were horses

not humans, they may not be able to hear you, but can hear their handlers just fine, and after they come back they usually don't remember what happened while they were "gone". This special "transformation" is not a goal to be reached. It happens to some ponies and not to others. You might not be able to tell which ponies are still humans and playing out a role and which have transformed themselves by simply watching. Their handlers almost always know what is going on.

Some get a head space that gives them some reflexive responses to commands, but they are still human and still "present with you". Those that do this can speak, and can get back from their head space fairly quickly.

## What can you do at a pony party?

**Be a pony or a handler** Of course!

**Watch** It's always a great show.

**Participate as a new pony** If you ever wanted to be a pony, this is your chance. You can ask a handler to introduce you to some tack. Most pony folk will share tack and tool with others.

**Participate as a new handler** If you want to take the reins and crop, or ride in a sulky, just ask. You might have to wait your turn.

**Help** Sometimes handlers need help: for example fetching water or holding the reins for just a minute while they fix something.

**Judge a show** In a show, there is a panel of judges and they award ribbons in categories.

**Take pictures** But, see the Photography paragraph below.

**Be a kitten, a puppy, or some other animal, and interact with the ponies** Some play parties are more "barn" oriented than others. At a show you might just get in the way. Other times the ponies might adore you if you rub up against them.

## Party rules

**Photography** The standard rule at BDSM play parties is "no photography". Ponies, however, usually want pictures taken. So, there is often a different protocol at pony parties.

Some events have one or more "house photographers". These are people who come prepared to take dozens, if not hundreds, of pictures of the event.

If you don't want to be in any pictures, the host needs to know that. You might be asked to wear a button, pin, or wrist band so that the photographer can immediately recognize you and make sure to exclude you from a shot.

There might be a special area reserved for the photographer and subjects. If so, someone will point this out to you when you arrive at the party. This space is reserved for that purpose. It might be tempting to pull a chair into it, since it will be empty a lot of the time. Usually it will have a neutral or special background, drape, scenery or props the photographer will include in the photos.

**Touching** Certainly the standard rule of "no touching anyone without their permission" applies. However, some ponies love to be touched. A handler might ask you to participate by petting or feeding their pony. Handlers, not ponies, normally make the decisions about including others in their activities. It is always personal. Please ask!

**Safewords** Most ponies are trained to use a "tap out", a repeated tapping of one foot, to indicate they are in distress. Usually a handler knows their pony is in trouble, but in case things are less than clear, the tap out is a last resort. Some ponies who transform can use their tap out signal while they are in pony mode.

Safe handling A pony should always have someone handling them, even if it is just to hold the reins and watch. Most are bound. Some have a head space that keeps them from taking responsibility for their actions.

**Risks and personal responsibility** If you approach a pony who has transformed, and you do something inappropriate, there is a risk that you will be kicked, bitten, or charged. The pony who does this is not responsible for their conduct, and neither is their handler. When you approach, you take responsibility for your own actions. Some parties have signs posted about this – it is wise to read them, no matter how detailed the messages.

**Water supply** Some can drink water from a straw around the bit, even while transformed. Having your mouth open for a period of time causes a lot of water loss. Also, latex, leather or rubber encasement is hot! In a BDSM play party often having liquids in a play space is discouraged, but with ponies it is necessary to keep them hydrated.

**Treats** Normally at a play party you will not see food in the play area. Ponies love treats. Apple slices, baby carrots, M&Ms and even blueberry muffins. In some play spaces there may be a special area reserved for giving treats. In others, it simply isn't practical to include this in play. Ponies are notoriously messy creatures.

**Noise** At many play parties talking is discouraged. This is not often the case at a pony party, but if a show is being judged and teams are going through their routines or making a presentation quiet is respectful both to the performers and the audience. Ponies who "transform" don't normally hear chatter around them, but loud sudden noises might frighten them and cause them to jump.

**Sharing tack, tools, and toys** Sharing is common among ponies and handlers, except where it concerns something that goes inside the body. This includes the bit. Brushes and leather items don't always get cleaned between uses. Have a close look at something before you share it.

**Cleanup** Ponies and handlers often have a lot of gear, and take more time than they would like packing up when they are done. Parties don't often have enough Stable Hands to take care of things. Volunteer!

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