
DRESSAGE

A document on Dressage guidelines and rules

Implemented in the Finnish Championships, related qualifiers, championship classes, and recommended for use in other dressage competitions/training sessions.

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CONTENTS

1. Cover
2. Contents
3. General information on Dressage
4. Dressage arena
5. Levels of Dressage
6. Gaits
- 7-8. Theory of dressage movements
9. Dressage patterns (pictures)
- 10-11. Competition rules**
- 12. Qualification rules**
- 13. Error scoring**
14. Clothing and tack
15. Judges and staff
16. Afterword

GENERAL INFORMATION ON DRESSAGE

Dressage is the foundation of all riding in the world of real horses, the same applies strongly to hobbyhorses. Dressage is very similar to dancing - the horse is moving smoothly, flexibly and effortlessly forward with ease. All the physical work, though, in the hobbyhorse world is done by the rider. However, the hobbyhorse plays an important role in the performance - the positioning of the head tells in different ways what the dressage movement specifically is. On competitions judges criticise the quality of the movements and punctuality with points from 0-10 (10 excellent, 9 very good, 8 good, 7 pretty good, 6 satisfactory, 5 poor, 4 weak, 3 pretty bad, 2 bad, 1 very bad and 0 not shown). The final result consists of the track program and overall impression points, in addition to points, the judge can calculate the percentage. That brings a professional image to the competitions and give the rider more comparability for the future.

There are a lot of different levels of dressage programs – from Easy to Grand Prix, which is the most difficult level of dressage. The levels in Finland are a bit different from the US/UK/Possibly other parts of the world – in this document we are discussing Finnish dressage levels. If you wish to define a training level for a hobbyhorse, for example, an easy B-level horse is not suitable for Intermediaire II level. Some enthusiasts do not determine the level of their horses at all and only train and compete at the level they are capable of.

Dressage has gained popularity slowly but surely in the hobbyhorse world, the level has risen dramatically within a couple of years. However, show jumping is still more popular, but often as the enthusiast get older there is also an interest in dressage. The average age of dressage riders is higher than the average age of riders that mostly are showjumpers. Dressage also works the muscles in a different way than show jumping and requires even a harder training program. Dressage requires excellent co-ordination, balance and muscle control, as well as endurance from the rider. The performance must look calm, controlled, and moving hastily is not considered good.

DRESSAGE ARENA

There are two standardly used arena shapes - Arena A and Arena B. The more advanced programs are often ridden on the A-arena, while easier programs are often on the shorter B-arena.

The arena is measured such that the A-arena is: *Short sideline x long sideline (3 x short-sideline)*

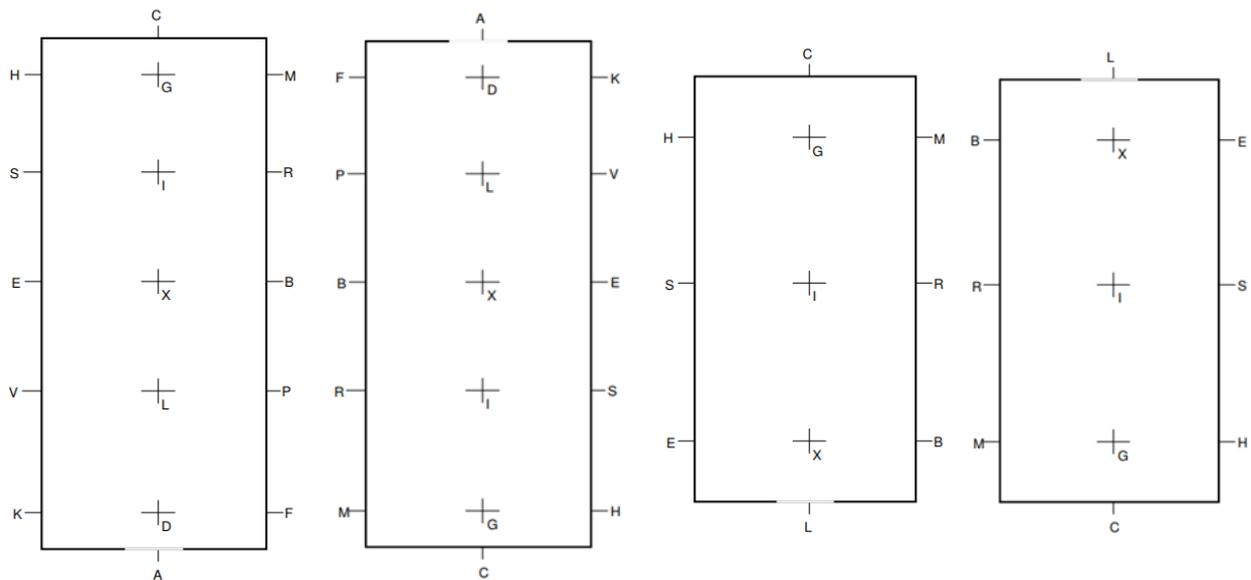
B-arena: *short sideline x long sideline (2 x short sideline)*

