

Horse fact sheets – Dressage

Rider Training

In preparing for the test, a major part of the training should be outdoors in open areas, where the natural environment for the horse makes it easier to retain his free forward movement. It is a very common fault for riders to work in the arena too much, which becomes boring for the horse and makes it difficult to maintain impulsion.

During training, the rider must learn all the movements of the test, and specific sections such as how to enter and leave the arena, salute, ride circles, half-circles and corners, etc. However, the rider should avoid always riding the actual sequence of the test. If this is done, the horse learns to anticipate what is coming next and it becomes very difficult to make him obedient and attentive to the aids. He takes short cuts and acts before the rider is ready. The test should only be ridden in the set sequence a few times, but the various movements and transitions are practiced in varying positions in the arena.

During training, the horse should always be going kindly and smoothly with a still head and even steps. If not, the rider may be expecting too much of the horse or the horse doesn't understand what he should do. Something is wrong - go back to riding quietly on a longer rein until the horse is settled and going quietly again.

During the test - What is the judge looking for?

When riding the dressage test, the horse should be taken to the arena going in a manner in which he will perform smoothly. The rider should not expect him to do more than he has successfully done in practice. The judge is looking for a performance that is quiet and obedient and for evidence of harmony between the horse and rider.

As upgrading occurs, tests increase in difficulty. The judge will expect the horse to be more responsive to the aids, to engage the hindquarters better, accepting a light and soft contact on the bit. The paces must be executed with greater evenness and precision.

Sections 9 and 10 of the PCAV Dressage Rules handbook cover Paces and Movements and Expected Standards. There is a wealth of information for all levels of dressage, and recommended reading. We will cover extracts from those sections in a future edition.

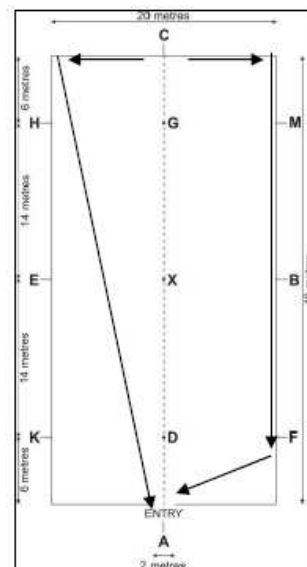
Dressage - Did you know??

Leaving the arena at A – Grade 5 tests

Grade 5 tests are the only PCAV tests where a mark is given for leaving the arena. In all other grades the test ends with the final salute. There are no instructions in the body of the test describing how the rider is to leave the arena other than to turn right or left at C and leave the arena at A.

It is up to the rider to choose the way they exit at A. The judge marks the obedience of the pony and the position and control of the rider.

There are any number of acceptable methods of exit, two are illustrated in the diagram at right.



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RULES / Requirements

Fundamental Requirements There are some basic requirements in the Pony Club rules: The combination (horse and rider) must be graded and have satisfied all eligibility requirements for a dressage competition. Dressage tests must be ridden from memory, and all movements must be executed in the order that they are laid out in the test. Riding with both hands on the reins is a must, except when saluting. The use of voice, or use of vocal clicking sounds, is a fault.

When **saluting** the rider must take the reins and whip in one hand, drop their free hand by their side and bow their head to the judge.

Elimination: Some of the reasons for which a competitor may be eliminated from a dressage competition include:

Unauthorised assistance for horse or rider

Failing to attend gear check

Competing with the wrong saddlery or equipment (make sure you understand the rules relating to use of whip and spurs for your level of competition – see the PCAV Gear Rules)

Dismounting during a test without good reason

Failing to enter the arena within 45 seconds of the bell being sounded

Horse refusing to continue the test for a single period of 20 seconds

Marked lameness

If during the test, three errors of course are made

Person other than the competitor riding or warming up the horse

It is normal to wait for the judge to advise if you have been eliminated.



Errors of Course and Test When a competitor makes an error of course (for instance, takes the wrong turn, omits a movement, etc) the judge may either allow the rider to continue or may sound a bell and ask the competitor to restart from a designated point. What the judge decides will depend on the type of error made, and the competitor must not repeat a movement unless they have been instructed by the judge. All errors of course will be penalised.

Regardless of the outcome, if something does go wrong, it is not a tragedy. The rider must forget about it and put his all into riding the next part of the test.