Rabbit Hopping and Agility

History and description of Rabbit Hopping courses, equipment, and rules.
What is Rabbit Hopping?

Rabbit Hopping is a competition where trained rabbits jump over obstacles of different varieties and sizes.

Rabbit hopping is compared to miniature horse jumping or dog agility because of the similar styles and techniques used.

History

Rabbit hopping originated in the late 1970’s in Sweden. When first started in Sweden, rabbit hopping was known as kaninhoppning (rabbit jumping). In 1987, the 1st National Rabbit Hopping Competition was held in Stockholm, Sweden.

In the early 1990’s, Norway joined in the rabbit hopping sport, followed by Denmark in 1993. In 1994 the Swedish Federation of Rabbit Jumping was formed.

In 1999, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark came together to form the Nordic Rabbit Hopping Rules. The purpose was to have a consistent set of rules so that all of the countries could participate in competitions together.
The sport was eventually made popular in the UK, from having a televised appearance on the TV show, *That’s Life!* Now there are more than 50 rabbit hopping groups in Scandinavia alone and rabbit hopping has spread to more countries around the world.

1. Sweden (1970)  
2. Norway (1990)  
3. Denmark (1993)  
5. Poland (2000)  
8. France (2001)  
9. United States (2001)  
In the United States

The United States national rabbit hopping group is called the American Hopping Association for Rabbits and Cavies (AHARC).

Rabbit hopping came to the United States in 2001, but it didn’t become popular until around 2011. The rules and guidelines for rabbit hopping were established for all Americans with the help of the judges committee in Denmark and with personal assistance from hopping judge Aase Bjerner.

The first ever United States rabbit hopping competition was held at the 88th ARBA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana in 2011.

The AHARC finally became a chartered club by the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) in 2013. Since then, rabbit hopping clubs have spread in popularity in the United States, and hopping competitions are becoming more common at rabbit shows around the country.
Types of Jumps

1. **Start/End/Transitional jumps** are seen at the beginning and ending of straight and crooked courses. They are one or two poles (2” to 4” high) on short standards and are used to mark start and end times of a run. They are also used at the bends of a L-shaped or U-shaped straight course.

2. **Vertical jumps** are made of 2 vertical standards with simple square bases. They usually have several poles spread between the standards spaced 2 inches apart. Vertical jumps are used in straight courses, crooked courses, and can be used in agility courses.

3. **Spread Jumps** are like multiple vertical jumps placed very close together, between 4 and 5 inches apart. The rabbit jumps over the whole unit in one jump. The slope on a spread jump must be the same in both directions. The total width of the spread jump is determined by the level of the course.
4. **High jump** is like a very tall vertical jump, a minimum of three feet tall. It is used in competitions to test a rabbit’s maximum jumping ability. Rabbits will get three times to successfully clear a height before another pole is added. Poles are 2 inches apart.

5. **Long jumps** are long standards laid at a low angle on the ground with poles between them. The rabbit runs toward the jump from a maximum of 10 feet away and jumps in a single jump over all the poles.

6. **Specialty Jumps** are any other jump that does not fit the description of vertical jump or spread jump. Many specialty jumps resemble spread jumps, but they may be formed in special shapes or may have pole to pole spreads that are wider than the 4 to 5 inches allowed in spread jumps. Some specialty jumps are X-Jump, V-Jump, Round Top, A-frame Jump (not to be confused with an A-Frame Obstacle). The names of those jumps indicate the shape in which the poles are arranged between the standards. Specialty jumps should still follow the
basic safety rules of standard jump construction. They are allowed in Intermediate through Elite Straight Course classes.

These might be called a round top and an “M-Jump”?! 

This could be called an X-jump because the poles cross like the letter X in the middle.

This could also be an X-Jump, because the standards are shaped like letter X’s.

If you look carefully, you can see an A-Frame jump in the background!
These are called V-Jumps because the poles look like the letter V when you look at them from above.

The names for some of the specialty jumps can be just as creative as the jumps themselves!