That is, for example - A: 7 x 21 meters, B: 7 x 14 meters (Dimensions used in the Finnish Championships)

Inside the arena the movements of the program are executed in a single letter or a combination of letters, underneath are the arenas and the letters.

ARENA A

ARENA B



The judge is sitting in the letter C, the competition can also include other judges for example in the middle of the arenas long side. Letters on the length diameter are not marked because that interferes with the rider and the letters on the side of the arena must be out of the way on the outside.

Often in competitions, the dressage arena is surrounded by low white fences or alternatively, the size is marked with poles. In smaller competitions you can often see just the corners marked with poles. It is important that the arena is symmetrical, the ground should be as smooth as possible to secure the riders safety in the arena.

LEVELS OF DRESSAGE

Dressage often refers to levels. The hobbyhorse can be trained or set to the desired level. The level of training determines which programs the rider can compete in. Next, each level is briefly dealt with and what that level essentially contains.

Easy C - Basic Horse. The Easy C-level horse knows basic gaits (walk, trot and canter), tempo additions as well as stop and backing up. The horse also has to respond easily to turning and other rein aids (circular patterns, changing the way).

Easy B - In addition to the above-mentioned standard requirements the hobbyhorse performs on this level the medium gates, leg yield, canter straight from walk and trot directly from backing up. At this level the horse has to move in a somewhat more controlled form.

Easy A - The ability to do extended gaits, shoulder-in and shoulder-out (walk), counter canter, change the canter lead through walk and turn both on the haunches and forehand. An easy A-level horse can already be categorized as a dressage horse. The use of a double bridle is also brought in on the easy A level but it is not mandatory.

Advanced B – At this level the rider and hobbyhorse effortlessly performs all of the above. In addition to these, the horse must know the collected gaits, shoulder-in and shoulder-out preformed in trot and canter, a simple flying change and cantering directly from backing up. The rider is already being criticised much more severely at the point of demanding levels.

Advanced A – At this level in competitions the horse must have a double bridle (a snaffle and a curb bit with a chain + two separate reins). This level requires the rider to ride with a double bridle without problems. Without the double bridle on this level and up the horse and rider will be disqualified. Additional movements to the previous are flying changes on every third or fourth step, a half-canter pirouette and a full pirouette in walk.

Prix St Georges – The level includes flying changes on every second step and a full canter pirouette. This almost intermediaire level is not a very common level of in the world of hobbyhorsing, but there are significant improvements at the level. Usually the rider jumps directly over this level to the next one. This level is a bit forgotten due to tests not usually written for this level.

Intermediaire I & II – The second highest level. At this level, very difficult and physically really heavy tasks can already be shown in full tests. The level includes flying changes on every step (at least 5 consecutive), passage, piaffe 7-8 steps, zigzag half pass in every gait, moves from passage to piaffe and vice versa and difficult transitions.

