

## Expected Standards for Dressage Tests

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### Grade 5

Grade 5 is for the youngest groups, say 8–10 years. It can be for beginner riders under 15 years, who are riding their first test and not yet capable of grade 4.

Grade 5 riders have very few riding skills. All they can do, or try to do, is make the pony go and keep it as nearly as possible on the required track. The better it goes forward for the rider the better it will follow the track and the straighter it will be. It is more important that the pony goes *where* the rider wishes rather than *how*. The judge should not be too concerned with details of position or correctness of the aids. The pony should be quiet and obedient. Incorrect diagonal or leading should not be penalised. Remarks should be simple and generous with their praise and every sheet should somewhere carry remarks that comment on the rider's ability or otherwise to fulfil the two basic requirements: "to keep the pony going at required speed and on the correct line."

### Grade 4

Grade 4 is for beginners 15 years and over and more experienced juniors.

The judge now expects the rider to be more balanced in their position, with better control of their hands and better application of the aids. The horse should go willingly forward. The rider who tries to get their horse near the corner and on the track should be marked more leniently than the rider who lets the horse take the line it chooses. The fact that the rider has to use the outside rein causing the horse to look to the outside is a minor detail at this grade.

At this grade, it is not always possible to achieve correct bend and flexion. The horse that goes quietly but lacks impulsion should mark better than one that is pulling and over bent. Riders should be rewarded for trying to do transitions on the markers.

**Increase the trot.** Riders should show a difference in energy and activity. Judges should show some leniency at grade 4 and early grade 3, as at these levels horses do not have to be on the bit, so will not be able to maintain rhythm and lengthening and will tend to run and quicken the stride. When asked to increase the trot the rider should be able to ride a reasonably straight diagonal, with the horse going forward more energetically, so that there is a difference from the working trot. If the horse does not lengthen the stride this should not be penalised at this grade.

As the rider progresses through the grades improvement should be made so by grades 1 and 2 the horse is expected to maintain rhythm and lengthen the stride.

**Free walk.** The horse should stretch out the neck and walk with long, relaxed, marching strides but would not be expected to maintain contact.

### Grade 3

Grade 3 is for more experienced juniors and less experienced senior riders. Experienced senior riders may ride young horses in this stage.

The rider should be starting to show an ability to influence the horse's way of going. This is possible due to a more balanced position, steadier hands and better understanding of application of the aids. The horse is not expected to be supple enough to go far into the corners as it may take uneven steps and bend its neck excessively and the smooth bend through the whole body is lost. The horse must not be ridden on too short a rein, which would result in short restricted paces, pulling, over bending and stiffness. There must be an obvious effort to ride the horse forward to contact on the bit with some resulting effect on the horse's frame. This does not have to be consistently maintained. At this grade riders should be able to ride accurate figures and transitions on the markers.

Consistent over bending throughout a movement should be penalised with a mark below 5, as insufficient, with corresponding loss in collective marks. However, momentary lapses behind the vertical should not outweigh correct work shown in other aspects. Any restriction of the horse's natural stride by the use of too short a rein is insufficient.

Every sheet should report on the success, or otherwise, of the rider's efforts to round the horse up while keeping him going. This is basic to any further progress in the horse's education.

## Grade 2

The rider should have a reasonably balanced position, be moderately steady in sitting trot, and demonstrate that they understand correct application of the aids. They should be able to ride forward to contact on the bit and be able to maintain a steady frame most of the time. There should be no drawing up of the legs when giving aids. More emphasis should be given to correct execution of transitions as well as accuracy. The horse should now show correct bend so corners and circles can be ridden without loss of rhythm and tempo. The rider should be improving in their ability to make the horse more active in his movements.

When doing "moderately lengthened strides" the rider should try to show a clear transition into and out of the movement, strides should lengthen and show a difference without loss of rhythm. The horse should be straight, but some loss of balance should not be heavily penalised.

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**Stretch on a Long Rein.** In order to execute the criteria "stretch on a long rein" the rider must lengthen the reins and the horse stretches gradually forward and down, but always maintains a steady contact with the rider's hands. During the taking up of the reins, the horse must accept the shortening of the reins without any kind of resistance in his poll. If the contact is correct the horse is supple, well balanced, relaxed and obedient.

**Leg yielding.** Refer to rule 9.11.

**Coefficient:** The number 2 in the coefficient column on the dressage score sheet doubles the mark given for that particular movement, to stress its importance in the training of the horse. As well as the free walk, a coefficient is applied to movements such as medium paces and transitions. This is to encourage riders to be more aware of the importance of these to the horse's basic paces.

## Grade 1

The judge should look for a well balanced and effective position that enables the rider to apply correct aids and influence the horse to achieve correct unrestricted paces. The horse should show free forward movement while going up to a steady contact on the bit. The roundness in the frame should be maintained throughout the test. Sitting trot should be established enough to obtain active engagement of the hindquarters. Transitions should be smooth and accurate with circles and corners executed correctly. There should be a general impression of harmony and balance of horse and rider.

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**Give the Reins.** The rider **while sitting upright** with seat remaining in the saddle pushes the hands forward towards the bit **momentarily** releasing the contact. This is done in the rhythm of the canter and the horse remains in the same outline and balance. The horse **does not** stretch his neck forward but shows he is in self carriage.

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