



DRESSAGE

Project Guide



CANADA
4-H Alberta

The 4-H Motto

“Learn To Do By Doing”

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge:

My **head** to clearer thinking,

My **heart** to greater loyalty,

My **hands** to larger service,

My **health** to better living,

For my club, my community,

my country, and my world.

Published by 4-H Alberta for the 4-H community.

For more information or to find other helpful resources,
please visit the 4-H Alberta website at www.4hab.com.

4-H Dressage Project

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Objectives	2
Requirements	3
Overview of Dressage	6
History of Dressage/ Dressage Today	7-8
Dressage Competition	9
Dressage Ring	10
Dressage Tests	12
Cadora Inc. First Level Test “C”	15
Dressage Levels	16
Dressage Competition	17-18
Equine Canada	19
Dressage Basics	20
Development of the gaits	20-26
The Elements of Training	27-28
Basic Riding Position	29
Natural aids / artificial aids	30-39
Common Dressage Terminology	40
On the bit - Above the bit - Behind the bit	40-42
Half Halt	42-44
Turn on the Forehand	44-45
Leg Yielding	45-47
The Shoulder-in	47-48
School Figures	48
Circles	49
Serpentines	49-50
The Half Arena	51
Changes across the diagonals/corners	52-55
Glossary - dressage terminology	56-59
Bibliography	60
Appendix A - Magazines, Videos, Addresses	61-62
Appendix B - Small Dressage Ring	63
Appendix C - Standard Dressage Ring	64
Appendix D - Suggestions for Leaders (unmounted/mounted)	65-71
Appendix E - Rider Assessment	72-76
Appendix F – Information about CEF Dressage Tests	77

Introduction

Welcome to the 4-H dressage project!

Congratulations on having successfully completed the mandatory Horsemanship Project Levels 1-3. You now have basics that will be important for successful completion of the Dressage Project. We hope you will have a fantastic year developing new skills and teaching your horse new things as you continue to develop your horse knowledge and experience.

What is Dressage?

Dressage is simply the French word for “training”. With the aid of this manual you will learn about the dressage competition and basic dressage training concepts. At the completion of this project you should be ready for competing at a dressage show, either in an open or “schooling” show or at one of the EC (Equine Canada) recognized dressage shows which are held throughout Alberta.

Whether you choose to compete or not, you will have fun learning, your horse will become better trained, and whatever skills you develop, you can use them to continue your pursuit of horsin’ around!

Do I have to compete by riding a dressage test at a show?

Competition is not mandatory for this project; however, it certainly is a valuable tool to assess a member’s full understanding and practical application of the skills and knowledge gained during the completion of the dressage project.

The assessment of the member’s ability and knowledge can be recognized easily in a show situation as he/she prepares, competes and receives a score on a dressage test.

Each 4-H member is encouraged to get involved by actively participating in formal dressage testing as competition itself is a tool for self-evaluation and promotes positive skill development.

It is possible, however, for a 4-H club to hold its own “dressage show” to help members evaluate or show off their achievements at the end of the 4-H year.

Horse and rider assessment

The dressage project has been developed with assessment tools for both unmounted and mounted abilities. There are some suggestions at the end of this manual to help guide the leader and members in the assessment of the dressage project, both for mounted and unmounted abilities.

The member(s) and the project leader can then decide how the assessment of each skill and dressage knowledge will be determined.



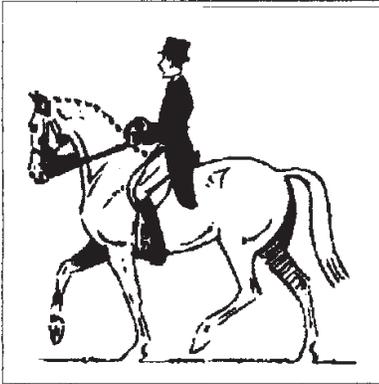
Objectives

The goal of the dressage project is to provide an opportunity for 4-H members to:

-  1. Understand how dressage originated and how we use it today.
-  2. Understand how the various levels of dressage and the accompanying tests evaluate the training of the horse and skill of the rider.
-  3. Know the specifications of a basic dressage ring including size and letter placement.
-  4. Understand the preparation necessary and proper etiquette for dressage competition.
-  5. Enjoy riding English while pursuing an interest in the dressage discipline.
-  6. Develop the skill and be able to use the correct aids to teach some basic dressage concepts to their horses.
-  7. Be prepared to enter and compete at a local or recognized dressage show or complete a basic dressage test in a noncompetitive situation.

Requirements:

A horse



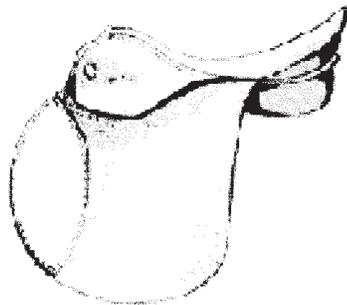
What do I need to complete this dressage project?

As with any other horse project in 4-H, you will need a horse that you are currently riding. Does it need to be a fancy breed or a certain type of horse? No! Any riding horse except, perhaps, one that does not have a natural trotting gait, such as a Tennessee Walking Horse, is fully able to be trained for basic dressage.

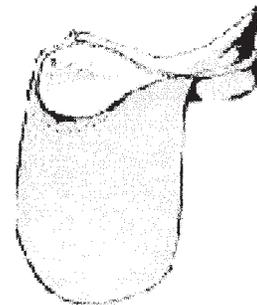
Your horse should be comfortable being ridden in a snaffle or jointed bit (one without shanks) as dressage training requires the use of both hands on the reins. Dressage is all about teaching your horse to respond to your aids in a willing manner so that it can obediently perform whatever task you ask of it. No matter what breed or type of horse you ride - dressage training will only make it better!

English Saddle

An English saddle versus a western saddle is important to dressage training only because it allows the rider to be “closer” to the horse as a result of the way the saddle is constructed. There is less “leather” between you and your horse at the important places such as your seat and legs. The English saddle can be of any type, all purpose or forward seat, that might be used for jumping, but the saddle that places the rider’s body in the correct position most easily is the dressage saddle. Although it is not necessary, it does make the job of sitting correctly on the horse much easier.

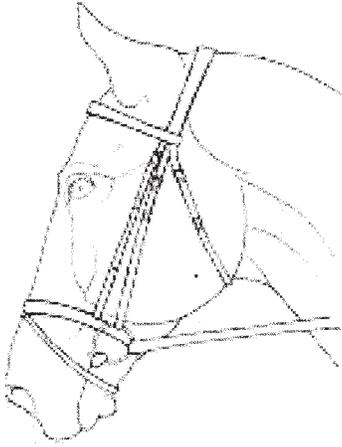


All purpose saddle



Dressage saddle

English Bridle

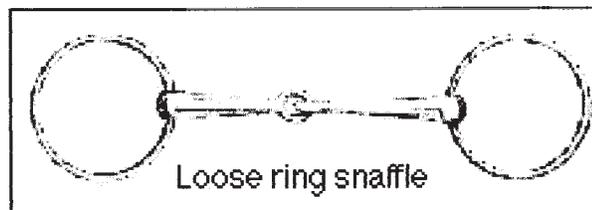


English bridle showing a flash noseband

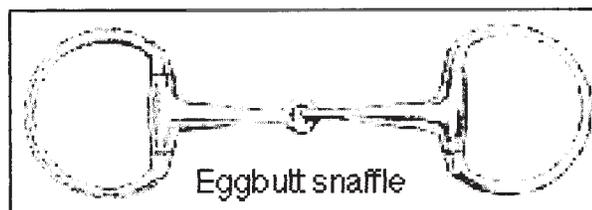
An **English bridle** is preferable because it automatically comes with a proper noseband. A noseband will help the action of the snaffle bit by not allowing the horse to open its mouth to get away from the pressure created by your contact on the reins. In addition, a **flash noseband** is often used for dressage. It is a piece of thin leather that attaches through a loop, to the center of the front of the noseband. It then is placed around the horse's muzzle below the bit that comes from the corners of the horse's mouth. It encourages the horse to keep its mouth closed while you make contact with it. Although it is a popular piece of equipment, it is not mandatory to ride dressage.

Snaffle Bit

The snaffle bit is also a must for dressage training. There are a variety of snaffle bits that are available for use. You choose the bit that your horse works best in. Generally speaking a loose ring snaffle, either single or double-jointed, is the standard bit used for dressage. Some horses may respond better to an eggbutt snaffle, while D-rings are not commonly used in dressage training. The size of the mouthpiece depends on your horse as well. A thinner mouthpiece is more severe than a thick mouthpiece. Most horses favor a thicker mouth piece.



Loose ring snaffle



Eggbutt snaffle

Riding Attire

The riding attire required to ride dressage depends on whether you are in the show ring at a competition, training at home, or in a lesson/clinic situation (often called “schooling”). The acceptable riding clothes for the show ring will be discussed later in this manual. For schooling dressage or during a lesson or clinic, you simply wear clothes that are comfortable for riding, usually *breeches* (a type of English riding pants that are made of a stretch type fabric), a comfortable shirt, long riding boots (either synthetic or leather) and a helmet. (The use of a helmet is strongly recommended for any type of riding, but is not mandatory) However, if you are under 18 years of age and competing at a recognized EC dressage show, you must wear a helmet at all times when mounted.



*ASTM/SEI ventilated schooling helmet



*ASTM/SEI English show helmet

(*American Society of Testing Materials/ Safety Equipment Institute)

With all of the requirements in place, you are now ready to begin your dressage training!



Overview of Dressage

What is Dressage?

Dressage is the art of training a horse from the basics of walk, trot and canter through to the more advanced movements such as "passage" and "piaffe". You could think of dressage simply as a school for horses from kindergarten through to university level. The rider must learn to ride in such a way that they enhance the horse's natural movement.

The dressage horse is ridden "on the flat". This simply means that there are no jumps in the training of the dressage horse. However, cavalletti and poles are often used during schooling (training) to increase balance, muscle development and suppleness.

Horses are "**tested**" by being individually ridden in a dressage arena. The horse and rider complete a series of movements that are performed at certain points within the arena. This is called the dressage "test". The dressage arena has letters around it at specific intervals to identify where the movement should begin and end.

Dressage is becoming more and more popular as the benefit of the training is becoming evident. Even jumper riders are taking advantage of dressage training to improve their horse's ability between the jumps as well as their own riding ability.



History of Dressage

Although man has used horses for thousands of years for transportation and working the fields, the beginnings of dressage training can be linked with the military.

A good war horse needed to be one that was easy to maneuver. The reason for this was that the soldier would only be able to ride with one hand, since the other was used to carry a weapon. As well, the horse had to be completely obedient; he had to go wherever the rider wanted and into whatever situation he came upon. The horse had to rely on his rider, to trust him and accept him as a superior and as a leader. Only then would a horse be able to overcome his natural fear and inborn flight instinct - a horse would be useless if he was afraid of battle and bolted off into the enemy's army. Some of the movements were used in battle to aid in the combat of the enemy. "Piaffe" was a movement originally developed to trample on the enemy when they were down on the ground.

Not only was it important that the horse be obedient to the rider's command, it was also necessary that he be well schooled and fit so that he remained *sound* (not lame) for his work. This is where dressage training began. In the eighteenth century, a Frenchman named Robichon de la Gueriniere discovered the importance of gymnastic exercises for the horse. These exercises strengthened the horse's muscles and thereby helped avoid injuries to the joints and tendons. Horses would last much longer on the battlefield if they were conditioned and trained in this manner.

Most of the movements that were taught to the horse during La Gueriniere's time, and are still taught today, were not an end to themselves, but rather a test as to whether the schooling and gymnastics were achieving the desired results of the horse being **fit** enough for battle.

Today when we hear talk of the art of "Classical Riding" we are referring to the system that was taught in La Gueriniere's *Ecole de Cavalerie* (Cavalry School). This is the foundation for the sport we now call Dressage.



Dressage Today

Dressage is a sport that has developed into a world renowned equestrian discipline that is an event in the Olympic games. In Canada and more importantly, in Alberta you have a wide variety of choice when it comes to the dressage discipline. Dressage training will improve any horse and rider's skill level, allowing you options of learning for the sake of learning, or if you are interested in competing, there are a wide variety of dressage competitions throughout Alberta and Western Canada which are enjoyed by many people.



Dressage Competition

EC Dressage Shows

Throughout our province there are numerous EC (Equine Canada) recognized dressage shows held each year leading up to the Provincial, Regional and/or National Championships.

If the show is designated as Regional Championships, the regions are divided as follows:

1. Pacific: British Columbia and Yukon
2. West: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, North West Territories and Nunavit
3. East: Ontario and Quebec
4. Atlantic: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.

All tests at National, Regional and Provincial Championships must be ridden in the 20 X 60 meter arena, for all levels of competition. When a competition is designated to be the National Championship, it must be held as one competition in one location accessible from all parts of the country.

Local Dressage Shows

On a local level, open horse shows are starting to offer dressage classes. It is likely that you will be able to try out your new dressage skills at your own local horse show. There are also numerous regional dressage circuits that have been organized by various riding groups in Alberta, such as Edmonton Area Alberta Dressage Association (EA/ADA) and Parkland Area Alberta Dressage Association (PA/ADA).

Schooling Dressage Shows

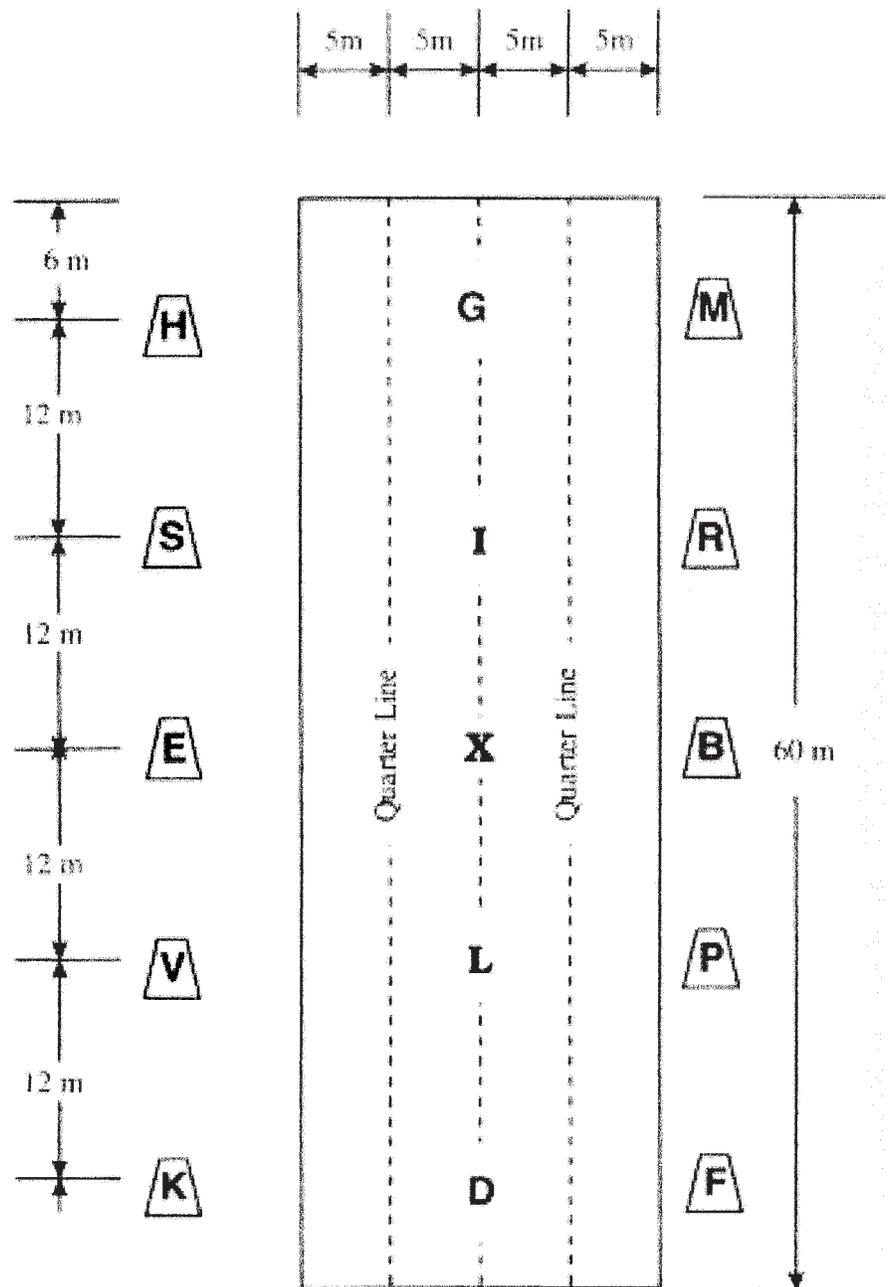
There are numerous “schooling” shows that offer dressage classes just for fun! You can try out your skills and practice as you compete in a fun way without the cost and preparation that is necessary at a recognized show. Contact training stables that specialize in dressage and ask for their schooling show schedule.



The Dressage Ring

General Information

All dressage tests are ridden in a 20 x 60 m dressage ring. (See below) For all tests, the horses are ridden through a gate at A; they proceed down the imaginary center line toward C where they halt at X and *salute* (See glossary). The remainder of the dressage test is ridden with movements performed at or between the letters as shown on the particular test being ridden. The test concludes with a final center line + halt at X or G.