Grand Prix – Is the most advanced level of dressage. The level of difficulty is increased by adding piaffe in 12–15 steps, a double pirouette in canter and flying changes (at least 9 consecutive). The Grand Prix horse and rider has reached its peak.

GAITS

The basic types of gaits are **walk, trot** and **canter**. Other special types of gaits can be found by breed - however, this manual only deals with the above.

Walk

The walk is the base of the gates and the most natural movement. There are various paces: *walk, collected walk, medium walk and extended walk*. Also, at the end of dressage tests the "*free walk*" usually mentioned is one form of the walk, allowing the horse to move freely in the pace of its choice. In a *collected walk*, the horse collects his step shorter, slower and higher than normal. The horse is also supported in a higher form than normal, but still retaining a relaxed feeling. At *medium walk*, the horse stretches for a long and relaxed front, with the pace remaining the same as in the basic walk. In the *extended walk* the horse stretches the steps long and relaxed, but the pace is increasing and the movement is brisk. The rider also gives the horse some free rein and the horse can lower its head to a more relaxed state.

Trot

Trot is a faster gait and resembles jogging. *Trot, collected trot, medium trot and extended trot* are the four stages. Rising trot with a hobbyhorse is unnecessary. The *collected trot* is an upward, slower and powerful movement. The horse's head is supported in a higher-than-normal shape. *Medium trot* works in the same way as medium walk - the step stretches longer but the pace remains as a normal trot. The *extended trot* is the most impressive of the paces. The horse is given a bit more rein and the extension is performed correctly when it gets to a long, relaxed and energetic briskness while maintaining strength and poise.

Canter

The fastest of the three basic gaits is the canter. The canter is to be onward, flexible and strong. There are also four stages – *a canter, collected canter, medium canter and extended canter*. In a *collected canter* the horse is ridden at a slower pace and asked for a shorter and higher movement. The head of the horse is to move from casual to more upward shape. In the *medium canter* the legs should stretch well forward while the pace is kept restrained like in all of the medium gaits the movement must remain controlled and properly executed. The *extended canter* is powerful and very brisk - but it doesn't seem hasty.

THEORY OF DRESSAGE MOVEMENTS

In this section we will briefly discuss the theory of different movements of dressage. **Everyone can do the movements in the way they want** - but here's how to make the movements happen. This part is tailored to fit hobbyhorse riding, the information in this part is not suitable for riding real horses.

Stop - The horse is standing in a still position with a straight feet. The horse's head is relaxed slightly below normal.

Backing up – moving backwards in a set number of steps. The horse's head must not get too high, otherwise the movement will seem too stiff.

Leg yield – Feet are positioned towards the inside of the arena while staying on the desired line, leg yield can be performed on the rail or for example in a diagonal line. The hobbyhorse should be flexed very slightly away from the movement.

Shoulder-in – Feet are positioned towards the inside of the arena, flexion also in the same direction. The riders outside shoulder should be slightly forward.

Shoulder-out – Feet are positioned away from the inside of the arena, flexion towards the inside of the arena. The riders outside shoulder should be slightly forward.

Zigzag half pass – The rider preforms a said zigzag on the centerline of the arena, always changing the direction of the movement after a certain number of steps. Can be performed in all gaits. Example of number of steps: 2-4-4-2 (Intermediaire), 3-6-6-6-3 (Grand Prix). During the first set of steps, the rider moves away from the centerline and during the last step the rider returns to the centerline. During the middle (4&4, 6&6&6) the rider crosses the centreline symmetrically leaving half the number of steps on both sides. In canter, the lead will always change when the direction changes. The head of the horse and the upper body of the rider lie in the direction of travel (picture on page 9).

Turn on the forehand – The rider preforms a 180 degree movement with the head of the horse as a pivot point inside the motion. The legs move on two rails and the horse is flexed in the direction of the movement slightly.

Turn on the haunches – The rider preforms a 180 degree movement with the end of the hobbyhorses stick as a pivot point inside the motion. Turning on the haunches is the opposite from turning on the forehand. The horse is flexed slightly to the changing lap.