7. **Water Jumps** are a shallow box, 2 to 3 inches high and 10 to 18 inches deep/long. They may or may not be filled with water and must match the width of the poles being used. Water jumps are used in Intermediate through Elite Straight or Crooked Courses. In some rule books, they are not allowed in Agility classes. They usually have standards to either side of the jump, and may or may not have accompanying poles.
Types of Obstacles (used for Agility Courses)

1. **Open Tunnel** – a lightweight plastic, fabric, or canvas tunnel that holds it shape with both ends staying open. The tunnel must be at least 15 inches in diameter, secured to prevent rolling, and a minimum of 2 feet in length.

2. **Closed Tunnel** – a similar material and design as the open tunnel, but with one end of the tunnel collapsed. The rabbit enters into the open end of the tunnel and must push his way out.

3. **A-Frame** – two solid wooden boards that are connected in the middle with hinges that allow the boards to be bent into an A-shape using a fine metal chain or connector to stabilize the angle. Each board must be 9-12 inches wide and 24 inches long. The surface usually has some sort of coating or material attached to the boards to add traction for the rabbit. The rabbit must touch both sides of the A-frame with his feet.
4. **Bridge** – three solid wooden panels connected by hinges, 9- to 12-inch long panels connected to a three-foot length panel by hinges. All panels must be 9- to 12-inches wide and have an added surface material for extra traction. The angles of the small panels to the larger are maintained by using a fine chain attached to the sides. The rabbit must move along the entire length of the long flat panel without jumping off to the side.

5. **Pause Box** – a square box between 11- and 14-inches square, elevated no more than 6 inches off the ground with a non-slip surface on the top. The rabbit must hop onto the box and wait without being restrained for a specified amount of time.

6. **Hoop or Tire Jump** – The concept is very similar for both of these jumps. A ring or hoop made of either fabric, plastic, or other lightweight material, at least 11 inches in diameter, and suspended above the ground using some sort of standards. If the hoop itself is actually a lightweight bicycle tire, you call it a tire jump!
7. **Window Jump** – A window jump is similar to a hoop or tire jump in that the rabbit is jumping through a circular opening. But a window jump is a circular hole cut out of a solid piece of wood or plastic, usually mounted on a base for stability.

8. **Teeter Totter** – A teeter-totter is a solid 3-foot board, 9- to 12-inches wide, mounted in the center on a 4 ½ inch diameter piece of PVC pipe (or other similar round pivot point). There is usually some sort of added traction on the board itself, either carpeting, slats, or textured paint. The rabbit must walk across the teeter totter from one end to the other.

9. **Weave Poles** for rabbits are similar to dog agility weave poles. They are thin flexible poles, 12-inches high, spaced at 18-inches. They can be inserted in the ground or mounted on a thin base. The rabbit must weave between each pole.
Training Your Rabbit to Hop

Step 1: Picking the Right Rabbit

Pick a young rabbit: It is easiest to start with a rabbit who is 4 to 6 months of age, but most rabbits will learn at any age if trained on a regular schedule. Don’t start training before a rabbit is about 10 – 12 weeks old. And be careful hopping a very old rabbit. Sometimes older rabbits have hidden sicknesses or pain in their bones and joints that would get worse if they hopped.

Pick a small, healthy rabbit: It is never a good idea to hop a rabbit that is overweight or a giant breed because it might cause physical injury to the rabbit. Small breeds that are under 5 pounds are a great choice. You can hop medium sized breeds (5 – 9 pounds), but they shouldn’t ever hop very high or fast. If your rabbit is overweight, they can easily get out of breath and run out of energy. A large or overweight rabbit also lands off a jump with a large force which might lead to injury.

Pick a brave and curious rabbit: You want your rabbit to be relaxed whenever you put it on the ground or take it to new places. You don't want your rabbit to act shy, nervous, or apprehensive. Expose your rabbit to different environments regularly so it gets used to being different places and feeling confident.

Step 2: Ground Work

Before you teach your rabbit to hop over jumps, you will need to teach them to hop forward in a straight line with a
harness on. When you bring your rabbit out to pet or hop around on the floor, put the harness on them so they get used to the feel. Let them hop around with the harness on in an enclosed space. Watch them to make sure they don’t panic or try to chew the harness off. Don’t ever leave a rabbit unsupervised wearing a harness.

