

NOTES ON DRESSAGE

The HRC AV recognizes the stated FEI object and general principles of Dressage as well as definitions of movements and paces. The HRC AV Notes on Dressage are to be read in conjunction with Articles 401 - 418 of the FEI Dressage Rules

http://www.fei.org/sites/default/files/GA_Annex_16%203Dressage%20Rules%202013_bla ck%20version.pdf

1. WHAT IS DRESSAGE?

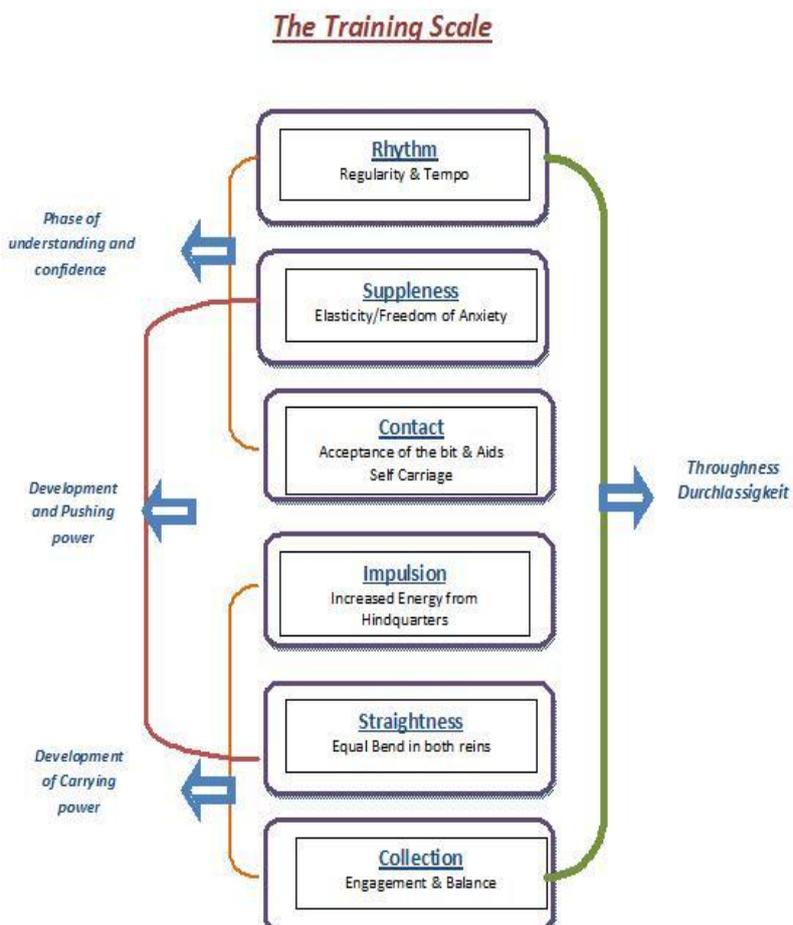
1.1. The object of Dressage is the harmonious development of the physique and ability of the horse with a view to making the horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with his rider.

2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE HRC AV DRESSAGE TESTS?

2.1. The aim of the tests is to evaluate the combination's progress and to encourage the development of the horse into a happy athlete through systematic and harmonious education. HRC AV Dressage Tests range from Level 5 (lowest) to Advanced (highest). Each level has specific requirements and expectations against which the combination is judged.

2.2. Horses are expected to show development of the various qualities covered in the Training Scale (see diagram), starting in Levels 4 & 5 where the emphasis is on developing rhythm, relaxation and acceptance of the basic aids. These elements should be more established in Level 3 with the horse showing suppleness, improved balance and acceptance of the bit. By Level 2 the horse is expected to be developing impulsion and improved straightness which will assist their progression to Levels 1 and Advanced where collection is required.

2.3. The Training Scale incorporates six elements representing the qualities we seek to establish in order to develop the horse's physical and mental aptitude from basic to advanced dressage work. None of the points of the training scale can be considered in isolation and at all times underpinning these elements are the harmony that must exist between rider and horse and the willingness of the horse to respond to the rider's aids. The result is that the horse demonstrates 'throughness' whereby the energy from active hind legs is transferred over a swinging and supple back through to the bit.