20 x 60 ring

Perimeter Fence

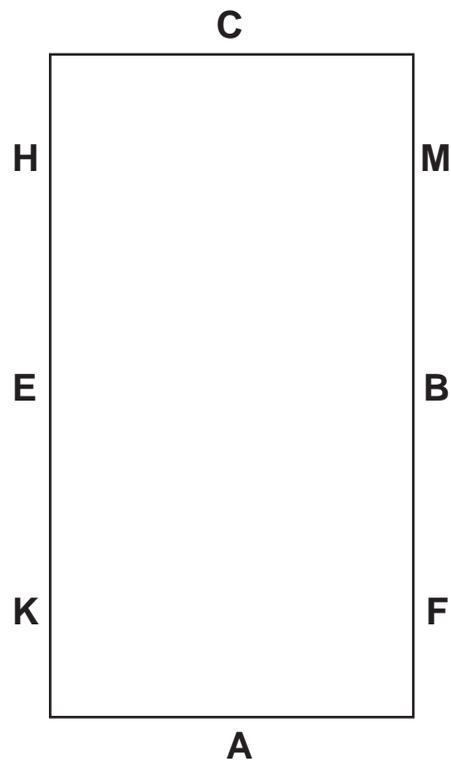
The perimeter of the ring is not fenced in with tall fence, but rather with a short fence that should be no higher than 18 inches. Why so short? This is so the rider can have the horse “track” (step) right next to the rail and into the corners without having to worry about the rider’s leg hitting the rail. The body of the horse might venture outside the edge of the arena while the legs and foot falls stay inside. If a horse steps outside of the ring with all four feet it is eliminated from that test.

Letters

How does a rider know where to perform the specified movements? Letters are placed in a standard pattern around the perimeter of the arena, at a prescribed minimum distance from the rail. This allows the tests to be completed with movements taking place at or between certain letters. The spacing between letters is important as it allows room for the horse to easily perform the desired movements.

Letter placement

The order of the letters is important but makes no sense whatsoever. To help you remember where the main letters are placed, start with “A” at the bottom and move clockwise around the ring and say:



All King Edward’s Horses Can Make Beautiful Foals

Dressage Tests

What are they?

-  The dressage test could be considered an assessment tool..
-  The tests are “checkpoints” to display the level of balance, strength and obedience the horse has reached in his training.
-  Tests are made up of patterns and changes of pace which are performed at various letters around the ring and are often symmetrical (the same movements are performed in each direction).
-  The tests are not composed of “tricks” to be learned automatically; the object of dressage training is to develop the horse physically and mentally, in harmony with his own natural way of moving.
-  Tests are divided into **movements** (there are, for example, 12 to 18 movements in the average basic test). A judge marks each movement separately on a 0-10 scale like figure skating or gymnastics.
-  At the end of the test the judge will also mark “collective marks” for general impression. At the non-FEI levels, these marks have a coefficient of 2 or 3. This means simply that they are marked out of 10 and multiplied by 2 or 3, therefore, being worth twice or 3 times as much as other movements in the test.

Collective Marks

Criteria	Definitions	FEI	Non-FEI
Paces	Freedom and regularity.	1	2
Impulsion	Desire to move forward, elasticity of the steps, suppleness of the back and engagement of the hind quarters.	1	2
Submission	Attention, confidence, ease of the movements, acceptance of the bit, lightness of forehand.	2	3
Rider’s position and seat	Correctness and effect of the aids.	2	3

 The passing or “adequate” score for a dressage test is 50%. Scores in the 60’s are very good and ones in the 70% range are exceptional.

 Once you have ridden your test and it has been recorded, you may take the judge’s evaluation home with you. This allows you to evaluate your training and continue improving your riding skills. The judge writes comments beside each movement. These are useful for determining what work needs to be done for the next test.

Preparation for a test

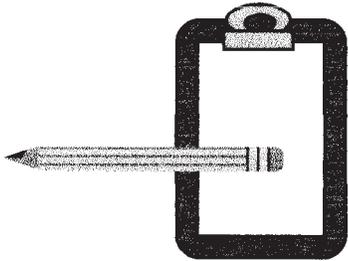
Each dressage show decides whether they will be offering 1, 2, 3 or 4 tests. This allows riders to know beforehand which test they are going to be riding at the show. A rider can then prepare his/her horse for the movements that are required for that specific test.

Except for National, Regional and Provincial championship shows, competitors are allowed to have a “reader” during the riding of the test. A reader is someone hired by the show (or someone whom you have asked), who reads, out loud, each movement in the test just before you are to perform the movement. Not only are horses trained progressively in dressage - in a sense, so are the riders. A basic (beginning) rider can then concentrate more on the horse’s movement, attentiveness, suppleness etc. instead of having to worry about going “off course”. This way it really is a test of the performance of the horse and rider, not the ability to memorize a test.

Despite the benefit of having a reader, it is still a good idea to completely memorize the dressage test(s) you will be riding before the show. The better you know the test, the less nervous you will be when actually performing it for real. A “reader” should serve only as a reminder if you lose your way during the test. It is not good to rely on your reader as there is so much to think about when you are riding your test.

Memorizing the Dressage Test

“Practice on paper”



One way to memorize a dressage test is to use pen and paper and draw a dressage ring, including the placement of the letters. (Blank copies of the dressage ring are included at the back of this manual.) Using a pen or pencil, “ride” the test on paper, being sure to ride exact lines. As you move your pencil around the ring, you will say out loud or to yourself the movement that is to take place. As you go through the test over and over in this manner you will get so that you know it. Visually, the more perfect a rider makes his/her ride on paper, the more likely it will be perfect when the test is actually ridden with the horse.

“Ride in your mind”

Furthermore, a rider can also “ride” through the test in ones mind many times throughout the day. Some people “walk” the test in an imaginary smaller arena, thinking with each step how they are going to ride the horse.

“Walk the test unmounted”

Each of these methods should be used until you discover which one or which ones work best for you to memorize the dressage tests. The more you learn to memorize tests, the easier it will get. Some people need only read through the test once and they have it memorized, others need a week of memorization to have the test solid in their mind.

Practicing the test with the horse

By riding the whole test for practise it will give the rider the feel of the movements and the “flow “ (how the movements are linked together with transitions and changes) of the test. However, it is a not a good idea to ride the whole test too often when practicing with your horse, as it often causes a horse to start anticipating or trying to perform movements before the rider gives the horse the aids for the movement or gait. You want your horse to wait for you to give it direction, so practice the movements individually and out-of-order.

Where do you get the tests from?

The Canadian Dressage Owners and Riders Association (CADORA) as well as Dressage Canada, publish a yearly book called the “Omnibus”. All of the current EC and FEI dressage tests are contained in this publication. You may purchase the Omnibus by contacting an area representative. However, the Omnibus does not include the “directives” for each movement. That is, the actual test that the judge will mark includes comments (directives) as to what is desirable for each movement. These directives will help you as you train your horse. They will be indicators of what you need to develop for each movement and ensure that you understand what the judge is looking for. Therefore, it is best to go to the EC website to get all the tests that you will be riding in the year. These tests contain the directives. There are some sample tests included with this manual. They may however, be out of date. So you should enquire about the current tests if you are going to enter a dressage show.

The page that follows gives an example of a Cadora Inc. First Level C dressage test.

Cadora Inc. First Level C dressage test.

 <p style="text-align: center;">CADORA INC. FIRST LEVEL TEST "C" <i>[AMENDED, 2011]</i></p>						No.	
To be ridden in an ordinary snaffle with the reins in both hands. All trot sitting, unless specified otherwise.						Conditions: Arena: Standard or small Average Time: 7:30 (Std.) or 5:30 (small)	
		Test	Directives	Pts	Coeff	Total	Remarks
1	A X	Enter working trot. Halt. Salute. Proceed working trot.	Straightness on centre line. Transitions. Quality of halt & trot.				
2	C HXF F	Track left. Proceed to H. Change rein, lengthen stride. Working trot. Proceed to K.	Quality of turns. Lengthening of frame & stride. Transitions into & out of lengthening.				
3	KG	Leg-yield right. Proceed to C.	Flow & straightness of leg-yield. Rhythm of trot.				
4	C MXK K	Turn right. Proceed to M. Change rein lengthen stride. Working trot. Proceed to F.	Quality of turns. Lengthening of frame & stride. Transitions into & out of lengthening.				
5	FG	Leg-yield left. Proceed to C.	Flow & straightness of leg-yield. Rhythm of trot.				
6	C	Medium walk & turn right. Proceed to M.	Transition. Smoothness of turn. Quality of walk.				
7	ME EK	Change rein free walk. Medium walk.	Quality of walks. Transition.		2		
8	KAFB	Working trot.	Quality of trot.				
9	B B	Circle 20m. rising trot, letting the horse stretch forward & downward. Before B, shorten the reins. Working trot. Proceed to C.	Quality of the stretch over the back. Balance & quality of trot.		2		
10	C HK K	Working canter. Proceed to H. Lengthen stride in canter. Working canter. Proceed to A.	Transitions into & out of lengthening. Length of stride & frame. Balance.				
11	A	Circle left 15m in diameter. Proceed to F.	Quality of canter. Roundness & shape of circle; bend & balance		2		
12	FXH X	Change rein. Change of lead through trot Proceed to C.	Quality of canter. Straightness across arena. Balance of transition at X.		2		
13	C	Circle right 15m in diameter Proceed to M	Quality of canter. Shape, size of circle; bend & balance		2		
14	MXK X	Change rein Change of lead through trot. Proceed to A	Quality of canter. Smoothness and balance of transition at X.		2		
15	AF FX	Working trot Working trot	Quality of trot transition. Straightness to X.				
16	X G	Proceed to G Halt. Salute.	Straightness on centre line & in halt. Immobility				
Leave arena in walk.							

Collective Marks					
1	Paces (freedom and regularity)		2		ERRORS: (deduct) 1 st -2 2 nd -4 3 rd Elimination
2	Impulsion (desire to move forward, elasticity of the steps, suppleness of the back and engagement of the hind quarters).		2		
3	Submission (attention, confidence, ease of the movements, acceptance of the bit, lightness of forehand).		2		
4	Rider's position and seat; correctness and effect of the aids.		2		
SUBTOTAL:					
ERRORS:			(-)		_____ %
TOTAL POINTS:			_____/300		
REMARKS:					
SIGNATURE OF JUDGE:					

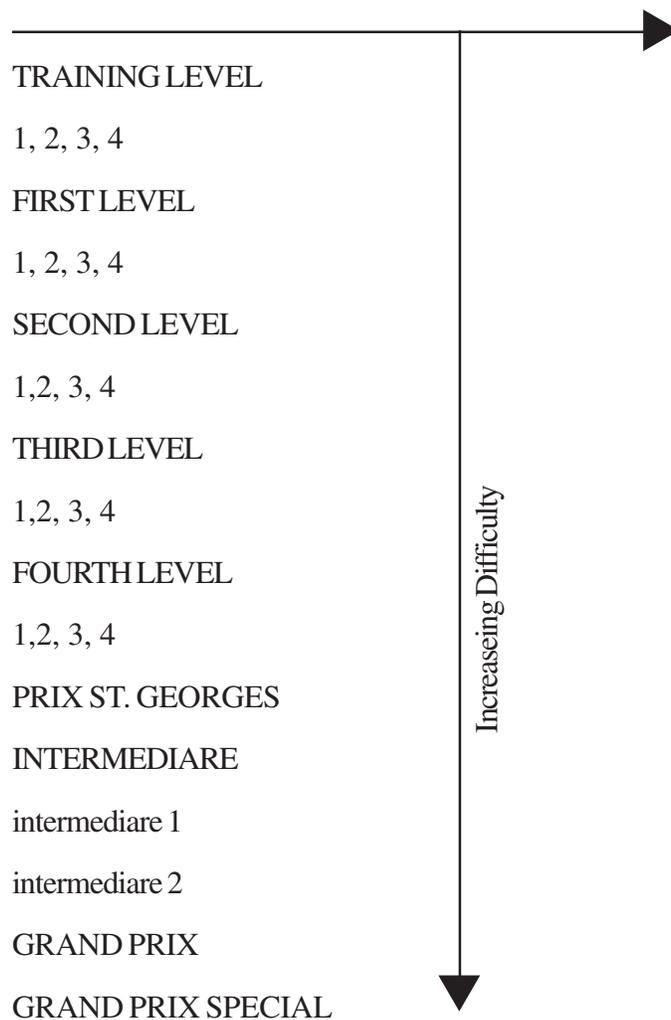


What are the “Levels” in Dressage?

Dressage training follows a specific order of required gaits and movements. This order is known as a level. Each level contains movements that follow a natural progression in training a horse. For example a horse would not be expected to perform a 10 meter canter circle until it has been successful in maintaining rhythm, balance, suppleness and bend on a 20 meter and 15 meter canter circle. If the “basics” are skipped, the more advanced work will be difficult, if not impossible for the horse.

The following is an outline of the tests that are found at each level of dressage competition:

Increasing difficulty 1, 2, 3, 4 tests



Dressage Competition

What you should know if competing or watching!

What classes are offered at a dressage show?

There are classes offered from Training through to Intermediare 2 level which contain increasingly difficult requirements. Grand Prix is the level ridden at the Olympic games, and is also offered at the recognized dressage shows. Each rider/horse combination rides individually in an arena at a specified time during the dressage competition.

How do riders know which class to enter?

Most horses start at Training level. They are allowed to enter any two consecutive levels plus a freestyle Kur (ride to music) if it is offered at their level. As a horse improves and gets higher scores over a period of time, he is promoted or “upgraded” and would compete at the next highest level.

How does a rider know when to ride?

Dressage shows are run on a strict schedule; riding times are available a day or two before the show. An example might be that you have entered the Training level 1 and 2 classes at a show. You would phone the show committee and receive confirmation of your entry. They would tell you that you ride on Friday evening at 8:05 and Saturday morning at 9:45. Even if they have canceled entries, you are still allowed to ride at your scheduled time.

Why does the Bell or Whistle sound?

A bell or whistle is used by the judge to signal the rider who is “warming up” that they have 45 seconds to enter the arena and begin the test. The bell may also halt the test if an “off course” error on the part of the rider has occurred. (After three mistakes the rider is eliminated and must retire from the ring.)

Are you allowed to ride in the dressage ring before the show or test?

There are scheduled riding times when the riders are allowed to use the official show ring before the show begins. These times will be given to you when you phone for confirmation of your entry.

Once the show has begun there will be a warm-up ring available for practicing. Rider can ride around ring once previous competitor has exited until the bell/whistle has been sounded.



What kind of riding apparel must the rider wear?

At informal (schooling) shows you may see the riders wearing light-colored breeches, tweed or summer riding jackets, or long sleeved shirts, hunt caps and high boots. You may also see the more formal dressage outfit which is required for EC recognized shows. White or light colored breeches, a black or very dark jacket, black boots, a white stock tie and a black bowler or low crowned top hat are worn. Riders under 18 years of age must wear approved helmets. Gloves are required at all shows and are usually black in color. White gloves are worn usually with the more formal advanced dress. Spurs are optional in the Basic and Medium Training level and possibly First level classes but are required in all advanced classes. Also, in the more advanced classes, from Prix St. Georges and up, the rider must wear a tail-coat, usually black or navy and a yellow waist coat, with a top hat, white breeches, white gloves, black boots and spurs. The rather conservative colors are designed to focus attention on the horse, not the rider.

What kind of tack does the horse wear?

Up to Third level a snaffle bridle is to be used. Third and Fourth level there is a choice between a snaffle or simple double bridle. PSG and up must use a simple double bridle.

What is the warm-up ring?

Each show must have an area made available where horse and rider can “warm up” and ride before they enter the competition arena to ride their test. Here, the riders will put their horse through a series of warm-up exercises and practice parts of the test in preparation for the real thing.

Why is everyone so quiet while watching a dressage competition?

Riding a dressage test calls for great concentration from both horse and rider. A sudden noise or movement could upset the flow of the test. Applause should be withheld until the horse has completed the test and is leaving the ring.

What should a spectator look for?

In order to develop a basis of comparison, one should watch several rides of the same test. The horse should move forward rhythmically with no impression of stiffness, discomfort or disobedience. As the levels progress, more and more accuracy is required of the performance. Above all, horse and rider should be in harmony. It is supposed to look easy!

How are the winners decided?

The highest scoring horse is the winner. If there is more than one judge, scores will be averaged. Scores are posted as fast as they are calculated, usually near the show secretary’s office. Winners receive ribbons, and some shows offer trophies or prize money.



What is Equine Canada?

Dressage competition in Canada is guided by Equine Canada (EC) which establishes the rules and sets the standards that enable riders throughout the country to compete at the same level.

In Canada, EC includes dressage as one of the disciplines that they recognize in competition.

They have implemented some basic rules that show committees must follow if they wish to put on an EC recognized dressage show. They establish the categories of riders and horses for the shows and the rules that must be followed during a competition.

Examples of some EC rules:

- All competitors under 18 years of age must wear an approved helmet at all times while on a horse at the competition.
- A horse must have their show number placed somewhere on it any time they are out of the stall and on the grounds of the show.
- Horses shown at EC shows must have a “passport” filled out and signed by a qualified veterinarian. The passport identifies the horse and owner. The test results from the show are recorded in a special section at the back of the passport and are a great way of keeping track of a horse’s show performance.