Once your rabbit is used to the feel of the harness, you will want to put your rabbit on its leash and harness and train your rabbit to walk around in an open area out in front of you with the leash fully extended. If your rabbit stops in front of you during the walk, you want to bend over and touch your rabbit near the tail or tickle them in the rib area. Your rabbit will eventually start to move forward when it sees you approaching it from behind.

In nature, rabbits never move in a straight line because they are prey animals. Their instincts tell them to run in a “zigzag” pattern to avoid predators. You are going to have to help them learn to move in a straight line.

Once your rabbit is comfortable wearing the harness and understands to move forward when you tickle or touch them, practice moving forward in a straight line, using tickles or touches to guide them. If they try to turn around or veer off to the side, use your hands to block, guide, or touch them so they move again along
a straight line. Don’t get frustrated! Straight lines are hard for rabbits!

Teaching them to walk forward in a straight line, on a harness and leash, is called “ground work.” It is important to teach your rabbit ground work before you start jumping over obstacles. If they aren’t comfortable hopping forward in harness, then they certainly won’t be able to jump a course in harness.

Practice time should be limited, especially in young rabbits. But you should practice at least twice a week, and up to twice a day. This is a big part of teaching them because rabbits learn by repetition and consistency. Young rabbits need shorter sessions. Your rabbit will tell you when it is tired or frustrated by flopping on the ground or getting angry at you! Don’t push them past their limits! Be considerate of your rabbit and increase their strength and stamina slowly.

Even experienced rabbits need regular practice to keep up their skills. Rabbit hopping is a physically demanding sport. Keep practicing with your rabbit a couple of times a week to keep them fit and strong.

**Step 3: Hopping over Jumps**

Now it’s time to start introducing your rabbits to the jumps and obstacles! Start small: Lay a series of jump poles on the ground at regular closely spaced intervals, in a straight line on a secure surface, like a carpet or foam mats.

Walk your rabbit while in the harness and leash over your items you placed down. Walk beside your rabbit so you can
help guide them straight down the “course” of poles on the ground. Remember you can help them by slightly touching them to keep on course. Use good rabbit hopping practices – don’t let them turn around or veer off course to the side.

Pick up your rabbit at the end of the walk and bring it back to start again. Repeat this process. As your rabbit improves with the poles on the ground, set closely together, you can increase the distance between the ground poles to about 3-4 feet apart. This teaches your rabbit to look at the objects in front of it and to stay focused on something set in front of their path. They also get used to being set down and picked up regularly, and to not turn around or go off to the side. Practice this method daily until it hops through the poles at a quick pace.

Once your rabbit has mastered ground work and running or hopping over poles on the ground, add the jump standards and lift the bars off the ground a couple of inches and repeat the training process. Most rabbits will catch on very quickly. The first bar should be 2” off the ground, and each subsequent bar should be 2” higher. Keep adding more bars, one at a time. Soon your rabbit will be hopping to new heights!

If your rabbit seems reluctant to hop over the poles when they are lifted off the ground, you can encourage him up to the base of the jump with tickles and touches. Then, gently lift him over the jump in a smooth movement until he hops himself over the jump. You can also place the rabbit halfway on or over the jump (if it’s a low jump!), and let him jump the rest of the way. Don’t let him turn around! And don’t let him quit halfway through the course!
If the rabbit lays stretched out on the ground, he is telling you he is tired. At that time, you should put him away and give him a rest. Remember to praise your rabbits along the way and at the end of practice. Keep your practice sessions positive. If you feel yourself getting frustrated, stop and put your rabbit away! You can finish the training session later when you are calm.

Basic Training Tips

Always:

- Stay calm and positive
- Start at the beginning of the course and don’t stop until the end
- Watch your rabbit for signs of fatigue (being tired)
- Master groundwork before you add height
- Increase height slowly

Never:

- Let your rabbit turn around and jump the previous jump
- Let your rabbit chin the poles, bite the poles, or poke them with their nose – those are bad habits that are hard to stop
- Let your rabbit go sideways off course
Training for Other Courses and Jumps

There is more to hopping than just Straight Course! There is Crooked Course, High Jump, and Long Jump. These courses and jumps use just a little different technique.