2.4. The six elements of the training are as follows:

- **Rhythm** - Refers to the regularity which is the correct sequence of footfalls
- **Suppleness** - Suppleness and relaxation. The complete absence of tension, and is an essential aim of the preliminary training phase. Relaxation in both the mental and physical sense
- **Contact** - Is a soft, steady, connection between the rider's hands and horse's mouth. The horse should go rhythmically forward from the rider's driving aids and "seek" a contact with the rider's hands
- **Impulsion** - The term used to describe the transmission of energy from the hindquarters being transmitted into the athletic movement of the horse
- **Straightness** - A horse is said to be straight when its forehead is in line with its hindquarters, that is, when its longitudinal axis is in line with the straight or curved track it is following
- **Collection** - To enable a horse to be collected correctly, all the former criteria must be fulfilled. The aim is to improve the balance and equilibrium of the horse and to develop and increase the horse's ability to lower and engage the quarters for the benefit of the lightness and mobility of the forehead. If the carrying capacity of the hindquarters is sufficiently developed, the horse is then in a position to move in balance and self carriage in all three paces.

3. RIDING THE TESTS

- 3.1. The tests are a series of connected and continuous movements executed in a designated dressage arena. (See diagram). A mark is awarded for each movement with some key movements attracting an additional coefficient mark. At the conclusion of the test the judge further evaluates the test through the Collective marks. See example of an HRC AV Dressage test at Appendix 8. Riding with both hands is mandatory and the use of the voice or clicking the tongue repeatedly is penalised. .
- 3.2. A rider moving along the outer track continues along it on the same rein, without alteration of pace or manner of riding (eg. sitting or rising) until instructed to do otherwise. If required to leave this track and return to it (eg. when circling), the rider will continue along the track in the same manner of going as he left it and on the same rein, unless instructed to do otherwise.
- 3.3. Where a change of pace is required at a given marker, the horse should make the first step in the new pace as the rider passes the marker. In lower levels, transitions may be made within a stated number of steps either side of the marker.

4. JUDGING THE TESTS

4.1. The dressage marks are as follows:

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|-----------|---------------------|--|
| 10 | Excellent | All the requirements of the Training Scale applicable to the level are fulfilled, and the movements display an excellent quality of paces, accuracy and consistency appropriate for the level |
| 9 | Very Good | All the applicable requirements of the Training Scale are fulfilled, and the movements are performed with very good accuracy, quality of paces and consistency appropriate for the level |
| 8 | Good | All the applicable requirements of the Training Scale are demonstrated, the overall quality of the paces is good, and the test is ridden accurately |
| 7 | Fairly Good | All the applicable requirements of the Training Scale are demonstrated to a fairly good standard, and the overall quality of the paces is fairly good but with some lack of cadence or consistency. Movements and accuracy are fairly good |
| 6 | Satisfactory | Applicable requirements of the Training Scale are demonstrated to a satisfactory standard and the paces are steady and consistent in rhythm but there is a loss in accuracy and precision with minor mistakes |

- 5 Marginal** Either the movements are performed fairly accurately but there are some weaknesses in the quality of the paces and the requirements of the Training Scale, or there are some serious mistakes in the movements
- 4 Insufficient** Basic paces are evident but there is an overall loss of quality either in the requirements of the Training Scale, or errors in the movements or accuracy in the test
- 3 Fairly Bad** There are serious problems in the applicable requirements of the Training Scale and loss of accuracy
- 2 Bad** There are severe problems in the paces/movement with clear loss of accuracy
- 1 Very Bad** Movements performed are barely recognizable, showing serious resistance throughout
- 0 Not Performed** No element of the movement was performed or recognizable

4.2. **Collective Marks** are awarded for the overall performance in the following areas

LEVEL 5

- Obedience of the horse: Attentiveness and response to the aids
- Rider's seat and control of the horse

LEVEL 4

- Paces: Freedom and regularity of paces
- Obedience of the horse: Willingness of horse to travel forward. Responsiveness to rider's aids. Attentiveness
- Rider's seat and control of the horse

LEVEL 3

- Paces: freedom and regularity
- Impulsion: desire to move forward, elasticity of steps, relaxation of the back
- Submission: attention and confidence; harmony, lightness and ease of movements, acceptance of the bridle
- Rider's position and seat: correctness and effect of the aids