DRESSAGE BASICS

Goal of Dressage

The goal of all dressage riding should be to bring the horse and rider together in harmony. **Harmony** means a oneness of balance, purpose and athletic expression. The horse appears relaxed in its work, the aids are unnoticeable by the spectator and there is a flowing rhythm to the movements.

Development of the gaits

Most horses have three natural gaits:

walk four beat gait

trot two beat gait

canter three beat gait.

There are variations within each of the gaits as follows:

Free (applies only to walk)

Working

Lengthened

Medium

Extended

Collected

The progression of training from Training Level to Fourth Level, results in developing each gait as follows:

Basic	Advanced
Free and medium <u>walk</u>	Collected, medium, extended <u>walk</u>
Working and lengthened <u>trot</u>	Collected, medium and extended <u>trot</u>
Working and lengthened <u>canter</u>	Collected, medium and extended <u>canter</u>

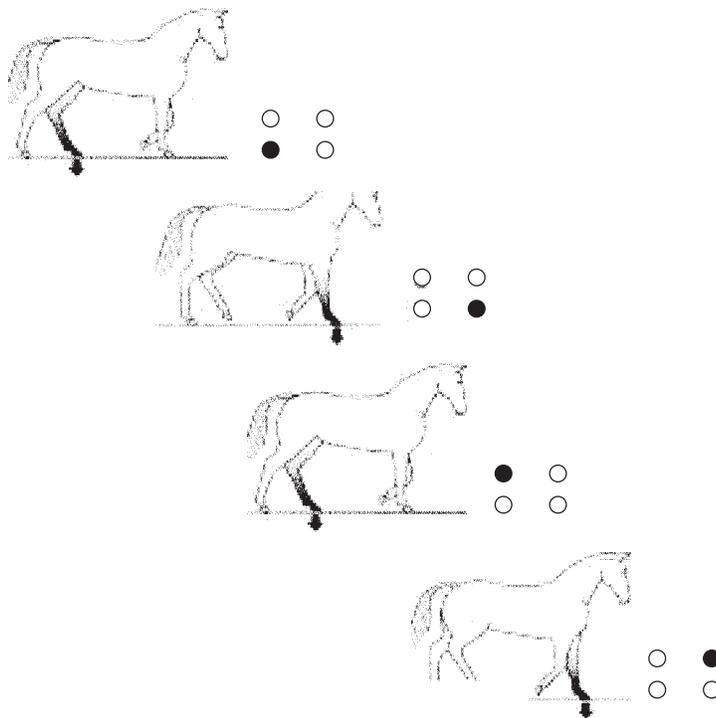


The Walk

The walk is a striding movement with four beats. The walk is a gait which is used in all levels of dressage from Basic to Grand prix. There are a number of variations of pace that can be ridden in walk.

Free walk on a loose rein

The natural walk of the horse with total freedom is called the “free walk” in dressage. The rider gives the horse total freedom from rein contact and allows the horse to fully stretch his neck forward and down. Its hind hoof should step over the hoof print made by the front hoof on the same side (overtrack). The walk should be forward without rushing. The free walk is a refreshing treat for a horse who has worked hard.



Footfalls at walk

Working walk

The working walk is ridden lightly on the bit. It is used in training young horses. The overtrack of the hind hoof should be one or two hoof lengths in front of the front foot imprint. There should be energy put into each stride so that the horse feels like it is “working”. The “working walk” is not found in dressage tests, but is simply a training gait.

Medium walk

The medium walk is a strong, working pace. It clearly shows some lengthening compared to the working walk with a definite overtrack. The horse strides out energetically, actively and regularly.

Extended walk

In the extended walk, the strides are lengthened as much as the horse's conformation will allow. In the extended walk the hind hoof should step clearly two or three hoof lengths over the hoof print of the front hoof. The frame (body from nose to tail) should be clearly lengthened, the neck becoming longer and the face of the horse somewhat in front of the vertical. The contact with the rider's hand should be maintained and under no circumstances should the horse get quicker in its rhythm. Rather, the horse should take longer strides.

Collected walk

In the collected walk the hind hoof should land slightly behind the hoof print of the front hoof as the stride is made shorter. The hindquarters of the horse should carry more weight while the forehead is elevated slightly. The frame of the horse becomes shorter and the horse looks "prouder". The face of the horse comes very close to the vertical and contact through the reins should be maintained.

The Trot

The trot is a movement where the two diagonal pairs of legs (opposite front and hind) move together alternately forward and back giving the trot a two beat rhythm. Between the changing of the pairs of legs there is a moment of suspension where none of the feet are touching the ground. Some horses have more natural suspension in the trot making them appear to have a floating gait.

Working trot

The working trot is the first trot that the young horse should be asked for. It is also the trot that is required in all basic level dressage tests. The length of the stride is between the collected and medium trot. It should be energetic with impulsion but without rushing. There must be rhythm of stride and the horse should clearly track up (hind feet step into hoof prints of front feet).



Lengthened stride at the trot

The lengthening of the stride at trot is just that. While the stride becomes longer the horse should not lose the rhythm or get faster in the tempo. The lengthening of the trot is used to train the horse and condition it for the more energetic and powerful medium and extended trots without overstressing it. As the horse lengthens, the frame should become a little longer. The lengthened trot is asked for in First Level tests.

Medium trot

The medium trot has a stride that should be even longer than in lengthened trot. The nose should be slightly in front of the vertical with the poll as the highest point. The medium trot is more energetic than the working trot, with the horse carrying himself and not leaning on the reins. The horse should overtrack compared to the working trot. The medium trot is required in Second level and up through the advanced levels.

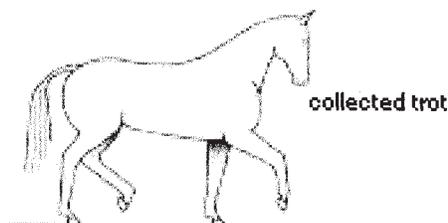
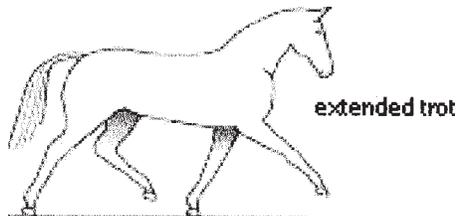
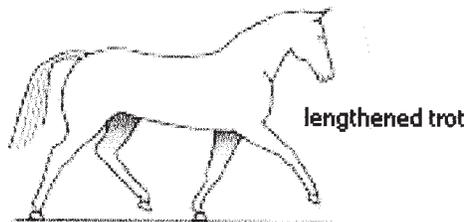
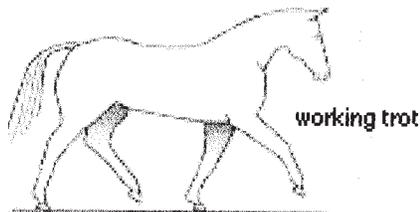
Extended trot

A medium and advanced movement, the extended trot shows a clear increase in the length of stride from medium trot. This includes increased impulsion, suspension and a very energetic use of the hind legs. The frame of the horse is longer than in medium. The horse should carry himself as it reaches forward with each stride.

When riding the extended trot you can easily feel a moment of suspension between strides.

Collected trot

The collected trot is a very special gait in dressage. The steps are elevated (higher), with increased flexion (bending) of the hind leg joints which cause the haunches of the horse to lower. While the haunches are taking more of the weight, the forehand becomes lighter and the horse appears to be moving “uphill”. The neck of the horse becomes somewhat shorter, but with more elevation. The horse is “giving” (not resisting) in the jaw and the face comes very close to the vertical. The expression of the horse is proud but still with relaxation. The collected trot should be ridden energetically but not too freely or it will become the working trot. It should not become too restrained or it will become more of a passage. (Trot with increased suspension between strides). It is important not to collect the horse for too long as a horse will tire easily and become crooked or lean on the rider’s hand. Even though the horse’s trot steps are shorter in length than in other trots, the horse appears “higher” in front and more mobile.



The Canter

The canter is a “jump-like” movement with three beats. Depending on which pair of legs is leading, there is a right lead canter and a left lead canter. The inside lead helps to balance the horse on turns and corners.

The footfall of the canter is in three time as follows:

1. outside hind leg
2. inside hind leg and outside fore leg
3. inside fore leg.

There is a moment of suspension before the next sequence of canter footfalls.

Quite often horses are asked to canter very slowly and the moment of suspension is lost. The horse begins to canter with a four beat movement. This four beat movement to the canter is incorrect and should be avoided at all times.

The canter should be lively and energetic with distinct three time hoof beats followed by a moment of suspension.

Working canter

Young horses and horses that are ridden at the basic level are ridden at the working canter. This is the natural canter where the horse is ridden with contact and has a definite three beat rhythm.

Lengthened canter

The lengthened canter prepares the horse for the medium and extended canter without asking too much in the early training. The horse must remain balanced without leaning forward onto the reins as it is asked to step longer with each canter stride without speeding up the tempo. As the horse lengthens its canter stride there will be a slight lengthening of the horse’s frame.

Medium canter

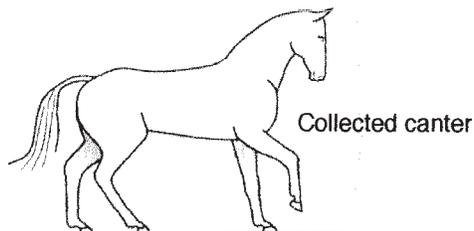
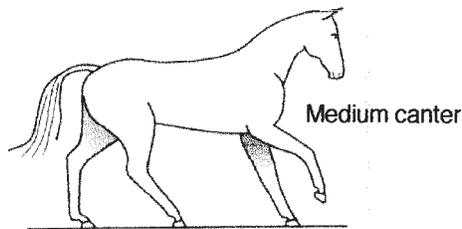
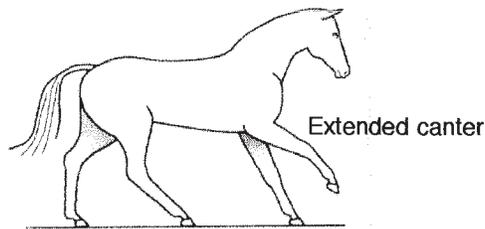
When the horse is relaxed and balanced in the lengthened canter it can be asked to extend its stride a bit more to medium canter. Longer and more ground covering springy strides are asked for and the rider should feel like he/she is going “uphill” rather than flat over the ground.

Extended canter

The extended canter results in the maximum amount of length of stride that the horse can give. It is ridden with control and balance without losing the three beat rhythm of the canter. The horse should be asked to increase its length of stride without quickening the rhythm of the canter.

Collected canter

The collected canter is an advanced gait that tests the horse's ability for “self carriage”. In order to perform a collected canter properly, the horse must be in good physical condition. Self carriage means that the horse does not lean onto the rider's hands; the weight of the horse shifts more to the hindquarters while the energy and impulsion remain strong. The horse's frame becomes shorter while the length of stride is decreased.



The Elements of Training

Your horse should be trained to ride forward in a calm and relaxed manner during all gaits, transitions and changes of direction. In order to achieve this there are a number of important elements in your training that should be followed.

Rhythm

Just as music has rhythm, so does the horses gaits. Rhythm refers to the sequence of the beats of each gait. The walk has a four beat pattern, the trot a two beat pattern and the canter a three beat pattern. The rhythm of each gait must be even and regular. This is a sign of relaxation in the horse while a loss of the regular beat in any one gait shows a loss of relaxation. The rider must find the correct tempo (the rate at which the rhythm of each gait is repeated) for each gait of the horse. Pay attention to the rhythm throughout your horse's training and it will greatly improve the horse's way of going and ability to remain relaxed.

Suppleness/Looseness

Suppleness is the looseness and flexibility of the horses body. There are 2 types of suppleness: longitudinal and lateral. Longitudinal suppleness gives the horse the ability to swing forward while retaining a connection with the rider's hand. Lateral suppleness allows the horse to bend sideways. You can put the frame of a supple horse wherever you want it. A supple horse will move fluidly like a dancer.

Contact

Contact is the connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth. The contact we have with our horse's mouth is important. It allows us to control our horse easily. Imagine riding with a long rein that does not allow you to "feel" your horse's mouth as you are trotting. When you want your horse to turn at a certain point or to slow down, there is so much slack that must be taken up in the reins before you can affect the horse's mouth with your hands. Contact is needed so that a rider can have very precise and responsive control of the horse's direction and speed. The reins should remain straight from the bit to the rider's hands without a loop. This way, any change in our fingers (by squeezing or opening slightly on the reins), or change in the position of our hands, is felt quickly and easily by the horse. Contact does not mean "pull", but rather a "feel" of the horse's mouth that comes from pushing the horse forward with our legs and seat into a steady hand. Contact helps to keep the horse straight, balanced and supple; contact guides the horse through the turns and changes of direction and is necessary to collect the horse.

Impulsion

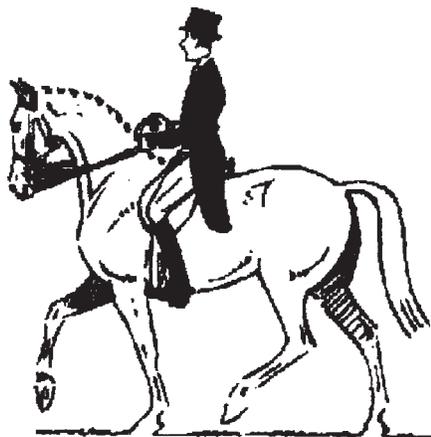
This describes the power of the hindquarters that carry the horse forward in each of its gaits. Think of the “motor” of the horse being contained in the hindquarter. The more power the horse uses to move forward, the more impulsion it has and the more expressive it becomes. It is much easier to train and ride a horse that is moving with impulsion while it is nearly impossible to affect a horse that is “loafing” along. Impulsion is closely related to the engagement of the hind legs like a spring, the more the joints of the hind legs are compressed (shortened), the more energy they give to the movement. The hind legs of the horse become more active and springy and the horse uses its whole body to move forward energetically. It is exciting to watch a horse that moves with great impulsion.

Straightness

A horse is straight when its forehand is in line with its hindquarters, whether on a straight or curved line. Although a horse’s skeleton might be symmetrical, horses are one sided. Just as people are either right or left handed, so is a horse right or left sided. In some horses this is more obvious than in others. They prefer to canter on one lead over another if left to their own. They are stiffer on one side and find it difficult to turn one way over another. Our aim in training is to make the horse as even as possible on both sides. Once the horse is straight then we can ride it evenly into the contact and have it perform more correctly.

Collection

Collection is the highest step in training the horse. It can occur only after the previous elements of training are securely in place. Collection involves lowering the hindquarters, increasing the engagement of the hind legs under the body and seat of the rider. This results in a shift of actual weight to the hindquarters, allowing the horse to lighten the forehand. With an elevated forehand it makes movements seem effortless and brilliant. The rider should feel like he/she is riding “uphill”. All of the elements discussed, rhythm-relaxation, impulsion-contact and straightness-suppleness, lead to collection.



The Basic Riding Position

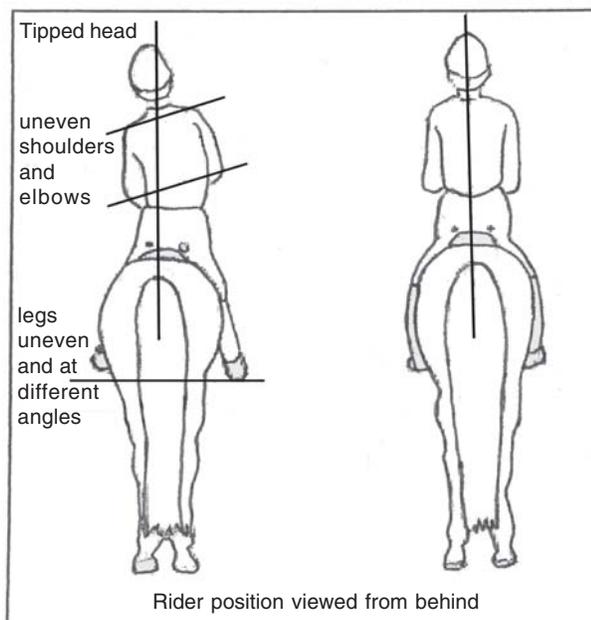
Because a rider constantly influences what a horse does, it is important that he/she sits on the horse in a position that is beneficial to the horse.

Body Position

The correct position is a basic requirement if the rider is to be able to ride well and have the greatest influence on the horse.

It is easiest for the horse to carry the rider's weight when the rider sits at the lowest point of the horse's back, just behind the withers; this is the spot where the rider's and horse's centers of gravity meet.

FAULTS:



It is important that the saddle fits the horse. If it is lopsided or pinches the horse's back, the horse will never be able to work well, regardless of how much it is trained.

When sitting correctly, the rider's ear, shoulder, hip and heel should form a vertical line when viewed from the side.

The tip of the toe should be directly under the front of the knee.

The arms should hang comfortably from the shoulders at the rider's sides.

There should be a straight line from the elbow to the wrist and through the rein to the horse's mouth.

Looking at the rider from the front or back it is very important that he/she sits absolutely straight when on the horse.

The rider's weight must be equally placed on both seat bones and slightly forward on the pubic bone. This forms a "triangle" of contact to the horse's back.