Training for Crooked Course

Don’t start training for Crooked Course until your rabbit is confident with the Straight Course. Remember all the effort you did on groundwork to get your rabbit to hop in a straight line! You want them to be experts in straight line jumping before you confuse them by asking them to turn and jump!

Start the jumps in the Crooked Course lower than what they can do in straight course to start out. Start with just 4 or 5 jumps in a simple curving pattern, and go slow, asking them clearly to turn towards the next jump in a series. When they understand the pattern and what you are asking them to do, you can add more jumps and make the pattern a little more complicated. Finally, increase the height of the jumps, but only when they are easy to direct through the Crooked Course and seem confident.

Training for High Jump

High jump is one of the most fun events in rabbit hopping! Who doesn’t want to see how high their rabbit can jump! It’s important to wait until your rabbit has mastered the Straight Course and can jump at least 12 inches high in the Straight Course before you attempt the High Jump.
Some rabbits like to run up to the High Jump and then jump over. Some like to just stand in front of it and spring over. Find out which style your rabbit likes and let him use it. The minimum starting height for a competition is 14 inches, but if you are practicing, you can start lower and work your way up.

During a training session, start at an easy height for your rabbit, adding a pole each time he clears the jump. When you get close to his current maximum height, he will start knocking poles down. Let him try a few times. If he clears it, stop the training sessions on a positive note. If he can’t quite get a height after 5 or 6 tries, lower the height by one pole and let him hop successfully over the lower height. Then end that training session. Don’t exhaust or frighten your rabbit by making him crash through a jump over and over. **Always end on a clean jump!**

It is important that while you are doing High Jump, you should manage your leash very carefully. **You never want to have any sort of jerking or pulling on the leash, especially in mid-air as the rabbit is jumping.** They get scared when they are jumping very high and feel a backwards tug on their harness. And you could make them knock the pole down by pulling them backwards in midair, and make them afraid to try a higher setting.

**Training for Long Jump**

Training for the Long Jump is a lot like training for the High Jump. The minimum long jump length is 14 inches in a
competition. But when you are just starting out, you can start with just 6 or 8 inches and slowly work your way up in length.

**Always run at the Long Jump.** Never just plop your rabbit right by the beginning of the jump and ask him to jump it, even if it’s at a very short length. You will have a maximum of 10 feet to run before the Long Jump – use every bit of it! Start the training session at an easy length for your rabbit and with each run add one pole. It’s important to build your rabbit’s endurance and physical strength.

When your rabbit reaches a length where it starts to crash into the last pole or hesitates, let him try a few times. If he succeeds, stop and end on a positive note. If he can’t quite make it, take a pole or two off and ask him to jump a shorter distance successfully so you can end on a positive note.

And just like with the High Jump, it is **VERY** important that you manage your leash perfectly. **Never let the leash tug the rabbit in midair over the Long Jump.** The longer the jump, the harder this will be for you, but you need to practice just like the rabbit. If the rabbit feels a tug on the leash in midair, it will scare them, and they won’t want to jump the long jump any more.
Types of Classes in Rabbit Hopping Competitions

- Straight Course
- Crooked Course
- Agility Course
- Team Relay
- Dual Hopping
- Long Jump
- High Jump

Skill Levels

All courses, except High and Long Jump, are divided into different skill levels at competitions. The levels that a particular competition chooses to offer vary and depend on the likely participants and the types of equipment used by the host club.

Novice – This level is designed for rabbits or handlers just learning to hop. Handlers are allowed assistance from a volunteer to help them complete the course. Judges may, and frequently do, offer comments after each run to the handler so they may improve. Jump heights are very low, and there are only vertical jumps in these classes.