LEVELS 2, 1 & ADVANCED

- Paces: freedom and regularity
- Impulsion: desire to move forward, elasticity of steps, relaxation of the back and engagement of the hindquarters
- Submission: attention and confidence, harmony, lightness and ease of movements, acceptance of the bridle and lightness of the forehand
- Rider's position and seat correctness and effect of the aids

5. PACES: REFER TO FEI RULES FOR DESCRIPTION OF PACES

5.1. The regularity of the paces is fundamental to dressage. .

5.2. In levels 4 & 5 the horse is required to demonstrate the basic paces. As the horse's training progresses, variations of the basic paces are required. The following table indicates the level at which the various paces are introduced

	Level 5	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1	Level Adv
Medium walk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free walk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collected walk					✓	✓
Extended walk						✓
Working trot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lengthened trot			✓	✓	✓	✓
Collected trot					✓	✓
Medium trot					✓	✓
Extended trot						✓
Working canter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lengthened canter			✓	✓	✓	✓
Collected canter					✓	✓
Medium canter					✓	✓
Extended canter						✓

5.3. A stride is a single coordinated movement of the four legs of the horse, completed when the legs return to their initial relative position.

A step is a movement of a limb within a stride, and the related footfalls will produce a clear beat.

A walk stride has four beats, a trot stride consists of two beats with a moment of suspension, and a canter stride three beats with a moment of suspension.

When counting steps within the walk, only the steps of the front legs are counted.

Thus a single walk stride will involve two steps of the front legs.

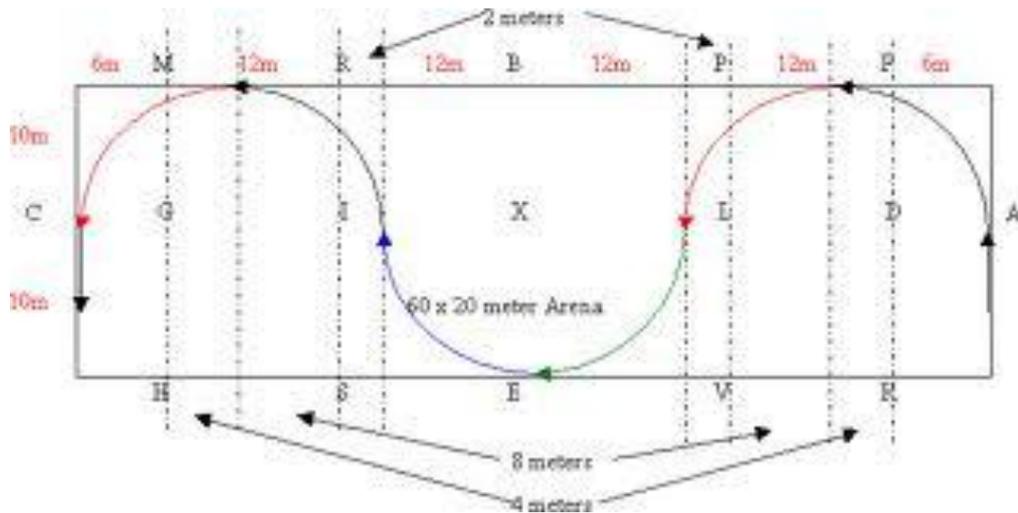
6. IMPULSION

- 6.1. Impulsion is the term used to describe the transmission of an eager and energetic, yet controlled, propulsive energy generated from the hindquarters into the athletic movement of the horse. Its ultimate expression can be shown only through the horse's soft and swinging back by gentle contact with the rider's hand. .
- 6.2. Speed, of itself, has little to do with impulsion; the result is more often a flattening of the paces. A visible characteristic is a more pronounced articulation of the hind leg, in a continuous rather than staccato action. The hock, as the hind foot leaves the ground, should first move forward rather than being pulled upwards, but certainly not backwards
- 6.3. A prime ingredient of impulsion is the time the horse spends in the air rather than on the ground. Impulsion is, therefore, seen only in those paces that have a period of suspension
- 6.4. Impulsion is a precondition for a good collection in trot and canter. If there is no impulsion, there is nothing to collect