Natural Aids

There are four natural aids that a rider brings with him/her when he/she rides a horse. “Natural” means that you don’t have to add them to your equipment or body to use them when riding. They are:

1. Hands
2. Legs
3. Seat
4. Voice

The natural aids are used together in combination to “talk” to the horse and give it direction.

Hand Position

The hands, when held correctly on the reins, influence the horse’s mouth through the bit. The hands are used in combination with the legs and the seat of the rider and should never be used alone.

Correct method to turn
the horse



For example, if a rider is going to turn the horse, he/she should apply a deep seat, resisting the forward movement slightly, squeeze with the legs, hold the hands steady as he/she uses them to guide the horse in the direction of the turn.

Incorrect method to turn
the horse



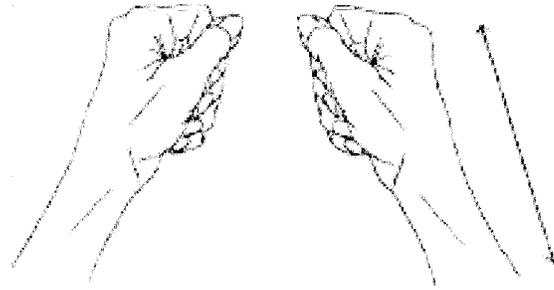
The rider would not simply pull at the horse’s mouth with his/her hands without first preparing the horse for the turn by using the seat and legs. Although horses may put up with this form of riding, it does not produce a relaxed and happy horse.

The rider’s hands (along with the legs and seat):

1. control the speed, gaits and rhythm of the horse
2. guide the direction that the horse moves
3. control the amount of bend (curve of the horse’s spine from poll to tail)
4. control the amount of flexion (movement at the poll of the horse so that the corner of the eye and nostril on the flexed side are visible by the rider.)



Correct hand position



The hands should be carried as independently as possible so as to create a sensitive and steady connection to the horse's mouth.

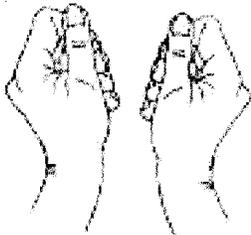
The goal of the rider is to become as well balanced in the saddle as possible so that the hands can be used independently from the rest of the body.

For example, as the rider is doing a posting trot, the hands should not move up and down with the action of the seat and body.

The quieter your hands are the more likely the horse will respond to them when you do use them.

You make a horse's reaction to your hands more sensitive if you reward it with a softening of the contact when the horse responds correctly. The rider does this by opening the fingers slightly (not so an observer can see it happen) which releases some of the contact with the horse's mouth.

Incorrect hand positions:



Hands turned out



Piano hands - hands turned down

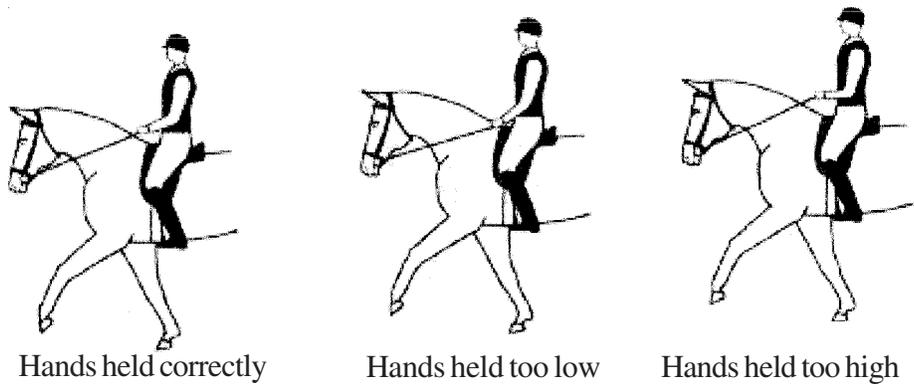


Hands turned in

The following points will help establish correct placement and use of the hands:

- The hands should be carried approximately one hand's width above the wither on each side of the neck with relaxed wrists.
- The rein will come from the bit to between the little finger and the ring finger, up through the hand and out the top, where the thumb will press down on it.
- The thumb should secure the reins in the hands. If you try to secure the reins with the fingers, the hand will become stiff and insensitive.

How high do you hold the hands on the reins?



Rein Aids

- The reins are always used in combination with the driving aids of the seat and leg.
- The outside rein controls the tempo, flexion, bending and outside shoulder.
- The inside rein supples and softens and guides in the turns. It also controls the inside shoulder.
- The connection between the rider's hands and the horse's mouth should be fine and consistent in order to "feel" what the horse is telling him/her.
- Remember that the most sensitive part of the horse is its mouth.
- The reins should feel like a half-pound weight in the rider's hands and with this connection the rider should always work forward, driving the horse into the hands, not backward, by pulling the horse into the contact.
- It is important that the riders's hand and arms are positioned correctly and help to "frame" the neck of the horse.
- The hands are carried above and on either side of the wither. It is incorrect to move your hand across the horse's wither.
- It is important that the hands act slowly, both in taking and giving. Each of these actions should be deliberate.
- A rider must learn to feel the movement from the horse and be ready to respond appropriately to the horse as it is working.
- The rider needs to continually adjust the length of the rein. It is a mistake to neglect to do this as the horse's neck is continually changing length as it moves from one gait to another.

Problems with Rein Aids

Holding the reins tightly with too much contact is often seen for three main reasons:

1. The rider is frightened of a nervous horse and is trying to control it.
2. The rider's balance is not good and he/she is using the hands for balance.
3. The rider is trying to create a roundness in the frame of the horse by using the hands.

All three reasons are fundamentally wrong:

- A nervous horse will only become more nervous with a tight rein as the horse will feel the rider is preventing it from escaping a dangerous situation.
- The rider is working against the horse's natural instinct, which will only make things worse.
- A rider should learn to hold the horse with his/her seat.
- An independent seat will make for independent hands that are not used for balance or security.
- The rider who tries to form roundness in the horse through the use of the hands will simply block the forward movement and cause tightness in the horse's back.

Holding the reins without enough contact happens because:

- The rider is afraid of hurting the horse's mouth.
- The rider doesn't understand the amount of contact necessary to create a connection with the horse's mouth.
- The rider is not riding with the influence of leg, seat and hand aids to produce the proper frame and forward impulsion of the horse into the bit.

Just as the rider must ensure that the hands do not accidentally "hit" the horse in the mouth, he/she must be sure that there is a certain degree of contact maintained at all times so that a steady connection is encouraged..

Without this contact, the horse truly is not in a position to accept the bit as they are moved forward from the rider's legs and seat.

The amount of bend (lateral) and flexion (longitudinal) that the horse has is dependent partly on the contact with the rider's steady hands.

The rider must always be prepared to "channel" the horse's energy by blocking the unwanted movement of the head and allowing the correct movement by using the hands quietly on the reins.



Two Types of Rein Aids - Passive and Holding

Holding Rein

A holding rein is used only when the horse is resisting by pulling at the bit and raising or lowering the head to an unsuitable position.

The rider's hands should become still and unyielding (not giving) for a moment while the pressure of the seat and legs drive the horse forward into this "holding" hand.

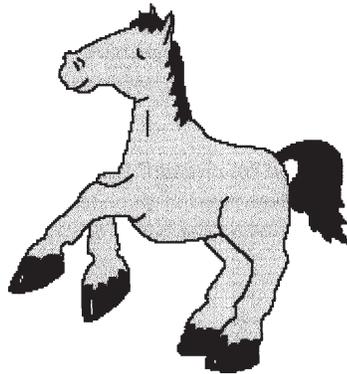
Passive Rein

When the horse "gives" in the poll and jaw, the pressure of the hand becomes "passive". If a rider fails to recognize and respond correctly by softening at this moment, the horse will only become dull and insensitive in the mouth.

A passive rein or a "giving rein" is commonly misunderstood. When you relax or soften rein contact what should you do with your hands? The answer is that you should simply relax through your shoulder and possibly change the closing of the fingers on the rein to a softer hold. This will be enough to give the horse a feeling of softness.

Leg Position

A rider's leg position on the horse is important since the legs are in contact with the horse at all times. A rider will be able to use his legs most effectively if they are in the correct position.



Just as the hands must act independently so must the rider's legs.

If the horse is to remain responsive to the rider's legs, it is important that the rider use them in a way that the horse does not get "tired" of feeling them. For example, if a rider is constantly kicking his/her horse to keep it going, then the horse becomes "dull-sided" and does not respond to the leg very easily.

A rider must teach the horse to "listen" to very slight leg aids, almost unnoticeable to onlookers.

The rider's legs:

1. direct the horse's body during turns
2. influence the horse's speed, gait and rhythm
3. direct the position of the hindquarters
4. control how much the horse bends in the barrel

The following points should help guide the rider in developing good leg position:

- The leg should hang straight down from the hip with the lower leg slightly behind the girth.
- The leg should lie flat against the body of the horse.
- The toe should point forward and slightly outward.
- The heel should be slightly lower than the toe, but the ankle should remain loose and springy.
- The length of the stirrup leather is also important for a good lower leg position.
- If the knee is at a correct angle the rider should need only to lift his toe to find the stirrup.
- If the stirrup leathers are too long, the knee joint becomes too straight, the toe points down and the lower leg is unable to maintain a quiet close connection with the horse's side.
- If the stirrup leathers are too short the rider will pull his knee up and place too much weight in the stirrup. He or she will then have a difficult time sitting relaxed in the saddle.
- On a young horse or a horse that needs to be urged on more with the leg, a shorter, rather than longer stirrup will be more favorable. Shorter stirrup length allows the rider to have more "power" in their lower leg.
- Leg aids should be as gentle as possible, consistently applied according to the horse's response.

Leg Aids: Driving, Holding, Sideways:

Each of the rider's legs influences the hind leg of the horse on the same side as the leg. Depending on the position of the rider's leg, the aid is either a driving aid or a holding (containing) aid. The leg can also be used to ask the horse to move sideways.

There are three ways to influence the horse with the legs:

Driving legs

- The position of the leg is at the girth.
- The front of the boot shaft almost touches the back edge of the girth.
- The “driving” effect is accomplished through increased pressure on the horse's sides either with one at a time or both legs at once.
- The timing of the driving aid is important and the leg should be applied when the horse's hind leg is just coming off the ground.
- This is the moment when you can influence the horse's movement in time with its own rhythm.
- When on a bending line, the inside leg is positioned at the girth while the outside leg is behind the girth to encourage bending.



Correct leg position
At the girth



Correct leg position
Behind the girth

Holding (containing) legs

The leg position is now slightly behind the girth.

The purpose of this leg aid is to prevent the horse from drifting off the desired path or a straight line, especially with its hindquarters.

These aids are used in backing up, during turns on forehand and haunches, and while leg yielding.

Sideways driving aids

These aids are also given with the rider's legs behind the girth.

These aids are always given with one at a time; the leg which is needed to “push” the horse sideways in one direction.

However, the other leg also needs to stay active as it keeps the horse moving forward or contains the horse.

The “timing” of this aid to move the horse sideways is again, very important. A horse can only step sideways from the pressure of the rider's leg when that hind foot is coming off the ground to take the next step. It is at this moment that a rider can most easily influence where the horse places that foot.

The amount of pressure used in the leg aids should always be as light as possible. The goal of the rider is to train the horse so that the horse is sensitive to slight changes in position and pressure of the leg.

The leg aids should be given with the movement of the horse, becoming more passive when the horse gives the correct response.

Seat Position

It is important for a rider to sit correctly in the saddle. The rider influences the horse by using his/her “seat”. The seat refers to the weight of the body in the saddle on the horse's back. A rider's seat needs to be balanced so as to move with the movement of the horse. A good seat does not disturb the natural ability of the horse. The key elements of a good seat are balance and elasticity, where the rider and horse become one unit.

The seat of the rider

1. influences the amount of impulsion (energy)
2. helps to balance the horse when turning
3. influences the horse's tempo, gait or rhythm

There are two ways to influence the horse with the seat:**1. Passive sitting:**

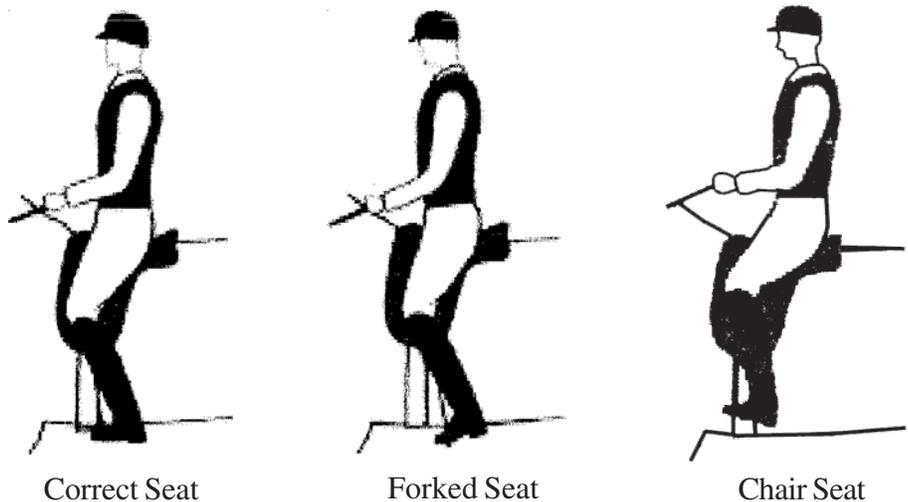
Passive sitting is often needed when riding. It occurs when you move with the movement of the horse without actively influencing him. Whatever the horse does, the seat should smoothly follow.

2. Active sitting:

You can also affect the horse with your seat by “active sitting”. This is when you influence the horse’s movement, direction, tempo, and rhythm with your seat aids. For example, the rider might sit very deep and slow the motion of the seat to help slow the horse’s tempo as it trots.

The following are points to help the rider establish a good seat:

- Sit in the deepest part of the saddle.
- Sit evenly on your seat bones and forward slightly onto your pubic bone. This forms a “triangle” of contact onto the horse’s back.
- Having good upper body control helps to stabilize the seat in the saddle as the horse moves.
- If the saddle sits the rider too far forward, then the “fork seat” is developed in which the legs are forced backward and the upper body forward.
- If the deepest point is too far back, then the rider will be pushed into a “chair seat”, with legs forward and the upper body leaning backward. In this position the rider is behind the horse’s center of gravity and can’t give the reins without losing balance.



VOICE

Often a horse will respond to the tone of a rider's voice when being handled or ridden.

The voice is one of the more important aids when beginning training on a young horse. If a rider teaches a horse voice commands such as "Get up", "Trot", "Canter", and "Whoa" when working on the lunge then the he/she will have an easier time when actually riding the horse. The voice commands which are already clearly understood by the horse now can be used in combination with the legs, seat and hands to teach the horse how to respond to the aids.

Often an excited horse can be calmed when using a calm tone of voice around them.

Although using the voice is not allowed in the show ring, it can be beneficial in the training of your horse, as long as the horse does not solely rely on the voice as an aid to do something.

Artificial Aids

When the rider "adds" an aid to help reinforce a natural aid it is called an "artificial" aid.

An example is the use of spurs or a whip to reinforce the leg aid.

The artificial aid should never replace the natural aid but should only be used to sharpen the horse's response to the aid.

If the horse gets dull to the leg aid, then the spur or whip will make the horse listen more quickly.

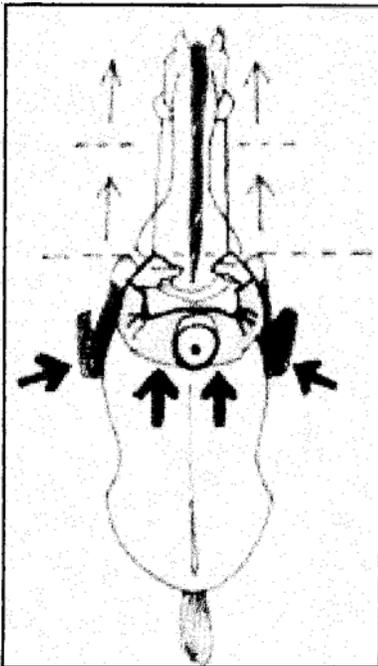
Once the horse understands, the artificial aid does not need to be used any further.

Common Dressage Terminology

On the Bit

A horse “on the bit” is one that is connected from the hind legs to the seat and back of the rider through the hands. Riding a horse on the bit means driving the horse from behind, forward into a soft contact with the rider’s hands. Because of this, it is important that there is a definite connection between the hands of the rider and the horse’s mouth. This is what is called contact. The softness of this contact comes from the “suppleness” in the horse’s poll.

What does “On the bit” look like?



The aids to put
the horse on the bit

When a horse is on the bit, the poll should be the highest point in the horse’s frame, with the nose slightly in front of the vertical. The degree of flexion in the poll depends on the gait and level of training. Even when the horse stretches his neck when the rider lengthens the reins, the rider should maintain contact with the horse. The neck of the horse is supple (not tense) and there is flexion in the poll while the horse uses its whole body without tension to move forward evenly into both reins.

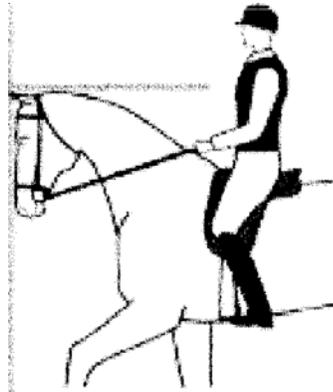
How does a rider get a horse “on the bit”?