Beginner – This class level is for rabbits and handlers with some experience at competitions, but whose rabbits are still jumping relatively low jumps. No assistance or comments are given by helpers or judges at this level and above. One spread jump (10 inches maximum) is allowed in this course level.
Intermediate – This class level is the middle skill level offered in competitions. Spread jumps, specialty jumps, and water jumps are allowed in these classes. A rabbit hopping at this level must be a bold hopper with good stamina.

Advanced – These rabbits and handlers are nearly at the top of their game! Jumps are very high, up to 16 inches, at this level. There will be multiple spread jumps, specialty jumps, and water jumps to contend with.

Elite – This is the absolute hardest level in any competition. It is rarely offered, perhaps only at National level competitions, and is the ultimate hopping test. Competing successfully at this level is a prize in and of itself!

Straight Course

The straight course consists of 8-14 jumps, including the start and end jumps, laid either in a straight line, an L-shape, or a U-shape. If the straight course is an L-shape or U-shaped straight course, there will be transitional jumps where the course bends.

The distance between each jump varies between 4 and 8 feet depending on the skill level of the course. This course is a timed event, with a maximum time of 2 minutes per run. Judges will also keep track of faults.
accumulated by the competitor. The bar height of each jump is determined by the skill level of the class.

**Crooked Course**

The Crooked Course consists of the same number of jumps as the Straight Course, but the jumps are arranged in a non-linear path with no transitional jumps at the bends. The exact course path is at the discretion of the course designer. The order of jump is proscribed and marked with numbers fixed to the jump standards.

The course area footing, whether it is mats, carpets, or grass, is arranged in a large rectangular format so that all jumps comfortably rest on the footing. There will be start and end jumps, used by the judges to mark the start and end time. Time and faults are recorded for each run. The maximum time is also 2 minutes, unless noted by the Show Superintendent.
### Straight and Crooked Course Specifications*

*(number of jumps includes start and end jumps)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Elite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Vertical Jumps</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>10-14</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Min. Height</strong></td>
<td>4”</td>
<td>6”</td>
<td>10”</td>
<td>12”</td>
<td>14”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max. Height</strong></td>
<td>6”</td>
<td>10”</td>
<td>14”</td>
<td>16”</td>
<td>20”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Min. Distance between jumps</strong></td>
<td>4-6 ft.</td>
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<td>6-7 ft.</td>
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<td><strong>Number of Spread Jumps</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum length of Spread Jumps</strong></td>
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<td>24”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Specialty Jumps</strong></td>
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<td>3-5</td>
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<td><strong>Number of Water Jumps</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10”</td>
<td>16”</td>
<td>18”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Information copied from 2019 PaSRBA Rabbit Hopping and Agility Rules*
Agility Course

The agility course consists of 8 to 14 obstacles, including the start and end jumps. These obstacles can consist of hoop jumps, window jumps, weave poles, teeter-totters, A-frames, bridges, pause table, and tunnels. It may include vertical jumps or spread jumps, height and width specified in the corresponding Straight/Crooked Course skill level table.

According to 2019 PaSRBA rules, agility courses may NOT include water jumps or specialty jumps. This course can be set up in a crooked or straight path. There is a start and end jump and the course for a competition is measured in time and faults.

A competitor can get “Incomplete Obstacle” faults if they do not complete the obstacle in the required fashion. For example, if a rabbit hops off the bridge to the side before the end, that would be a fault. If a rabbit does not walk the length of the teeter totter, that would be a fault. Each obstacle has its own description of completion.
Agility Course Specifications*

(number of jumps includes start and end jumps; water jumps and specialty jumps are not allowed in Agility Courses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Novice</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Elite</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Jumps plus Obstacles</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10”</td>
<td>14”</td>
<td>16”</td>
<td>20”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. Distance between jumps</td>
<td>4-6 ft.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>A-frame, bridge, tunnel, pause table, hoop jump, teeter-totter</td>
<td>A-frame, bridge, tunnel, pause table, hoop jump, teeter-totter</td>
<td>A-frame, bridge, tunnel, pause table, hoop jump, teeter-totter</td>
<td>A-frame, bridge, tunnel, pause table, hoop jump, teeter-totter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information copied from 2019 PaSRBA Rabbit Hopping and Agility Rules
Team Hopping (or Relay)

Team Hopping or Team Relay can vary depending on the competition and the event organizers. It usually consists of 3 competitors and their rabbits hopping a Straight Course of a specified level. The competitors will either all start at one end, take turns hopping the course, and then everyone’s faults/times will be combined. Or it can be run as a relay with two competitors at one end of a Straight Course and one at the other. They take turns running the straight course back and forth with the cumulative time and faults recorded.