Flying change – The rider switches the leading leg of the canter. The flying change is happening in the air, the rider will jump in to the air to take the other leg as their leading leg when they land. The horses head should be flexed slightly to the switched lead and the rider switches the reins to the other hand – the reins should always be on the leading side. Flying changes can be done on every stride on higher levels.

Counter canter – Moving on the wrong lead deliberately. Lower-level horses can accidentally move in a counter canter without the rider's request. An easy A-level horse can maintain a counter canter without problems even on an arched line. The horse is flexed towards the leading leg of the canter (counter flexion).

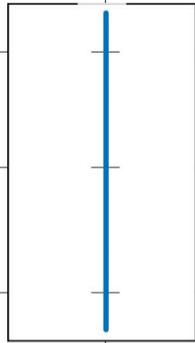
Canter pirouette – A 360 degree motion where the hobbyhorse stick end remains within the movement. The pirouette is started by slowing the canter almost in place and then moving in the direction of the leading leg. The rider's legs are moving on two rails, the leading leg moving in a bigger more upbringing movement and the other leg more inside of the movement in a smaller circle, this leg taking most of the weight of the rider's body and pushing the movement sideways. The perfect amount of steps in a full canter pirouette is 5-6 steps depending on the length of the rider's steps. The head of the hobbyhorse is positioned in a very collected position and the flexion of both horse and rider's upper body is in the direction of the movement. The canter pirouette can also be done in a *half-pirouette*, the ideal amount of steps being 3. The lead is changed after these 3 steps when the rider is back on the desired line. At the higher levels riders can perform a *double pirouette*, which require strength and precision, the amount of steps is doubled by the steps in a normal pirouette (10–12 steps). In a test it is not permitted to do more than a double pirouette.

Pirouette in walk – A 360 degree motion, turning on the haunches in full.

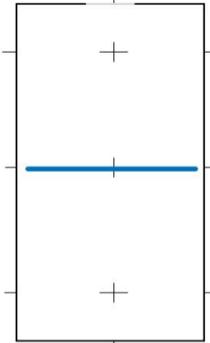
Passage – Very collected trot that stays almost in place. A higher level movement, requires strength and stamina. In passage the horse is collected upwards and the leg movement is desired to be flexible, powerful and moving forward at a slow pace.

Piaffe – Like passage but completely in place. Piaffe is a powerful movement, the horse should be even more collected than in the passage. On the Intermediaire-level the minimum is 7 steps, Grand Prix requires 12 steps. A *pirouette* can also be performed in piaffe, it resembles turning on the haunches, the movement can be done in a full pirouette or a half pirouette.

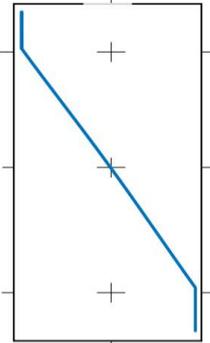
DRESSAGE PATTERNS



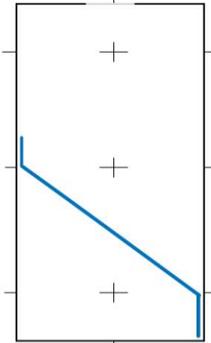
Down the centerline



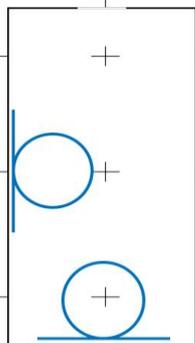
Down the midline



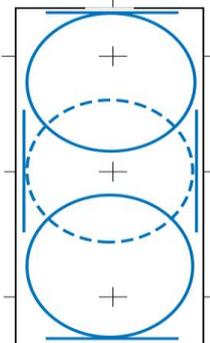
Across the long diagonal



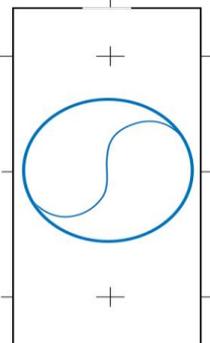
Across the short diagonal



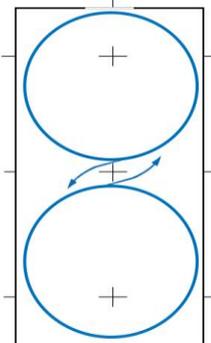
Circles (small)