A rider must ride the horse on the bit, not put the horse on the bit. When you use only the hands to move the head of the horse around, a rider will create a resistance and unsteadiness in the horse as well as a possibility of putting the horse behind the bit. Begin by having the horse relaxed and moving easily forward. Keep quiet steady hands and seat. This allows the horse to trust the rider’s hands and encourages it to come on the bit. With legs and seat, drive the horse forward into the hands and seat. Soon, the horse will soften the poll and come into the contact.

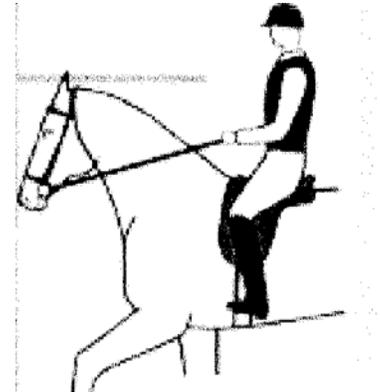
Have patience; use circles for control; and be consistent with the combination of these aids.

Above the Bit

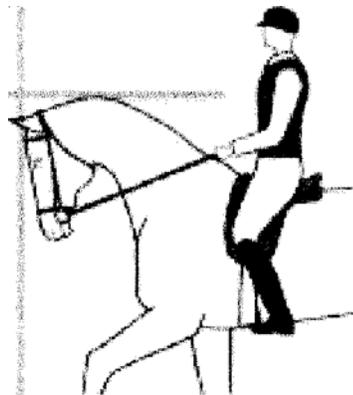
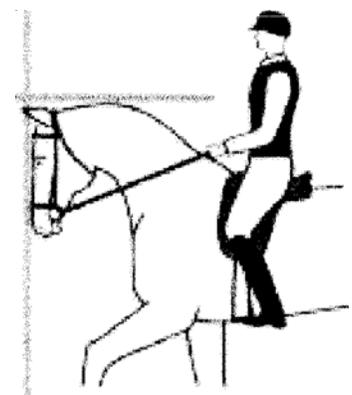
A horse is “above the bit” when he resists the contact with the rider’s hands, stiffens his neck and poll muscles and lifts his head and neck up. This is a serious problem. The correction should begin with strong forward driving aids from the legs and seat of the rider. As the horse is ridden on a circle, the rider will continue to maintain contact with the hands held slightly higher (so as to put contact on the corners of the mouth rather than on the lower jaw). Gradually through continued bending and driving around the circle the horse should begin to yield and round its frame.



ON THE BIT



ABOVE THE BIT

BEHIND THE BIT,
behind the vertical,
broken behind the pollBEHIND THE BIT,
on the vertical,
but broken behind the poll

Behind the Bit

A horse that is “behind the bit” is over flexed in the third vertebra of the neck rather than flexed at the poll. Usually the face is behind the vertical, possibly the mouth is open and the jaw might be moving toward the chest with the tongue hanging out. This is a common problem of a rider that uses too much hand and not enough leg to put the horse on the bit.

To correct this problem, the contact must be lightened (not given up completely) and the driving aids of the seat and leg must be applied until the horse begins to move the face in front of the vertical and into the contact. The rider should not allow the horse to “rush” forward, but use driving and restraining aids to encourage the horse to “take” the contact further in front of the vertical.

The Half Halt

The ability of the horse to respond correctly to the rider’s half halt is probably one of the more difficult parts of basic training.

It is also one of the most misunderstood and difficult to describe skills that the rider and horse will face learning. There are many ways to describe a half halt and equally as many ways to execute one.

The way in which the combination of aids is applied to the horse will depend on many factors.

It is, however, important that a rider have a basic understanding of this term so that the progression of training can include attempts to half halt the horse.

Half halting improves the horse’s training in many ways.

Remember that the goal of dressage training is to make the movements appear effortless and flow smoothly from one gait to another. The half halt is the mechanism to do just that.

The purpose of the half halt

1. prepares the horse for changes in direction
2. prepares the horse for upward or downward transitions
3. rebalances the horse to increase the amount of collection
4. regains the horse’s attention if it has lost focus on its work
5. regulates the speed in any of the three gaits

The function of the half halt

The function of the half halt is to put the horse's center of gravity briefly further back towards the hind legs, with the horse giving in its neck. Any resistance in the neck will result in simply interrupting forward momentum. The secret to a good half halt is to maintain the rhythm of the movement without any stiffness in the hindquarters, neck or jaw. Good half halts are never painful for the horse (or rider) and the more half halts are used while riding, the more the horse will shift its weight back and the lighter it will become in the front.

Performing the Half Halt

The aids for the half halt are a combination of seat (core), leg and hand.

The half halt is a combination of aids to restrain the horse's front end momentarily, combined with driving the hind legs under and giving the horse the freedom to step forward.

Put simply it is a restraining aid combined with a driving aid.

To do a half halt:

1. the rider sits deeper in the saddle, stretching up with the upper body and down with the legs,
2. applies both legs, moving the horse forward into quiet receptive hands.
3. In the next moment, the rider resists with their core muscles and closes the hands, (restraining the front end momentarily causing the horse's weight to shift back) while still pushing the horse forward with both legs.

A good exercise to begin learning the half halt is to establish it from the trot through to walk and then back to trot. The restraining aids should be applied, but immediately when the horse walks, apply the forward aids for trot. This way, the horse learns without disturbing the movement in a pace. The transition to walk makes the horse change his weight automatically to the hind quarters and when it is pushed smoothly forward again it will start to develop a swinging relaxed and balanced gait.

A rider must be prepared for the half halt not to be completely successful at first. It takes a lot of consistent training and practice for the horse to understand and accept the half halt. The rider needs experience in learning to "balance" the aids for the half halt correctly.

Common problems during the half halt:

1. Tightening the seat makes the horse hollow its back against the rider
2. a leg yield that is too strong and at the wrong instance makes the horse too heavy in the hand or causes the horse to rush forward losing its rhythm
3. too strong a hand results in the horse bracing against the bit and stopping the forward rhythm

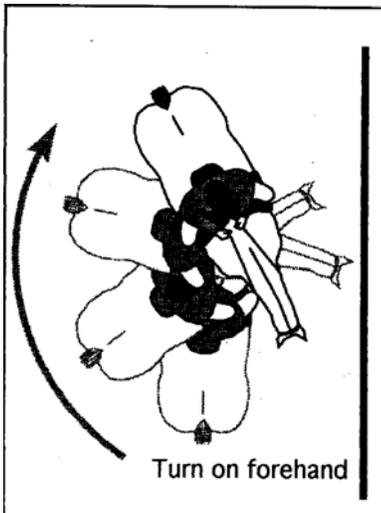
Turn on the Forehand

The horse's ability to do a turn on the forehand in both directions shows that he can balance himself and give well coordinated responses to the leg and hand aids of the rider.

The turn on the forehand is done from the walk to maintain rhythm and requires the horse to move its hindquarters around the front quarters.

It is best to do a turn on the forehand in an enclosed area and to start on a track just to the inside of the outside track of the arena. (often called the "second track") This gives the horse's neck and head enough space to move without hitting a wall or fence during the turn on the forehand.

Turn on the forehand to the right.



- Riding on the left rein, turn onto the "second track" (about 1 meter to the inside of the track against the wall) as you go down the long side of the arena.
- Position the horse slightly to the right, shorten both reins and position right slightly more.
- The right rein has now become the inside rein.
- At the same time, the rider shifts his weight slightly to the right seat bone so quietly that someone watching cannot see it happen.
- The rider applies the right leg just behind the girth, pressing the horse's hindquarters step by step around the forehand until 180 degrees has been completed.
- The rider's left hand prevents the horse from moving forward with a small half halt.
- The horse's right hind leg should move across and in front of the left hind leg.
- The timing of the aids is important to a smooth turn on the forehand. The aids should be given just as the inside (right) hind is just leaving the ground.

- The rider's outside leg rests behind the girth to prevent excessive swinging of the haunches and is ready to stop the turn on the forehand whenever necessary. During the turn on the forehand the horse should not walk forward or step back. However, it is better to step forward than backwards because it is to remain a "forward" movement.
- The inside front leg of the horse should step (stay active) but stay in the same area while the outside (left) leg moves around the inside leg.

Leg Yielding

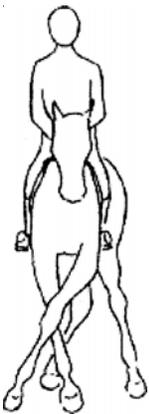


Leg yielding is one of the earliest and most fundamental exercises in the development of both horse and rider.

It is a suppling exercise which places the horse on four tracks. The horse remains straight in his neck and body and moves **sideways** and **forward** at the same time. The inside hind and fore leg step across and over the outside hind and fore leg. A rider should pay special attention when training a horse to leg yield.

When the aids are applied correctly and the horse responds well, it becomes an important step for further training.

Be sure to leg yield in both directions so that the horse's muscles and response to the rider's aids are developed evenly.



For the horse, the leg yield :

- shows acceptance of the sideways driving leg aid as well as the opposite holding leg
- shows acceptance of the straightness of the body and neck as well as light flexion
- is a suppling exercise, not a collecting movement.

For the rider, the leg yield:

- introduces control of the sideways driving aids and control of the outside (holding) aids and the balance of the two.

Leg Yield Hints

- The rider will learn just how much pressure is needed from each leg, and the timing needed in order to move the horse sideways and forward at the same time.
- The half halt becomes important as the aids are applied for the leg yield.
- The horse should not “rush” away from the leg.
- The hands should be held close together and with contact so that the horse remains straight in his body with only slight flexion in the poll.
- It is important to try and maintain the same tempo of whatever gait is being ridden.
- The horse does not truly accept the aids and stay balanced with the movement if it is becoming shorter or faster in its strides.
- The benefit of loosening and suppling the horse can only happen when the horse is quiet and stretching and not too slow.

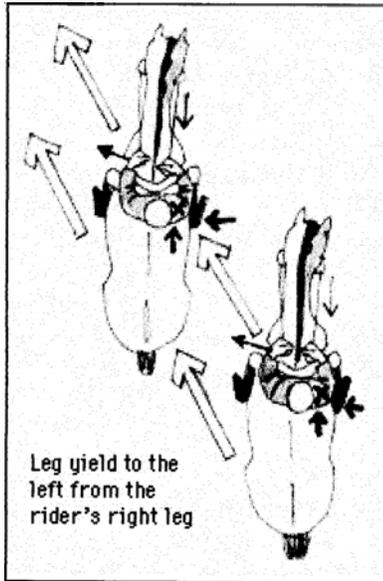
Leg Yielding Exercises

There are a number of exercises that can be used when training the horse to leg yield. It is important to reward the horse with forward movement after a few correct steps of leg yielding. Develop slowly by using quiet, correct aids and keep the horse relaxed at all times.

The leg yield may be done:

- on a circle
- from the quarter line to the outside track and/or from the track to the quarter line
- on a 45 degree angle down the wall
- down the long side , leg yield off the wall, ride straight for a few strides then repeat the leg yield
- across the diagonal, either long or short

Leg yielding from the right leg

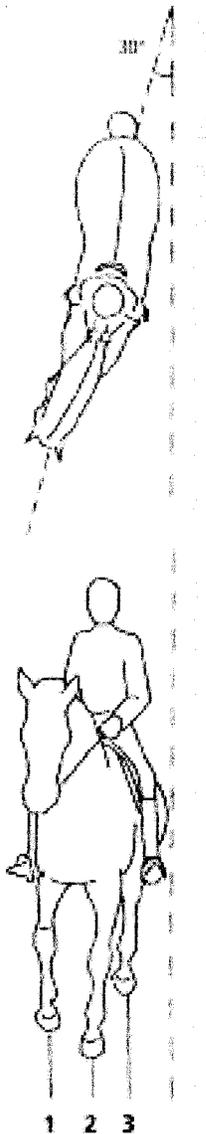


- In leg yielding the horse is asked to move forwards and sideways while keeping the body and neck straight and with only slight flexion.
- The horse should “yield” to the pressure (move away from) of the rider’s lower leg and seat bone on the same side. The rider sits heavier on the *inside* (right) seat bone and the horse moves away from the leg and the weight.
- Both the rider’s legs are back during leg yielding.
- The inside (right) leg drives, while the outside (left) leg “catches” or controls the amount of sideways movement.
- The inside (right) rein gives very slight position to the horse’s head and poll.
- The neck and body of the horse should remain straight.
- Very slight flexion of the poll to the side the horse is moving away from. That is, when yielding from the right leg (moving to the left), the horse has slight flexion to the right.
- To keep the horse parallel to the long side of the arena, the outside rein (relative to the flexion) has good solid contact and holds the horse’s neck straight.
- The rider uses these rein and leg aids at the moment the inside (right) hoof leaves the ground. And then the rider gives gently, without losing the inside (right) rein. The outside (left) rein remains taut without pulling.
- It is important during the leg yield that the outside rein and leg maintain control. It is often necessary for a half halt to be given with the outside rein and leg pressure – for example if the horse goes too close to the wall, goes too fast, or drifts through the outside shoulder.

The Shoulder-in

- The shoulder-in is a collecting movement that is required in the more advanced levels of dressage.
- The shoulder-in is a “three track movement”.
- When a horse is being ridden straight, the horse is being ridden on two tracks. Its inside front and hind leg are on one track, while the outside front and hind leg are traveling on the other track.
- During the shoulder-in, however, the position of the shoulders becomes such that the horse now moves on three tracks.

How to perform a shoulder-in:



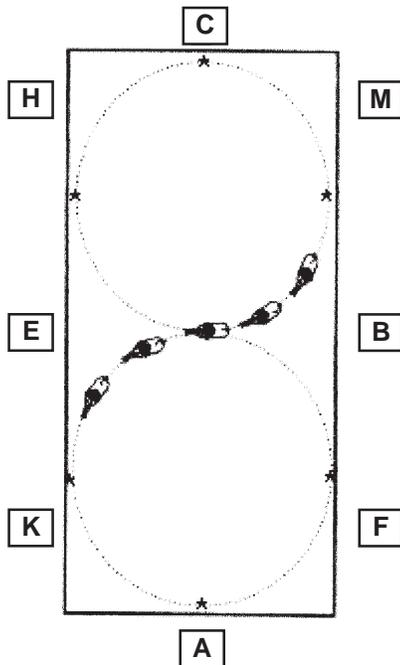
- The hindquarters will continue to move straight down the track or wall as they did before the movement began.
- The horse is bent from poll to tail in one continuous curve away from the direction of travel.
- The front legs are moved to the inside of the track so that the horse moves on three tracks as follows:
 1. outside hind leg,
 2. inside hind leg and outside front leg,
 3. inside front leg.
- The inside rein leads the forehand in from the track. It also bends the horse in the neck and flexes the poll.
- The outside rein guides the shoulders and regulates the bending and flexion of the horse.
- The inside leg lies just behind the girth and keeps the horse on the track, driving it forward. The horse is also bent through the barrel around this leg.
- The outside leg lies slightly further back where it pushes the horse forward and also prevents the hind legs from falling out and losing collection.
- The weight of the rider is shifted slightly to the inside seat bone as the horse moves well into the direction of the movement.

SCHOOL FIGURES

Since dressage movements are performed at specific places in the dressage ring, there are “lines” or tracks that the horse must be ridden on.

All of this requires control of the horse’s direction, bend, gait and rhythm. It is therefore important to train the horse to ride “figures” and “lines”. The following pages give some information on the different lines and figures that will be used during schooling of the dressage horse.

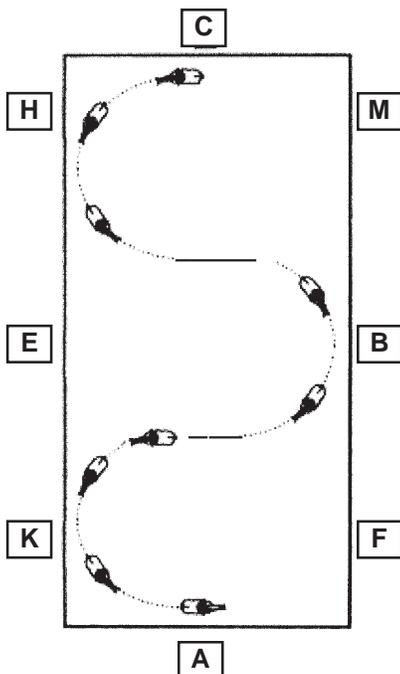
Circles



Riding two 20 meter circles. Notice the

- It is important to ride the line of the circle correctly.
- When you ride a circle you do not go into the corners. You should ride to four imaginary points on larger circles.
- It is at those points that the horse must “touch the point” for one horse length.
- The horse’s whole body from poll to tail should be bent in the same curve as the circle.
- The horse will be bent more for a 10 meter circle than for a 20 meter circle.
- The inside hip of the rider is lower and, therefore the inside heel will be a little lower than the outside heel, as his/her weight shifts slightly to the inside.
- Don’t hang your head to the inside.
- Keep the horse’s neck between both reins.
- Keep the outside leg well against the horse so that the horse doesn’t step out with his outside leg.
- By keeping the horse bent around the circle, the horse will track up (step the hind foot into or in front of the imprint left by the front foot).