Dual Hopping

Dual hopping is similar to the Straight Course, except it is made up of a team of 2 rabbits and 2 handlers. There are 2 separate straight courses, of equal level and jump type, built side by side. The two handlers with their rabbits take position at the same end of each of their separate Straight Courses. The timer starts when the first rabbit jumps over the start jump and ends when the last rabbit hops over the end jump. The ideal performance is to have the 2 rabbits be in sync while hopping over the jumps, starting and ending at the same time.
The long jump consists of one jump, two long standards with a gentle slope upwards in the direction of jump. The rabbit will have 6 to 10 feet to run before jumping. The long jump starts at a minimum of 14 inches in length.

Competitors are allowed one practice jump, and can choose their starting length. A competitor gets three attempts at each length to jump without knocking any poles off the long jump. Stamina, skill, and excellent leash handling are the keys to champion long jumpers!

After a successful jump, the length is increased by 2 inches. In some rule sets, the handler can choose to “pass” on a length and skip to the next length for their next attempt. If the competitor fails on the skipped length, the last length successfully jumped is the final score. For example, if a rabbit successfully jumps 20 inches, the competitor can choose to “pass” and attempt 24 inches (instead of 22 inches). If the rabbit then fails on 24 inches, the final score of that competitor is 20 inches, the last length successfully hopped.
High Jump

The high jump consists of 1 tall, vertical jump. The rabbit will have 6 to 10 feet to run before jumping on either side of the jump. The competitor gets one practice jump from each side to help them choose their initial jump height. The initial height must be a minimum of 14 inches, but the competitor can pick a larger height if they desire.

The competitor will have three attempts for each height. Once a rabbit is placed on one side of the jump in order to attempt a height, the rabbit must either jump or the handler takes an “attempt” by picking up their rabbit and moving to the other side. Once a height is successfully jumped, the height is raised 2 inches.
Rabbit Hopping Rules

(More detailed and extensive rule lists are published by or for AHARC and PaSRBA, and are published before every competition. Review the rules that are posted for each competition you attend to make sure you know the details!)  

1. The rabbit and handler are considered a team. You may hop multiple rabbits, but multiple handlers may NOT share one rabbit.
2. Hopping rabbits do not need to be pedigreed, intact, or purebred, but must be tattooed.
3. All rabbits must be at least 4 months of age to compete.
4. Rabbit should be healthy, free of disease and parasites, and should not have diarrhea, open sores, or wounds.
5. Pregnant or nursing does CANNOT compete.
6. Any mistreatment of a rabbit will not be tolerated and will result in disqualification or removal from event.
7. Rabbits must hop through course at their own free will. Handlers may encourage or guide rabbits forward vocally (softly) or with gentle touches/tickles with your hands. No touching with your feet.
8. Handlers/rabbits cannot receive any help, verbal or physical, from spectators.
9. Judges are the boss! They have final say on scoring, rules, and any disqualifications based on the posted rules.

Handlers:

1. No dangling jewelry. No boots, flip-flops, or high heeled shoes. You need soft-soled shoes; sneakers preferred.
2. You may NOT jump or walk over the jumps. You must walk beside the course, preferably off the mats.
3. You are responsible for repairing or replacing any damaged equipment because of your actions.
4. You must bring (carry) your own rabbit to the course for competition.
5. Do NOT drag your rabbit through the course or lift it by its leash. This could hurt the rabbit and will result in you and your rabbit being given a fault or disqualification.
6. You are responsible for the way you act during the competition. Poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated and could get you disqualified from the competition. Using foul or abusive language to anyone or your rabbit is not acceptable.