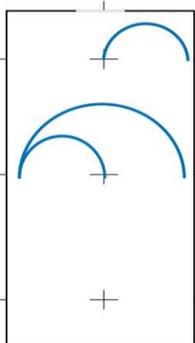
Circles (large)



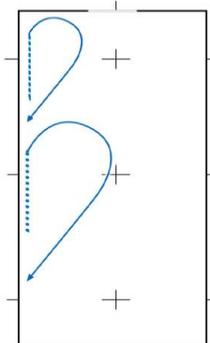
Through a circle



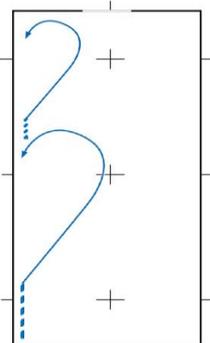
Switching circles (figure eight)



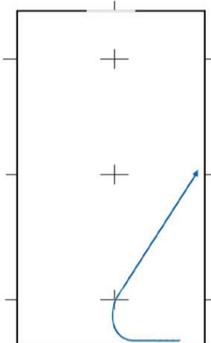
Half-circles



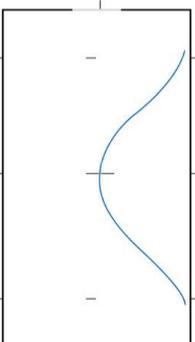
Half-volte to the wall



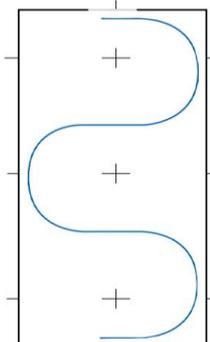
Half-volte to the wall (reverse)



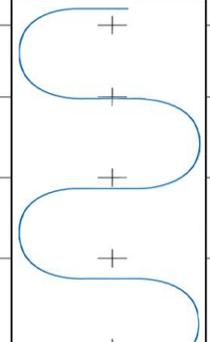
Corner cut



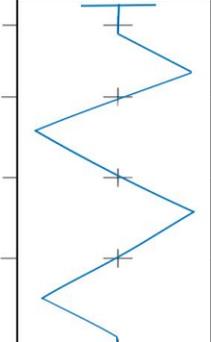
Shallow loop



3-loop serpentine



4-loop serpentine



Zigzag halfpass (3-6-6-6-3)

COMPETITION RULES

The rules / recommendations below are used in the Finnish Championships and their use is also encouraged for general use in competitions.

Open / general dressage tests

- The horse and rider are performing the program from the beginning to the end. Each marking on the test is scored by 1-10. 5 or lower number requires an explanation in the comments section. The judge can give a score of 0 if the movement was not performed at all. If the result is 50 percent or more, the track is accepted.
- The judges take notice on for example the flexibility and consistency of the movements, the work of the rider and make sure that the right lines are taken and give the score to it. However, the general impression criteria may vary according to the test or according to the judge's preferences.
- You can also calculate the percentage of the test. Calculating percentages will give the competition a professional outlook and the rider will get a clearer result for the future. If you want to emphasize some movement, it can be multiplied by, for example, two.
- The test is only allowed to start off with the judge's consent. The judge will stand up or say loudly "*Start*" in the initial greeting, after which the rider can start the test. Also, a clear nod is enough - but clearer ways are recommended. If a rider starts its course before a clear acceptance mark, it will lead to rejection.
- The same horse is allowed to participate twice in the same class with a different rider. Usually, in dressage the rider can only participate once in the class.
- The advanced A-level requires a double bridle (a snaffle and a curb bit with a chain + two separate reins). Without the double bridle on the Advanced A-level and higher the horse will be disqualified. Forbidden equipment on each level are ear covers, whips and various accessories. With these equipment the horse will be disqualified.