Serpentines



3 loop serpentine

Serpentines should be introduced and practiced early in a horse’s training.

First in walk, then trot and later in canter.

The important thing is to be able to change the bend in the horse quite smoothly, and consistent with the curve of the serpentine track.

The rider achieves this with careful and precise changing of his own position and aids in good time without letting the horse lose balance or rhythm.

The rider must keep the impulsion going so as not to lose the contact on the bit.

Serpentines are half circles joined by straight lines (approximately 1 horse length) with a change of bend and direction occurring across the center line of the dressage ring.

The number of loops in the serpentine will determine whether or not there is a change of rein (change of direction on the rail).

For odd numbered loops (3 or 5) there is no change of rein when the serpentine is complete.

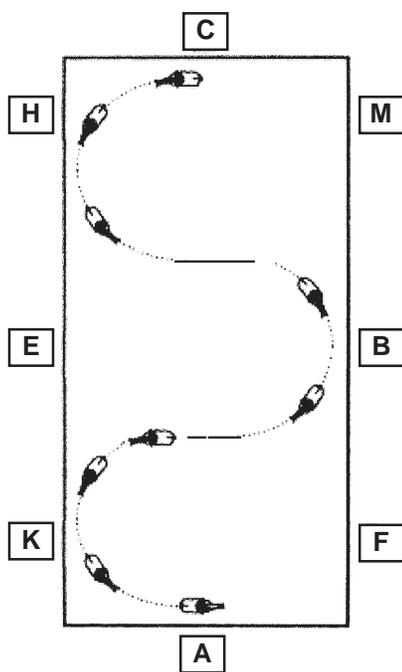
However an even number of loops (2 or 4) results in a change of rein at the completion of the serpentine.

Full serpentines are ridden across the full width of the arena and are often referred to as “riding wall to wall”.

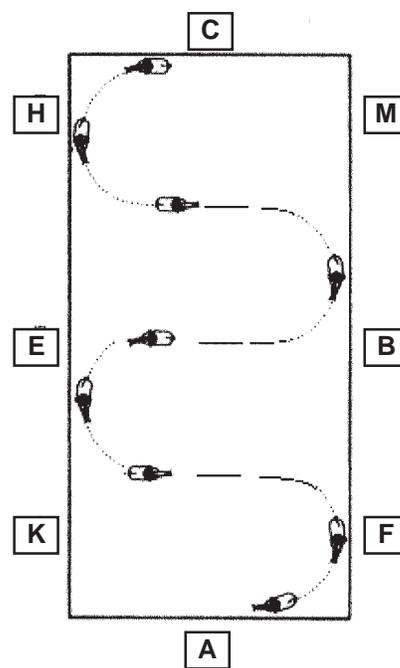
3 and 4 Loop Serpentine

The simplest serpentine would be “3 loops wall to wall”. A three loop serpentine would be made by dividing the arena length into three and riding three half circles (approximately 20 meters in diameter) each joined by a straight line, followed by a change in direction.

A four loop serpentine would be made of four 15 meter half circles.



3 loop serpentine



4 loop serpentine

The Half Arena

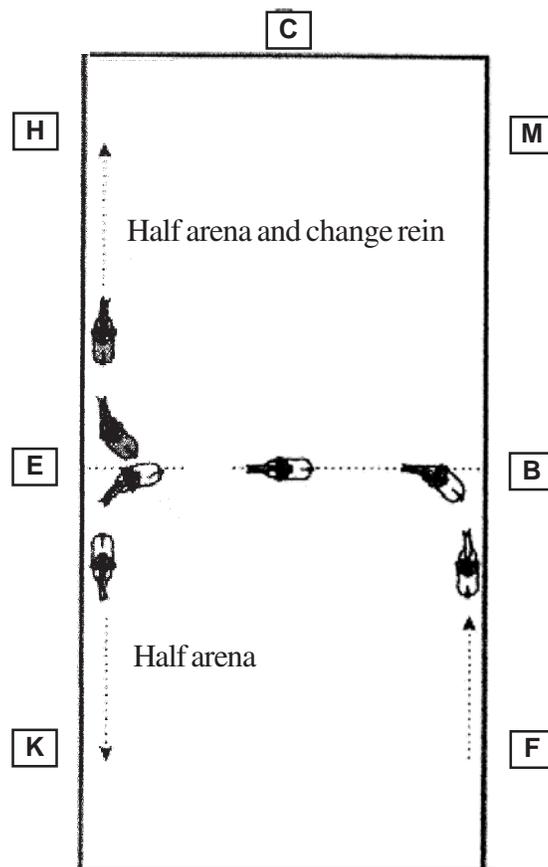
To ride half the arena, a rider would ride straight down the long side, but when coming to B for example, he/she would turn left, making a one-quarter of a volte (small circle) turn - just like riding through a corner.

When the rider reaches the opposite wall, he/she would again turn left. This is working on the half arena.

The half arena and the change of rein

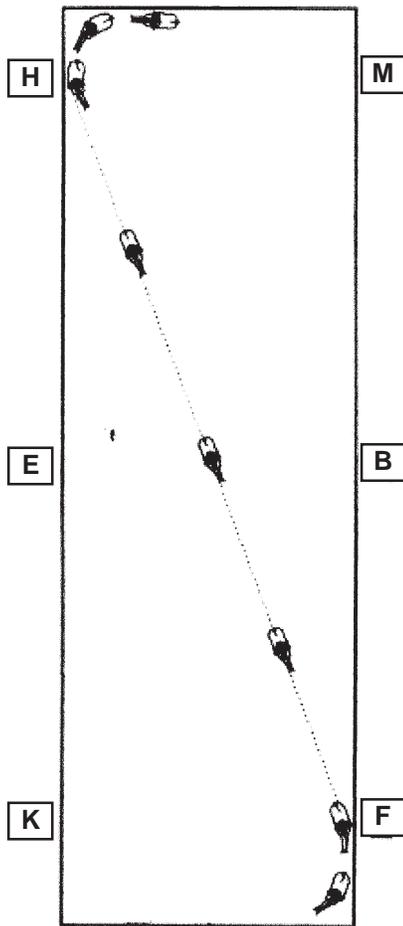
After turning left at B from the left rein and going straight across to E, the rider would change the rein by turning right at E instead of left.

It would be important to half halt on the outside rein before the turns. The outside leg is well against the horse. The inside hand and leg will create bend and flexion for the turn as the horse is guided around the corner.



Changes across the diagonal

When going around the arena it is important to change direction so that both sides of the horse are worked evenly. One way to make this “change of rein” is to ride the horse across the diagonal.



Change across the FULL diagonal from the left rein to the right rein.

Full diagonal

Depending on the original direction of travel the change across a full diagonal would be to ride FXH or HXF as well as MXK or KXM.

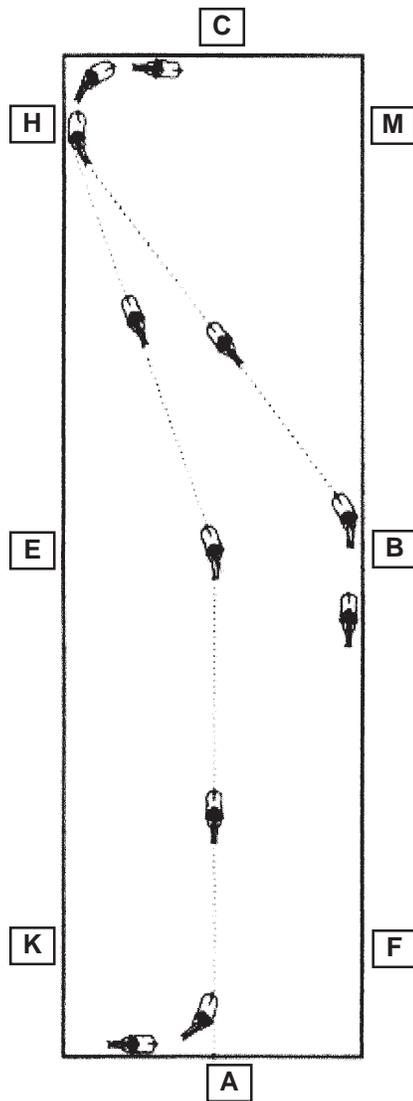
When the rider is going on the left rein and wants to change across the diagonal at HXF, the rider must ride the horse across the short side of the arena, ride into the corner and come off the track at H before straightening the horse on the diagonal towards F.

The horse remains straight as it is ridden across the diagonal.

As it reaches the letter F, the rider will bend the horse in the new bend (right) as it returns to the track and changes direction.

Once the horse's shoulder reaches F, the rider now rides on the track and around the whole arena on the new rein to the right.

Half diagonal



Change of rein across the
HALF diagonal oval

Change of rein from diagonal
then to centerline

When riding a change across the half diagonal a rider will now aim for the middle letter of the dressage ring after coming off the track.

Examples of half diagonal changes would be HB, FE, ME or KB. These changes of rein across the short diagonals are ridden exactly like the full diagonal except there is less space between the letters before the change occurs.

Diagonal to X, then centerline

You can also ride a diagonal to X then ride down the centerline before changing direction at C or A.

It is a good idea to vary the work so that the horse will not necessarily know what comes next.

Use a variety of changes to improve your horses response to your aids.

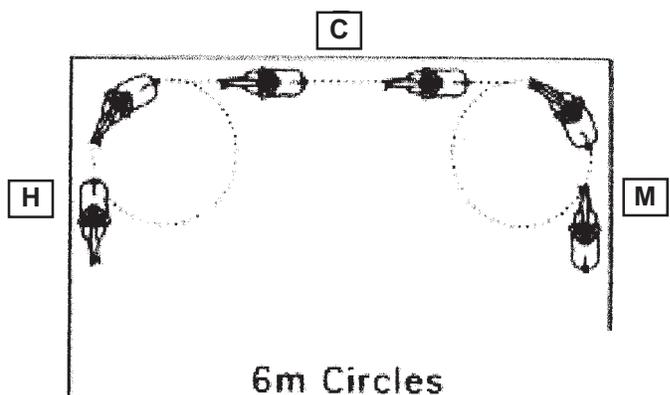
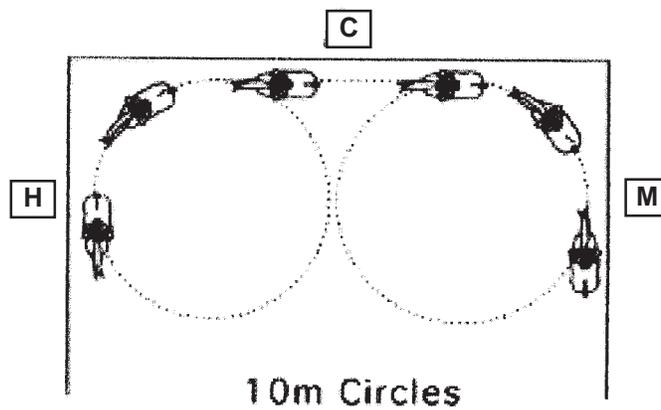
Corners

A corner is a difficult turn for a young horse to make smoothly and easily. Either the horse will go too deep and then have to be “pulled” out by the rider, or he cuts the corner and falls over the inside shoulder.

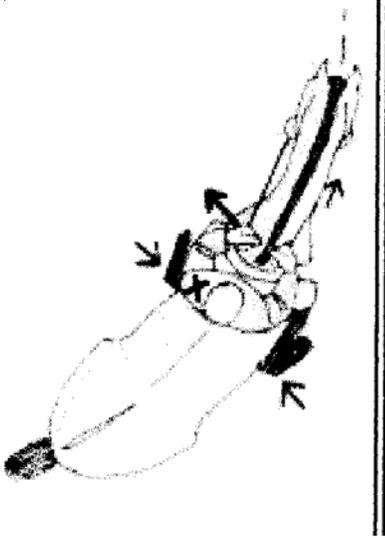
Through the progression of the training the horse will move from riding a half a 20 meter circle into smaller and smaller quarter circles.

Less developed training level horses should ride the 10 meter quarter circle through the corner. A more well trained advanced horse will be ridden in a quarter of a 6 meter circle to turn a corner.

To decide how small a circle is appropriate for each horse, it is important that the horse be able to go freely forward in balance and harmony on the size of the corner chosen.



Riding a corner



The aids applied to ride a corner correctly.

The horse is “bent” through the corner.

Going through a corner is a turn.

The horse should be prepared with a half halt before the corner and then after the corner.

With every step in the corner the horse must turn.

There is an open side to each corner so it is important that the rider uses the outside aids to prevent the horse drifting out of the corner.

The outside rein and leg control and limit the amount of bend to the outside.

Because every step is a turn, the rider should give the aids to turn followed by a release after each step.

The inside rein aid shows the horse where to go and the release of that aid allows the horse to go in this direction.

Keep the hands together. Don't pull with the inside rein. The outside leg is back. Keep a little more contact to encourage the horse to step into the rein, but balance this with a little more drive from the inside “driving” leg.

Correct riding of corners is very important. It seems like a small thing to everyone. But riding through the corner is preparation for riding a **volte** because it has the same radius.

Each corner also provides an opportunity to rebalance the horse in preparation for the next movement.

GLOSSARY

- Aids (Natural)** The way in which the rider is able to communicate or influence the horse. The four natural aids are the hands, legs, seat and voice.
- Aids (Artificial)** Aids that must be “added” by the rider that are to be used to communicate with the horse. They are used to “reinforce” the natural aids. Examples of artificial aids are a whip and spurs. These two artificial aids reinforce the “leg” aids.
- Balance** The ability of the horse to maintain the distribution of his weight, together, with that of his rider. Some horses are more naturally “balanced” than others. Balance can be developed so that the horse and rider appear to work together easily in all movements.
- Bend (lateral)** Curvature in the horse’s body from the poll, along the spine all the way to the tail. A horse must bend in order to stay balanced around circles, turns and corners. The amount of the bend is dependent on the size of the curve the horse is being ridden. Bend is created in the horses body through the use of the rider’s seat, legs and hands.
- Cadence** The extra quality, expression and animation given to the rhythm and to each successive footfall by increased impulsion.
- CADORA** Canadian Dressage Owners and Riders Association. Incorporated in 1969, the National non-profit organization was formed to develop Dressage in Canada. CADORA has a uniform training system for riders, trainers, coaches and judges.
- Cavalletti** Cavalletti are used for suppling young and old horses. They are also used to improve the relaxation of the horse in trot as well as improve the rhythm of the trot. By gradually increasing the distance between the poles, it stretches the length of the horse’s stride at the trot. Cavalletti also help in the muscular development of the horse. Cavalletti are wooden poles between 12 to 16 feet in length that are attached at each end to crosses made of wood. As the cavalletti is rotated on the ground it changes the height of the pole. For trot work they should be placed approximately 1 to 1 and 1/2 meters apart. These distances can be adjusted according to the length of stride of the horse. Horses should not work over cavalletti that is too high. A maximum of 8 to 10 inches is sufficient.
- Change of rein** Changing the direction the horse is being ridden in the arena. There are several methods of changing the rein in the arena.
- Collection** The concentration of the weight of the horse moving further onto the hindquarters with a shortening of the frame without losing the impulsion or energy of the gait. The horse appears to be moving “uphill”.



Counter canter	A movement that is used to increase collection and balance. A counter canter is initiated by the rider and not simply going around on the “wrong lead”. The horse should maintain bend towards the lead while going around the arena in counter canter. This is a difficult movement for the horse to do correctly and should only be attempted when the horse is cantering with balance and ease on the correct lead.
EC	Abbreviation for Equine Canada.
FEI	Abbreviation for Federation Equestre Internationale.
Flexion	Bending the horse in the poll. With the horse’s body and neck straight, flexion will occur when it bends at the “poll”. This results in the eye and nostril on the flexed side to be slightly visible by the rider. The crest of the neck will appear to “flip” to the side away from the flexion. Each of the ears of the horse should remain the same height and one should not be more forward than the other. If you want the horse to flex to the right, it is the right rein that asks for the flexion, while the left rein regulates how much the horse flexes. If you give too much on the left rein, the horse will merely bend its neck and turn its head too much. If you give too little, the horse cannot flex at all.
Half-halt	Applying a combination of hand, core, seat and leg aids, to the horse’s front end momentarily, combined with driving the hind legs under and giving the horse freedom to step forward. Restrain the horse from going forward, setting the weight further to the hindquarter, then immediately pushing the horse and allowing it to go forward. The goal of the half halt is to prepare and rebalance the horse as it moves around the arena.
Half pass	An advanced movement requiring the horse to bend evenly in the direction of the movement as it crosses front and hind legs over to step sideways and forward. A half pass is similar to doing a travers on a diagonal line.
Impulsion	The energy from the hind quarters that passes through the horse and is controlled and directed by the rider’s hands through the reins. The flexion of the hocks increases as impulsion increases.
Kur	Freestyle to music. The rider must choreograph a series of prescribed compulsory movements putting together a pattern that displays the horse’s paces, training and special talent to the best advantage. In addition, the rider must select and edit the music that will suit the horse and its paces. The performance is judged on technical merit and artistic impression. As well, choreography, the degree of difficulty and incorporation of music are each evaluated.
Leg yielding	Applying a combination seat, leg and hand aids that move the horse sideways and forward at the same time. The horse’s body should remain straight with only slight flexion away from the direction of the movement.