7. SUBMISSION

- 7.1. Fulfilling the main requirements/movements of a Dressage test is the main criterion for submission. .
- 7.2. Submission does not mean subordination, but an obedience revealing its presence by a constant attention, willingness and confidence in the whole behaviour of the horse as well as by the harmony, lightness and ease he is displaying in the execution of the different movements
- 7.3. The degree of submission is also demonstrated by the way the horse accepts the bit. Resistance to or evasion of the rider's hand being either "above the bit" or "behind the bit" demonstrate lack of submission. The main contact with the horse's mouth must be through the snaffle bit. In levels 4 & 5, the horse is expected to work in a natural frame showing acceptance of a light contact. By level 3 the horse should be establishing acceptance of the bit working into a light and soft contact with a supple poll resulting in a rounder frame.
- 7.4. Putting out the tongue, keeping it above the bit or drawing it up altogether, as well as resistance on the part of the horse and must be taken into account by the judges in their marks for the movement concerned as well as the collective mark for "submission"
- 7.5. The first thought when considering submission is willingness, that the horse understands what is being asked of it and is confident enough in the rider to react to the aids without fear or tension
- 7.6. The horse's straightness, uphill tendency and balance enable it to stay in front of the rider's legs and go forward into an accepting and self-carrying contact with the bit. This is what really produces the picture of harmony and
lightness

8.4. **SERPENTINE:** a 3 loop serpentine is introduced in level 3. The serpentine consists of 3 ½ 20m circles with each loop touching the long side of the arena. The serpentine tests the suppleness and balance of the horse as well as obedience and acceptance of the aids.



8.5. **HALT:** In levels 4 & 5, the horse is expected to stand attentive and motionless for the prescribed length of time (where a length of time is not specified the halt should be maintained for 3 seconds) and be ready to move off at the indication of the rider. As the training progresses the quality of the halt will improve. By level 2, in addition to the above qualities, the horse will stand engaged, square and on the bit with the poll at the highest point and the nose slightly in front of the vertical. The quality of the paces before and after the halt is an integral part of the assessment.

8.6. **REIN RELEASE:** the rein release in trot is introduced in level 3 to demonstrate the horse's ability to maintain the same rhythm, balance, straightness and outline without relying on the rider's hands. In accordance with the test directive, the release may be either the inside rein or both reins. The rider pushes one or both hands forward towards the bit maintaining a straight line from elbow to hand to the horse's mouth showing a clear release of the contact. The forward and returning action of the hands is completed over the prescribed number of strides with the actual release resulting in a brief loop of the reins. The action of the hands is smooth and fluent. The horse maintains its outline during the release, demonstrating that he is sufficiently balanced and obedient to carry himself and shows acceptance of the contact as it is returned.

- 8.7. **STRETCHING ON A LONG REIN:** stretching on a long rein is introduced in level 3. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the horse is completely relaxed and can maintain the same balance, tempo, length of stride and swing through the back whilst the rider allows the horse to take the contact down and forward, stretching his head and neck, maintaining a light contact at the end of the rein. As the next stretches forward and downwards, the mouth should reach more or less to the horizontal line corresponding with the point of the shoulder. The pace must maintain its rhythm, and the horse should remain light in the shoulders with the hind legs engaged. During the retake of reins, the horse must accept the contact without resistance in the mouth or poll.
- 8.8. **TRANSITIONS:** Transitions should be performed as the rider's body aligns with the prescribed marker except in transitions where the horse approaches the letter from a diagonal or perpendicular to the point on track where the letters are positioned. In this case, the transitions must be done when the horse's nose reaches the track at the letter so that the horse is straight in the transition. The quality of the pace should be maintained up to the moment when the pace or movement is changed. In level 5 the expectation is that transitions will be performed within 3 strides of the marker, in level 4 within 2 strides of the marker and in level 3 within 1 stride of the marker. By level 2 all transitions should be smooth and on the marker. Transitions within the pace must be clearly defined while maintaining the same rhythm and cadence throughout. The horse should remain light in hand, calm and maintain a correct position. .
- 8.9. **CORNERS:** correctly executed corners are an indication of the horse's balance, straightness, suppleness and thoroughness. In levels 4 & 5 the horse is not expected to be ridden deeply into corners. By level 3 the corners are to be ridden on a 10m diameter curve. By level 1 and Advanced, the horse is expected to execute corners on an 8m diameter curve.