Kür

- Same rules as in the above section: Open / General dressage tests
- A dressage program designed by the rider in accordance with the required movements and ridden to the music of their choice. The length of the program can be limited in the competition as needed. The maximum number of minutes in the Championships is usually 3-4 minutes, after the maximum time points of error will be added to the performance. The minute varies by the years, the exact minute will be displayed in that years test. The rider can also be disqualified if the time allowed is over performed by an extensive amount (more about error points on page 13).
- In Kür classes, the riding is also judged by artistic points, for example the music and its interpretation, degree of difficulty and choreography. Artistic scores are an important part of the critique.
- The music starts with the rider's hand gesture before the initial greeting or directly after the initial greeting. The hand should be raised directly to the side if the music starts before the initial greeting, when the rider has lowered their hand the music starts playing.
- The song and its performer must be reported usually upon registration/when asked for. It cannot be changed after the registration has ended. Music is usually delivered as a link from YouTube to the judge's email.
- If there is a pre-qualifier in the Kür class, it will be ridden on the same horse as on the competition day itself - if the horse and rider moves forward from the qualifier. The same horse can participate with up to two different riders in the same class.

Dressage championship

- These class rules are only for Finnish riders written in Finnish, riders from foreign countries can't participate in the Finnish Championship for Dressage.

QUALIFICATION RULES

These rules are for the pre-video qualification of the Finnish Championship classes for the Kür and Finnish Championship in Dressage.

Common rules for Kür & Dressage Championship

- Pre-qualifying, the rider films the specified test and sends it to the qualifying team before the last registration date. Instructions for posting can be found in more detail on the website of the Championships of that year.
- The video must be clear, horizontally filmed so that the entire area is visible. The video must have a frame width of at least 360p and the video is uploaded to YouTube either publicly or hidden. A smaller frame width / unclear video will lead to the rejection of the video.
- The camera must be at the judge's end (letter C) in the middle of the short side so that this short side is fully visible. Don't film the performance from the ground, for example, use a camera mount / table / chair. Don't use another person as a camera mount, then the filming doesn't meet the criteria. If the video does not meet the above criteria, it will not be judged.
- The video will be shot in one take, any cuts should not be displayed on the video.
- The arena must include at least the middle letters of the long side and the middle letters of the short side. Marking all letters (A and B arenas) is highly recommended. A clearly identifiable object that is not on the riding path is enough of a mark.
- The arena should be clearly defined and the minimum size on the A-arena is 5x15 meters. However, the recommended size is 7x21 meters. Please mention the arena size in the video description/ when registering. Be careful that the arena is symmetrical.
- The qualifiers require a double bridle (a snaffle and a curb bit with a chain + two separate reins). Without the double bridle the horse will be disqualified. Forbidden equipment are ear covers, whips and various accessories. With these equipment the horse will be disqualified.
- The qualification is ridden on the same horse as the final.

ERROR SCORING

During a test, it is also possible to obtain error points for unwanted events. The most common way to get error points is to run on the wrong track temporarily. This section discusses the errors a little more clearly.

Reductions, riding errors (-2, -4, disqualification) is the text that often reads under the overall impression of the test. Here is where the judge marks any fault points and the reason for the fault point - or the reason for the disqualification. When a rider makes an error, the judge will whistle as follows: 1 whistle tells one error and 2 whistles two errors. Three whistling in a row means disqualification. Long uninterrupted whistling means temporarily interrupting a test that is not due to the rider. When the judge gives the permission again, the rider can continue from where it left off.

- 2 Causes of error point:

- The rider did not perform the requested movement at a particular point / the rider did not do the move at all - so the part of the movement in the test is marked as number 0. The paper marks -2 points which are deducted from the final points.
- The horse makes a disobedience error - for example, bucks, rears, stops or kicks the fence.
- The rider gets advice from someone outside the arena.
- The rider takes a wrong way but returns within 10 seconds to the right track.
- Kür track music exceeds the maximum time by 10 seconds.