Lengthening	Asking the horse to step further (longer) with each step as they either walk, trot or canter. The horse covers more ground as it maintains the original rhythm. Lengthened gaits are asked for in basic dressage before medium or extended gaits are expected.
Non-FEI	Abbreviation for not using the Federation Equestre Internationale standards.
On the bit	The condition when the horse takes a steady, equal and relaxed contact with the reins. His head is at or near the vertical, the poll is unresistant and the mouth soft.
Overtrack	Often called “overstride”. Overtracking occurs when a horse's hind hoof lands in line (not to the side) of the imprint left by the front hoof on the same side. Horses will vary in their ability to overtrack. Some will step three or four hoof prints in front of the front foot imprint with their hind feet, while others may barely step onto the imprint left by the front foot.
Passage	An advanced movement for the dressage horse. The horse moves forward in a very collected trot, but with higher and more suspended diagonal steps. There is a pause between each diagonal movement of the legs giving it an elegant “dancing” appearance.
Passive sitting	When the rider maintains a balanced position, whatever the horse does, and smoothly follows all the movements of the horse in a relaxed and erect way, without actively influencing him.
Piaffe	The most collected movement of the dressage horse. The piaffe is a “collected trot on the spot” performed with high, rhythmical diagonal steps.
Pirouette	In the ideal pirouette, (walk or canter), the horse executes a 360 (180 for a half pirouette) turn around his inside hind leg, which steps up and down almost on the same spot. The radius of the turn is equal to the length of the horse's body. A horse must maintain the true three beat gait of the canter or the four beat gait of the walk when doing a pirouette. The rhythm and regularity of the gait must not be lost.
Reader	A person who reads a dressage test aloud to the rider who is riding the test with his/her horse. A reader may be used in all non-FEI competition but cannot be used at the Championship dressage shows.
Rein back	A diagonal movement performed by the horse stepping backwards.
Renvers	Often termed “haunches out”. The horse's hindquarters remain on the track while the horse is bent in the direction of travel with the horse's forelegs brought off the track to an inner and parallel track. The hoof prints create four tracks and from the front one would see all four legs of the horse.
Rhythm	The regularity and correctly ordered flow of the gait. A horse that moves with rhythm is usually relaxed.

Salute	Performed by the rider in a dressage test at the beginning and the end as a display of respect to the judge. To salute if you are female, you take both reins in one hand, and drop your other hand behind your leg as you drop your chin to your chest. Then look up, take up both reins and be ready to move forward. Males should take the reins in one hand and remove their hat, swinging it down beside their leg. The hat is then replaced and the rider takes up both reins and is ready to move forward. Riders with safety helmets are not required to remove their headgear and may salute as a female rider does.
Schooling	Training of the horse outside the show ring.
Shoulder-in	A suppling and collecting movement where the horse moves with the shoulder to the inside of the track so that it moves on three tracks; 1: outside hind leg, 2: inside hind and outside front leg and 3: inside front leg.
Submissive	The act of being relaxed and giving in. A horse that is submissive is attentive and will not resist the aids that the rider applies.
Suspension	The moment during which all four legs of the horse are simultaneously above the ground.
Tempo	The speed at which the horse performs a certain gait.
Track	Used either as a noun or verb. As a noun, the track is the path or line the horse is ridden on. There are numerous “tracks” in the dressage ring. The outside track, second track, quarter track. Used as a verb, tracking refers to direction a horse is to take. A horse that is to “track” right at C, is supposed to “turn” right at C.
Transition	Transitions are the most important and most difficult riding exercises in all of riding. A transition is changing from one gait to another. A transition can be either <u>upward</u> or <u>downward</u> . An example of an upward transition is walk to trot or trot to canter. A downward transition would be canter to halt or trot to walk. Transitions must be schooled so the horse remains balanced, relaxed and forward from one gait to another. There can also be transitions <u>within</u> the gait. For example when moving from collected to medium trot or extended to collected canter.
Travers	Often called “haunches in”. Travers is an advanced movement where the horse is bent from the poll to the croup in the direction of travel. As it moves, its front legs follow the track, while the hind legs are brought to the inside. As with renvers, the travers, when viewed from the front will show all four legs as it is a four track movement.
Volte	A volte can only be ridden when the horse has collection. A volte is a very small circle with every step being a turn. The greatest degree of bend a horse can physically achieve is the arc of a 6 meter volte.

BIBLIOGRAPHY / REFERENCES

Crossley, Anthony, Training the Young Horse - The First Two Years, Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd., London, 1989

Klimke, Reiner, Basic Training of the Young Horse, J.A. Allen & Company Limited, 1985

Kunffy, Charles de, The Athletic Development of the Dressage Horse - Manege Patterns, Howell Book House, New York, 1992

Kyrklund, Kyra and Lemkow, Jytte, Dressage with Kyra - The K4ra Kyrklund Training Method, Kenilworth Press Ltd., Addington Buckingham, 1998

Museler, W., Riding Logic, Prentice Hall Press, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY., 1983

Podhajsky, Alois, The Complete Training of Horse and Rider in the Principles of Classical Horsemanship, Doubleday & Co., Inc. Garden City, NY, 1965

Storl, Werner, Schooling Young Horses, Breakthrough Publications Inc., New York, 1989

Swift, Sally, Centered Riding

Zettl, Walter, Dressage in Harmony - From Basic to Grand Prix, Half Halt Press, Inc., Boonsboro, MD), 1998

Cadora Tests



Appendix A

Addresses of Dressage Organizations:

EC
Equine Canada
2460 Lancaster Road
Ottawa, Ontario
K1B 4S5

CADORA
Secretary
Diane Swanlund
5065 - 31 Avenue # 214
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 6S5

EAADA
Edmonton Area Dressage Association
Jan Simmonds
5611-115 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 3P5

PAADA
Parkland Area Alberta Dressage Association
This website covers Calgary,
Chinook, Edmonton, Parkland,
Young Riders and Cold Lake.
www.albertadressage.com

Magazine Publications/Videos

Gait Post Magazine, 105-26730 56 Avenue, Aldergrove, BC V4W 3X5

The Pacific and Prairie Horse Journal, 10148 Bowerbank Rd., Sidney, BC V8L 3T9

Practical Horseman, PO Box 367, Mt. Morris IL 61054

Dressage Today, 656 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878

Centered Riding, a video by Sally Swift

Dressage by the Letter, A guide for the novice, Moira C. Harris, Horse Illustrated

Chris Irwin, Video series, and book: Horse's Don't Lie, Horsepower Productions, Box 1875, Swift Current, SK, S9H 4M6. E-mail: horsepower@sk.sympatico.ca

Introduction to Dressage, Video available from the Alberta Equestrian Federation



Websites

www.dressagecanada.org

www.dressagedaily.com

www.ridinghabit.com

www.dressageunltd.com

www.equisearch.com

www.equestrian-connection.com

www.classicaldressage.com

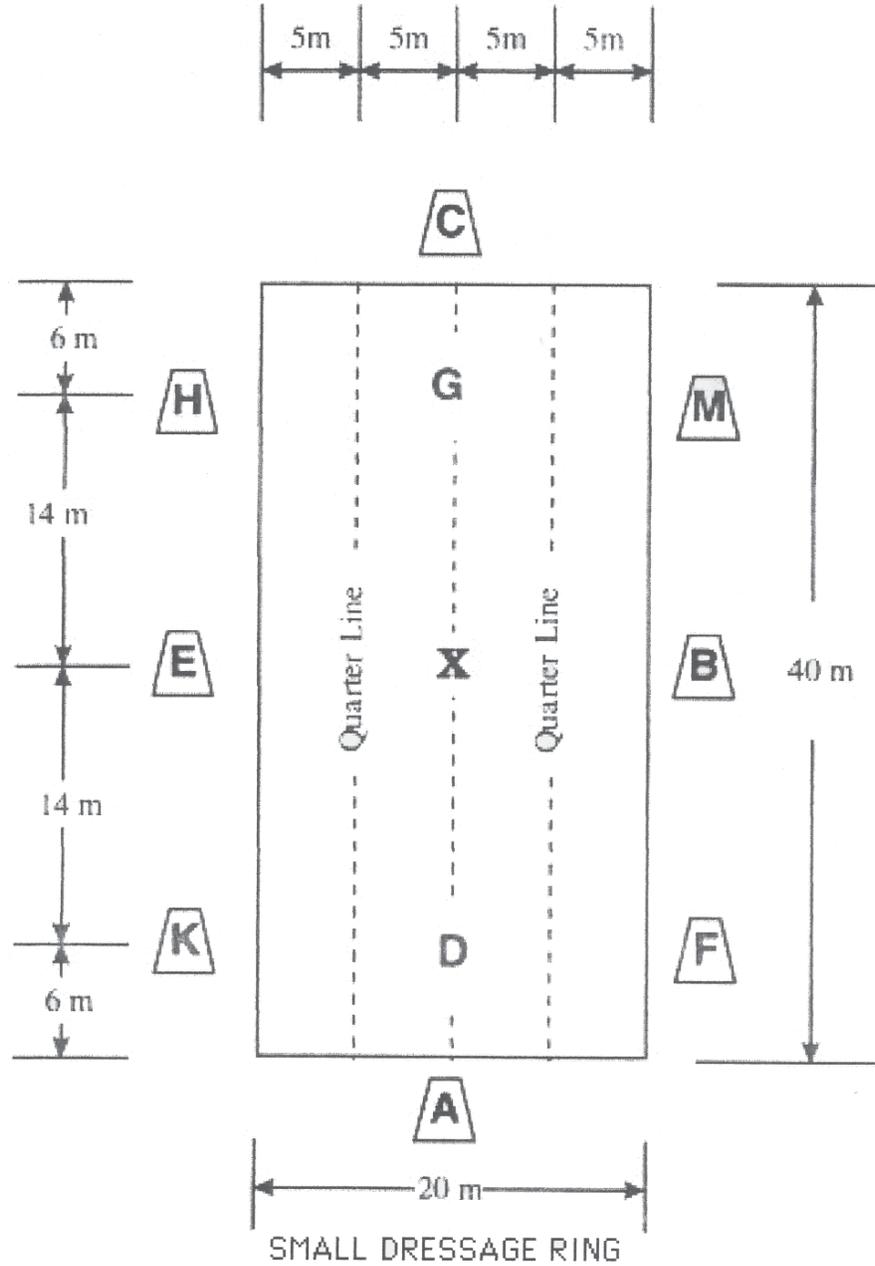
www.haynet.net

www.equiresource.com

www.horse-canada.com

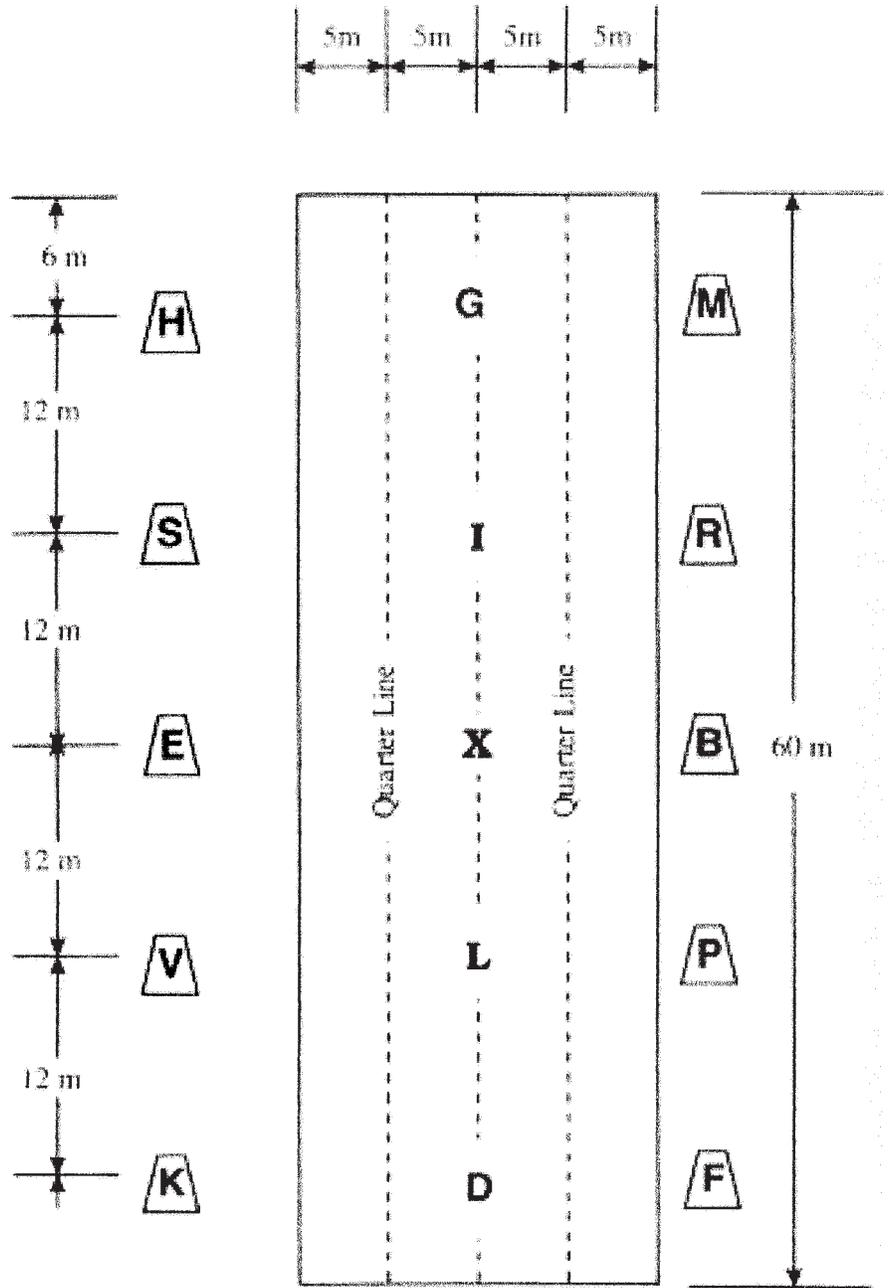
Appendix B

Small Dressage Ring



Appendix C

Standard (Large) Dressage Ring



20 x 60 ring

Appendix D

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS

Welcome to the 4-H Dressage project!

Each of the members who wish to complete the dressage project have successfully completed the horsemanship levels 1-3, giving them the basics they need to work through the dressage project. Some of the members may have also completed requirements from levels 4-7, either western or English.

Members who are interested in the dressage project have now specified the desire to continue their English riding and training and follow the dressage discipline.

The following are suggested activities and lessons that may guide the leaders and members during the completion of the dressage project.

NON MOUNTED ACTIVITIES

1. Requirement Assessment

Begin by having each member use the dressage manual for reference and make a list of the requirements needed to complete the dressage project.

Next, they should identify which of the requirements they have and ensure that they will be able to get any they do not have in order to complete the dressage project.

At this point, each member may not know whether they will be competing in an actual show. You and the member(s) can decide together, whether you want them to prepare as if they will be competing formally. This is important because some of the requirements will change depending on whether they are showing or not.



2. Identifying the “level” of horse/rider combination

It is important that the member understand where they are starting at in terms of the “level” of skill that the horse and themselves is capable of completing. Once this is understood, they and the leader can determine the goals for the year.

Using the dressage manual, each member should read through some of the Training and First Level tests to identify which movements they feel their horse and themselves are capable of completing successfully. They are a team, so it is important that both horse and rider be capable of performing together.



The member could be prepared at the next riding practice to perform some of these movements. This may help decide what level they are currently working at. If someone is available, they can help evaluate the movements by using the directives in the tests.

This form of evaluation will help each member to decide on the level they wish to work towards. For example a rider might be capable of 20 meter circles at trot and canter and want to work towards 15 meter circles. They might have a solid working trot, but want to begin work on lengthening the trot. This rider would be currently riding at a Training Level, but be willing to work towards First Level.

By understanding where they are and where they want to go they can identify their goals more specifically. This will guide their training throughout the 4-H year.

3. Review EC Dressage Tests

Members can go online to the EC website to review all the dressage tests. It is very interesting for members to see the progression of training from level to level. They could complete a chart that identifies how the movements progress through Third level tests, for example. It is exciting to understand what is involved in a Grand Prix test and understand that it all started with the Basic level of training. For example, a 20 meter circle ridden at the Basic level will progress to a 6 meter volte at the Advanced level of dressage.

4. Memorization of Dressage Tests

Because it is important to memorize dressage tests before you attempt to ride them in a show or practice situation, it is useful for members to practice different methods of memorization to see which method(s) works best for them. Assign a specific test for them to memorize. They can be timed or you can give them as much time as they need (until the next meeting, perhaps). The following are the different methods that can be used:

Writing on paper

Members can use the blank copies of the dressage ring that are included with this manual. Have them “ride” the test on paper. In order to “ride” the test on paper they simply draw the lines that the movement would follow as they say the movement “out loud”. The more they do this, the more they will be able to “ride” the test without looking at the test for the movements.

Walking the test

Members can physically walk around an imaginary “small” arena saying each movement out loud as they move on the correct lines around the arena. Someone else should be reading the test to check whether they are correct or not.

Silent memorization

Members will simply use the test as a guide while they memorize it silently in their heads. They may choose at some point to put the actual test away and practice memorizing without it as they get better and better at it.