Rabbit Equipment Needed:

1. Harnesses must be an “H” style harness. The harness needs to be loose enough not to restrict the rabbit’s movement but tight enough so they do not slip out of it. The D-ring that the leash attaches to must be in the far back of the harness (attached on the top of the belly band).
2. Leashes must be between 4 and 6 feet long, and made entirely of the same type of webbing that the harness is made from. The handle may not be a different material.
3. Harnesses and leashes not meeting safety standards for rabbits will not be allowed to be used on the rabbit. Wrong harness/leash will result in disqualification.
4. No treats are allowed on the hopping course.
General Competition:

1. Leashes are to be held at all times, and your rabbit must be in your control.
2. You are responsible for cleaning up after your rabbit. Cleaning equipment will be available.
3. Handler should walk on the opposite side of the course from the judge to allow full view of the rabbit by the judge.
4. Rabbits competing in Agility, High Jump, and Long Jump must wear a harness, but may be off-leash.
5. Each run has a maximum time of 2 minutes. Teams will have 3 runs per class, except in the case of large events, where only 2 runs may be allowed.
6. Each run is judged by faults first then time.
7. Maximum faults allowed are determined by length of course, and set and announced prior to competition.
8. Time starts when all four feet of the rabbit jumps or is placed over the start jump, and the time is stopped when all four feet of the rabbit jumps or is placed over the finish jump. There are no faults for knocking down the start/end jumps.
9. In the case of a tie, a jump-off can be called. In Straight Courses, each team tied is allowed 1 run through the course. Best run is awarded the higher placement.

Faults:

1. **Upset or Handler Upset:** Displaced rail, bar, or jump by handler or rabbit. One fault maximum per jump/obstacle. Whether you knock over one pole, or all, it’s one fault. It also does not matter whether it was you or the rabbit who...
knocked the pole. And even if a pole falls from a previously cleared jump, it counts as a fault.

2. **Lift:** Having to lift your rabbit up and over an intact jump (no poles knocked down). Once you or your rabbit knocks a pole down, you can set him over without incurring a second fault. The lift fault only occurs when you lift a rabbit over an intact jump/obstacle.

3. **Lopsided Jump or Incomplete Obstacle:** Rabbit jumps outside the jump supports (standards) or off the footing (mats or carpet). Rabbit does not complete an obstacle, jumps off the obstacle prematurely, or avoids part of the obstacle. This occurs more often in Agility Courses, but can be incurred on any type of course. Ex: Jumping off a bridge before you get to the end would count as an Incomplete Jump; Jumping diagonally/crookedly over a spread jump so you actually jump across the standards and land on the floor beside the course.

4. **False Start:** Team does not wait for judge to be ready before beginning run. Always wait once you get to the start of the course until the judge signals you to begin. Frequently, a judge will simply stop you and send you back. But they could choose to just add a fault to your run.

5. **Out of Bounds:** A rabbit runs more than 5 feet off the course. There is a judgement call between this being a fault and being a disqualification (see “Off Course” disqualification). If a handler goes more than 5 feet, recovers control on the rabbit, and redirects back to the course, right back where they exited from, then it is a fault.
If a rabbit moves only slightly off the course area (less than 5 feet), it is not considered a fault. You are simply adding time to your score!

6. **Correction**: Lifting the rabbit off the ground by handler to reset or adjust rabbit’s position relative to the jump in order to avoid faults. Lifting the rabbit or correcting the rabbit if it is about to go off course or jump off an obstacle prematurely. Lifting a rabbit and setting it further back from a jump or obstacle to prevent it from jumping poorly. Stopping a rabbit as it’s running towards a jump and resetting it back to run again. This fault is not commonly enforced in the competitions we attend. You see this fault listed in many of the European rule sets. They are fairly strict on blocking a rabbit from making a mistake or significant re-positioning during the course. They expect the rabbit to simply go. Sometimes, one correction = one fault. In other rule sets, three corrections = one fault.