- 4 error points get marked if any of the above is done additional to a previous error or the same error is repeated again.

If the above-mentioned mistakes are repeated three times/ three different errors, it will lead to the immediate disqualification and the rider needs to leave the arena.

Other reasons leading to disqualification:

- Leaving the arena during the test.
- Incorrect tack.
- A visible or serious injury during the test.
- Starting the test without the judge's consent.
- Falling off/down.
- The music goes over 20 seconds of the set time in the Kür-class.

CLOTHING AND TACK

It is *recommended* to wear a simple and clean outfit in dressage competitions. Clothing should be flexible and breathable and lightweight but sturdy enough. In clothing, neutral colours are the most appropriate, but there is no specific style of dressing that everyone should follow. However, gymnastic slippers are popular among dressage riders, especially in indoor halls and on a very smooth footing as they are as little as possible in the way of the movement. However, it is recommended to wear well-fitting and shock-absorbing shoes. Long-haired riders are advised to brush their hair or put it up so the judge sees the movements of the rider's upper body and the shoulder line better. **Nothing is mandatory in the rider's outfit and therefore a lack of something does not lead to elimination.** However, adhering to the above guidelines is strongly encouraged, and it also tells the rider's dedication to the sport.

The hobbyhorse equipment has requirements that are important for acceptance. The Advanced B-level and the test levels below it are completely free in what bridle to use, even a bitless bridle is allowed. However, the recommended bridle model is a tidy English noseband with a snaffle. The advanced A-level horse is already in need of a **double bridle**. The bridle include a noseband (usually a pullback) without a flash, a snaffle and a curb bit with a chain and two separate reins. An advanced rider can easily ride with two reins. There must be no extra equipment on the hobbyhorse other than the bridle. Ear covers, whips and any other equipment will lead to rejection.

JUDGES AND STAFF

At least one **judge** and an **assistant** (secretary) are required for dressage competitions. The number of judges may be higher - these judges are called letter judges. **The head judge** is sitting on C, the letter judges usually sit in the middle of the long side, and if there are more judges available for the course, they may also sit in the corners of the arena, but often 1-3 judges are sufficient. If there are more judges, the separate points will count the total number of points from all the present judge's papers together. **The judge's assistant** acts in accordance with the instructions of the judge and sits next to the judge as needed. The assistant calculates the total points and percentages as the class progresses and marks them directly on the computer if there is no computer in the judge's equipment. In the Finnish Championship class a computer is mandatory. The results are recorded either in Excel (recommended) or in Word / other text processor. In Excel, it is convenient to rank participants by ranking points. The assistant must therefore be able to calculate percentages, use Excel, Word or another text processing software. In addition, the assistant must learn the programs they are assisting. An assistant may also act as scribe if the judge rather dictated the criticism. The judge's assistant is an important addition to having a successful competition.

The following items are recommended for the judge's table to improve fluency:

- Blank sheets of paper
- Pens
- Calculator which manages percentage calculation
- Whistle for error situations.
- Enough tests sheets
- Computer / Laptop
- Entry list
- Camera. The camera is placed in front/behind of the judge's table to film the performance to help judging the performance so that the judge can return to see the test as a whole and make a more comprehensive assessment of the riding.

In addition to judges and assistants, other staff may include an *announcer*, an *arena supervisor*, an *equipment inspector*, a *potential cameraman*, and a *person to fix the arena if needed* (fallen fence / letter / distracting object in the arena). A bigger staff will guarantee a quick and smooth schedule. It is good for the staff to discuss the roles before the competition, so that everyone can manage their jobs without bigger problems.

This document of guidelines/rules applies to overall dressage and competitions in the dressage genre. The rules are used in the Finnish Championships and can be used and applied in lower level competitions. Guidelines for dressage are recommended for use in training.

Created by: Maikken (khtRaRa) 12.4.2018

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