5. Make a set of Dressage Letters

C

F

A

Have members make a set of dressage letters for the basic dressage ring. They can choose the materials they use to make them. It will depend on whether they need to be movable or permanent on the arena walls; whether they will be attached to a wall, fence or pylon; or what type of arena is available. Is it sheltered from the weather or do they need to be water proof? Members can have fun doing this!

6. How to Ride Dressage movements

Members can research a particular dressage “movement” or “exercise”, such as “travers”, for example. They can then write a brief explanation of it and try to teach someone else what aids are needed to ride the travers. Most dressage movements can be explained and understood while not even mounted on the horse. The benefit of doing this, is that performing the movement is often easier if there is a complete understanding of the aids before the rider is mounted.

7. Dressage Show Field Trip

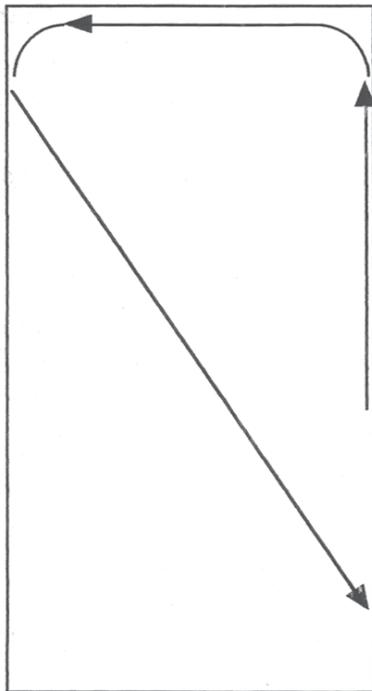
Members can attend a show that offers dressage classes. There is no better way to understand the whole concept of dressage, than to actually go and watch a dressage show. Members can attempt to “score” the horses during the movements based on the directives that are given with each movement. At a recognized show, members can even watch the wonderful “kurs” that are ridden!

8. Organize a Dressage Show

Members can organize a mini dressage show at the club level. Perhaps they can work to put on the show at the end of the 4-H year. The show can then be used to evaluate or assess the rider/horse abilities by having each rider complete the dressage test at their particular level. This is a wonderful experience for anyone interested in dressage!



MOUNTED ACTIVITIES



Use the manual first!

1. Basic Position

After using the manual to identify the position of the rider’s body in the saddle, members can practice riding in basic position during the different gaits.

During the year they should work toward having good balance and position in all three gaits while riding and applying their aids.

They can practice the application of the different rein, leg and seat aids during the training of their horses while trying to maintain the basic riding position.

With careful and consistent practice they will improve their riding skills and train their horses to be sensitive to the aids.

2. Lines, Figures and Transitions

Members can practice using the natural aids to direct the horse around the arena.

They should have a complete understanding of the terminology used to ride lines and figures in the dressage arena. (serpentines, circles, changes of rein across the diagonal etc.).

They can also be asked to make upward and downward transitions at certain letters in the arena.

All of this will help the riders understand what they are capable of doing and where they need to do more training to improve their riding skills.

3. Elements of Training

Members should first use the dressage manual to identify the different elements of training. The goal of the rider is to understand these elements well enough to train the horse successfully. To do this, other resources, both written and practical (riding instruction) should be utilized. Once the rider has a clear understanding of the elements that are important to training, they can begin putting them to use in the training of their horse. Remember, training a horse and becoming a good rider does not happen overnight, and it does not happen without some effort. So be prepared to spend time and energy to reach your goals!

Rhythm

Begin with the first element, rhythm. Members will ride their horses in all three gaits trying to establish good rhythm by counting the beats as they ride. Remember it is easier to ride forward to find the horse's natural rhythm. If someone has an electronic counter, it can be used to keep the tempo of the rhythm. These are often used when developing a kur. (The tempo of your horse in each gait is determined first and then music with the same tempo is chosen.)

Relaxation is important during all of the work done in dressage training. Riders should become aware of how a horse feels and looks when they are tense or nervous so they know when to ease up on the pressures created in training. Relaxed horses will learn quicker, better and retain the training for much longer so it is important that riders take this element seriously. Relaxed horses carry their head more level and breath evenly while they swing through their backs.

Suppleness

Suppleness in a horse indicates a willingness to bend, flex and give to the rider's seat, legs and hands. Horses are large strong animals that should be willing to "give" when a rider asks for something. All training should have this element in mind. A rider can determine how supple their horse is by asking the horse to bend in the body around circles or turns, or give with the poll and jaw when asking for flexion. If the horse does not willingly give to the rider's aids, then the training should be made more clear and the horse should be taught in a way that they can learn the correct response to the rider's aids.

Working around the horse on the ground before mounting often gives a person a good indication of how supple a horse is. When you ask a horse to step over when it is being groomed, or to move their head to the side, or give to the bit when bridling, it helps to determine what work needs to be done.

Some of the indications of resistances that a horse might have that shows that it is not as supple and willing as it needs to be:

1. pulling at the bit
2. throwing the head up
3. bracing in the neck or back (very stiff)
4. pushing against the rider's leg when asked to step sideways
5. refusing to go forward.

Each of these resistances must be dealt with in a way that ensures that the horse "understands" what is required. Remember it sometimes takes more time to teach the horse the correct way, but in the end it is worth it because a horse has such a great memory and it will last a lifetime.



Contact

Contact is one of the more difficult elements to understand for both rider and horse. The connection that a rider has with the horse is developed slowly through the continuous application of all the aids. The goal is to establish a soft connection with the horse's mouth. The horse should "submit" or "give" to the rein when the rider asks for bend, flexion, changes in gait or changes in frame. Riders should practice making this soft connection at all times when riding. A good way to teach the feeling of contact is for the instructor to hold the bit end of the reins to give riders a "feel" for contact.

Impulsion

Impulsion describes the power the horse has in its hindquarters to carry it forward in all three gaits. Riders should ride with this element in mind. Once the horse understands the meaning of the leg, seat and hand aids to produce a strong forward, but "contained" gait, then the horse can be asked for more "power". Be sure that this does not result in "running" away from the leg. Impulsion comes from a contained and more collected frame, by using legs and seat in combination with the hands.

Straightness

Straightness is one of the more difficult elements to establish. Horses are naturally crooked or one sided, just as we are right or left handed. A horse is straight when its forehead is in line with its hindquarters whether on a straight or curved line. Once a horse is able to move forward between the rider's hands, legs and seat, then the horse should be made to step straight in all three gaits. It is a good idea to use an "eye on the ground" to help guide the rider with the aids to create "true" straightness. Transitions are a time when most horses want to take the "easy way out", and swing the hips one way or the other. Often riders are unaware of their horse swinging the hindquarters in as they step into canter, for example. The goal is being able to go both directions easily and evenly so it is important that riders practise both ways.

Collection

Collection is the highest step in training a horse. There are of course differing degrees of collection that are developed as dressage training continues. Do not expect the horse to perform a collecting movement such as shoulder-in without establishing the other elements and having a certain amount of physical conditioning in place. Just as you would not expect to do well in a marathon without training for a long period of time, a horse cannot be expected to properly "hold" itself up in front, and place more weight to hindquarters without the proper preparation and training.

Transitions and changes of directions, circles and other figures are very important in developing natural collection for a horse so these should be continually worked on during the schooling of the dressage horse.

4. Gaits of the Horse



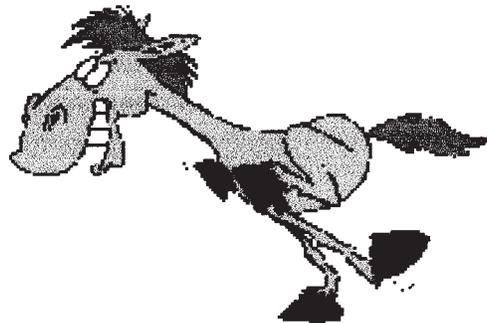
In dressage, there are a number of variations within the gaits. Using the manual to understand what each of these variations are, the member should work at his/her level to improve the gait. For example, a rider should work in “walk” and develop the free, medium, and extended walks. Have someone watch to see whether the horse is clearly overtracking in the extended walk, for example. The same can be done in trot and canter if the horse is capable. Do not rush the horse as this is training that should be continued throughout the year. Have the member identify the goal that they wish to reach with each riding practice.

Remember, horses do best if they learn one new thing at a time, so encourage members to establish sensible riding goals.

5. Riding Dressage Tests

Members can choose a test that is possible for the horse and rider to complete with some degree of success. After memorizing the test, they can ride the test during a practice session. Other members can watch and help to evaluate the movements so that positive comments can be made at the end of the test. It is important that everyone included in this activity be very familiar with the directives of the test so that useful comments are made. The riding area may not be exactly 20 meters by 60 meters. Try to divide the area that is available so that it is even. This is important for making truly “round” circles and correct figures in the dressage ring.

Quite often a video camera is a useful tool in evaluating the performance of both horse and rider. If the ridden test is videotaped it will allow time for the rider to analyze the good and bad points of the ride. Then more goals for training can be made for the next ride. Remember that most of the time if the horse we are riding does something wrong we should first look at ourselves as riders. Horses are generally willing to please if they have been taught what to do. If a horse is having difficulty with something, try to determine what part of it it doesn't understand and re-teach that in order to progress. Keep the training simple and clear!



Appendix E

RIDER ASSESSMENT

The evaluation of each rider and horse combination can be guided by the following suggestions and Levels 1-4 assessment tools.

The leader and members should make a decision as the year progresses as to how they wish to be evaluated.

The use of dressage tests will help with successful evaluation and identification of each skill required at the different levels.

The assessment of unmounted skills and knowledge can take place throughout the year.

The unmounted skills can be evaluated using some of the activities/suggestions that are included with this manual.

There may be a formal assessment of mounted skills by having members ride a dressage test at the level they have been working on. This could be done at the club level, open show level or recognized show level.

A more informal approach to evaluation is to assess the member and horse's skills during the riding sessions throughout the year.

This is important for success as evaluation of different skills within each level will lead to a better understanding of what is required at each level.

For example, in order to ride at First Level, the rider/horse combination must be able to ride 15 meter circles at trot and canter. In the process of being able to ride these figures correctly, they might be evaluated to help them be more accurate and correct in their training. Then when they ride a First Level test as a final "demonstration" or "evaluation"

method, the practice, with evaluation of all the different parts will have paid off as the pair is successful in the end. Each member can keep a record of the skills and information that should be learned and check off each skill that has been evaluated by the leader or other person responsible for assessing the skill of each member.

There are assessment tool checklists included with this manual to help in the evaluation of each member.

Whatever method of assessment is used, the rider and horse should enjoy the progress they make as they work through the 4-H dressage project. This project can be continued from year to year as the horse and rider simply continue to progress from one level to the next.

GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN WHILE LEARNING!



Dressage Project Assessment Tools

Level 1

Dismounted Abilities

- Explain briefly how dressage originated.
- List three movements that are required during a Training dressage test.
- What is the size of a basic dressage ring?
- Identify the letters of the basic dressage ring in the correct positions.
- Explain and demonstrate how to “salute”.
- Explain why a snaffle bit is used in dressage.
- Explain why a dressage saddle might be preferable to a jumping saddle.
- Explain what a flash noseband is.
- Describe the riding attire for a dressage rider in the show ring.
- What does “on the flat” mean?
- What is a “schooling” show?
- How many marks is each movement in a dressage test worth?
- Memorize a Training 1, 2, 3 or 4 test
- Why does a bell or whistle sound before beginning a dressage test?
- Explain the difference between a medium walk and a free walk on a loose rein.

Level 1

Mounted Abilities

- Demonstrate how to salute.
- Demonstrate how to ride in correct basic position in halt and walk.
- Demonstrate a working trot on center line followed by a halt through walk.
- Demonstrate a smooth transition between walk and trot, both upwards and downwards.
- Demonstrate correct contact in halt and walk and trot.
- Demonstrate a free walk on a loose rein.
- Execute a rising trot on a 20 meter circle in both directions
- Perform a working canter on a 20 meter circle in both directions with the correct lead.
- Show correct use of aids during a turn on the forehand in both directions.
- Show how to change diagonals after a change of rein across the diagonal.
- Ride a Training 1, 2, 3, 4 test completing all required movements with a score of 50% or better.

Dressage Project Assessment Tools

Level 2

Unmounted Abilities

- Name the dressage tests ridden at basic level.
- Explain how the progression of training occurs between basic 1 and basic 2 level according to the movements required in the tests.
- What is the distance between the letters in a basic dressage ring?
- What are the aids necessary to ask the horse to come on the bit?
- Explain what “above the bit” and “behind the bit” mean when riding?
- Explain what type of head gear a rider under 18 years of age must wear when showing in an EC recognized dressage show.
- What does EC stand for?
- What type of fence is found around the perimeter of a dressage ring?
- Name three movements found in a First Level test that are not in a Training level test.
- What is meant by “co-efficient of 2” in terms of marks on a dressage test?
- What is a passing mark for a dressage test?
- Memorize a First Level test and repeat it outloud.
- What book contains all the dressage tests used each year in EC shows.
- Explain the difference between a working trot and a lengthened trot.
- On paper, show how a serpentine of three loops wall to wall is ridden in a basic dressage ring.
- Name the first three elements of training in dressage.
- List three ways that a rider’s hand affect a horse when riding.
- Explain the difference between the inside and outside rein.

Level 2

Mounted Abilities

- Demonstrate how to ride in correct basic position in walk and rising trot.
- Demonstrate smooth transitions between trot and canter in both directions, both upward and downward.
- Execute a serpentine of three loops wall to wall in sitting trot.
- Execute a change of rein across the diagonal with lengthened stride at trot.
- Execute a 15 meter circle at sitting trot in both directions.
- Execute a 15 meter circle at canter in both directions on the correct lead.
- Execute a figure eight at canter with a simple change of lead through trot.
- Demonstrate a square halt with immobility for four seconds.
- Demonstrate using the correct aids for leg yielding both left and right (not necessarily mastering the leg yield, but rather using correct aids)
- Demonstrate a free walk on a loose rein.
- Demonstrate a working trot (rising) on a 20 meter circle letting the horse stretch on a long rein. (see First Level test) for directives.
- Perform a First Level test completing all required movements with a score of 50% or better.

Dressage Project Assessment Tools

Level 3

Unmounted Abilities

- Explain how to ride a warm-up session before your dressage test is to be ridden.
- Name the last four elements of training in dressage.
- List three ways the rider's legs affect the horse when riding.
- Explain the difference between the "driving" and the "holding" leg.
- Name three movements that are found in a First Level test that are not found in a Training Level test.
- Explain how to perform a simple change of lead.
- List the four areas that are evaluated in the "collective marks" on a dressage test.
- List the levels in dressage from training through to advanced.
- What is a Kur?
- When does a rider begin using a double bridle in dressage?
- What is the difference between the working trot and the collected trot.
- Memorize a Second level test and repeat it outloud.
- Explain the purpose of the half halt.
- Become a "reader" for someone performing a dressage test.

Level 3

Mounted Abilities

- Demonstrate leg yield in both directions at trot.
- Execute working trot on a 10 meter circle in both directions.
- Execute a working canter on a 10 meter circle in both directions.
- Perform a lengthened stride at canter without quickening the pace.
- Demonstrate the correct use of the aids to perform a shoulder-in at a walk.
(mastering the shoulder-in is not necessary)
- Ride a four loop serpentine wall to wall at sitting trot with correct use of the aids and changes of bend and flexion.
- Demonstrate correct basic position at walk, trot and canter in both directions.
- Demonstrate a warm -up routine that would be used before riding a First Level dressage test.
- Perform a First Level test 4 dressage test completing all required movements with a score of 50% or better.



Dressage Project Assessment Tools

Level 4

Unmounted Abilities

- Explain how the directives of a dressage test help the rider.
- Describe specifically what a dressage judge is looking for when marking the “collective marks” on a dressage test.
- Explain why some movements in a dressage test have a coefficient of 2.
- Groom and braid your horse as if in preparation for a formal dressage show.
- Memorize a Second Level test and repeat it outloud.
- Name the levels in dressage from Basic to Grand Prix.
- How does a dressage rider dress when showing at the advanced level.
- Explain what an EC passport is.
- Explain the difference between the working canter and medium canter.
- Describe the aids necessary to perform a travers either right or left.
- Describe the aids necessary to perform a shoulder-in right or left.
- Explain what a “counter canter” is.
- Describe each of the seven elements of training.
- Memorize a Second Level test and repeat it outloud.

Level 4

Mounted Abilities

- Demonstrate correct basic position in all gaits and variations of each gait during a warm-up ride.
- Demonstrate correct use of aids for shoulder in right and left.
- Perform a rein back of four steps.
- Perform a collected canter on a 20 meter circle in both directions.
- Demonstrate correct use of aids for travers left and right.
- Perform counter canter in both directions around the arena.
- Demonstrate a canter on a 20 meter circle letting horse stretch on a long rein with some contact to be maintained.
- Perform a medium canter in both directions.
- Show smooth transitions between gaits both upward and downward.
- Show differences in the gaits while performing variations within the gaits. (example, working trot, collected trot, medium trot.)
- Perform a Second Level dressage test completing all required movements with a score of 50% or better.



Appendix F

EC dressage tests

The most current EC Dressage tests are available on line at:
www.dressagecanada.org/dcp.asp?pageid=68#copyright

Or, members can write to:

Dressage Canada
2460 Lancaster Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1B 4S5
Telephone: (613) 248-3433
Fax: (613) 248-3484