7. **Failure to Pick up your Rabbit**: In some rule sets, a failure to pick up your rabbit after a run is complete counts as a fault. I don’t often see this fault enforced, but don’t chance it! Pick up your rabbit promptly after your run is finished. It also prevents your rabbit from immediately turning around and jumping back over the end jump, which might give you a DQ (Judge’s discretion).

The Handler/Rabbit with the fewest faults wins the class. If there are ties on faults, then the competitors are ordered by time – fastest is best.
Disqualifications – DQs (for current run only*):

1. **Wrong Course (and Skipped Jump):** Rabbit goes off course, by jumping jumps in wrong order (Crooked Course), or fully skipping a jump. Rabbit’s entire body must pass the jump before Wrong Course is called. If you can catch your rabbit before his whole body passes the jump, then you can avoid the DQ. However, if the competition is observing the Correction type of fault, you would get a fault for such a move!

2. **Refusal:** Rabbit lays down and refuses to move for 20+ seconds. Since the care and health of our rabbits take priority in this sport, a refusal of this length would mean a rabbit was too tired to continue and should be DQed for the run or class.

3. **Fault Limit:** Team exceeds maximum fault limit for course. A maximum number of faults can either be arbitrarily set by the Show organizers, or can be calculated based on the number of jumps in a course. \( \text{MaxFaults} = \frac{\text{total number of jumps including all start/end/transitional jumps}}{2} \). Round up to the nearest whole number, and that would be the Maximum Fault number.

4. **Time Limit:** Team exceeds the Maximum Time allotted for a run. Frequently, two minutes is used as the Maximum Time, though a Show Organizer can increase the time on particularly difficult courses or for Crooked Courses. The Maximum Time will never be shorter than 1 minute.
5. **Poor Sportsmanship**: Handler shows poor sportsmanship. Poor sportsmanship can include any physical or verbal abuse of any other person or rabbit in the event, your own included. No negative or hurtful comments or physical actions towards any person will be tolerated. Excessive indications off poor sportsmanship can get you DQed from the whole class or even the entire event.

6. **Abuse**: Any abuse of rabbit, on course or off, will result in disqualification. No hitting, kicking, yanking of leash, or screaming at rabbit is tolerated. This is a repetition of the Poor Sportsmanship rule. But this can also be enacted if you are seen abusing your animal anywhere in the competition space or venue.

7. **Wrong Touch**: Touching rabbit with feet to direct. One warning may be given before disqualification. This is at the judge’s discretion. An accidental touch would most likely not be called a DQ, but an intentional touch, even a gentle one, is a DQ. Hands only to touch a rabbit!

8. **Wrong Harness/Leash**: Harness and leash does meet equipment specifications. Frequently, show organizers will check youth harnesses/leashes before the classes even begin and give the participants a chance to find a regulation harness.

9. **Footwear**: Handler may not wear heels, flip-flops, or heavy boots. You must use soft-soled shoes, preferably sneakers. This is to avoid seriously hurting your rabbit in case you step on him. Show officials frequently check handlers
before the show even begins and warn them to change footwear or take their shoes off entirely.

10. **Wrong Way**: A rabbit jumps back over a jump he has just cleared and lands with all 4 feet on the opposite side. This is another time when your quick reflexes can save you a DQ. If you catch your rabbit before it hits the ground with his back feet, you can avoid the DQ. Again, if the Correction rule is being enforced, this would get you a fault.

11. **Off Course**: Rabbit leaves the course area entirely. This is a somewhat similar to the Out of Bounds fault. Off Course is most likely used when a rabbit truly runs away! A judge would have the final say on whether to give you a “Out of Bounds” fault or a “Off Course” DQ. Personally, I think the names are misleading and should be switched, but no one asked me!

12. **Handler Jump**: A handler stepping over the jump before or after the rabbit. This is rabbit hopping, not people hopping. Only the rabbit should go over the jump.

13. **Disruption**: Excessive disruptive behavior from the handler or a family member. This is an issue of judge's discretion. Train your family not to get angry on your behalf! Keep your cool if your rabbit does something wrong or isn’t jumping well. This could also be considered Poor Sportsmanship.

*Repeated or serious disqualifications can disqualify you from the whole class or even that entire day’s competition!