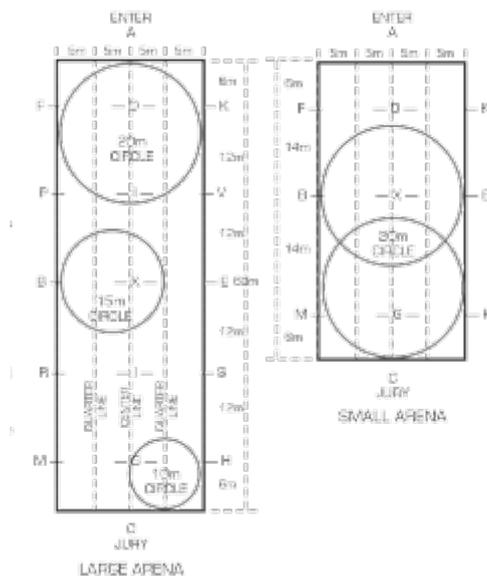


Dressage

- [General Dressage Rules\(Rule 569\)](#)
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- [Judge a Test\(Rule 571\)](#)
- [Dressage Tests at USEF Website](#)
- [Dressage Test Book at Dover Saddlery](#)



569. General Dressage Rules

- A. Attire - For Training through Fourth Levels is: A short riding coat of conservative color, with tie, choker or stock tie, breeches or jodhpurs, boots or jodhpur boots, and properly fastened protective headgear which meets or exceeds ASTM standards for equestrian use and carries SEI tag.
 1. Management may allow competitors to show without jackets in extreme heat (temperatures over 85 degrees). Must wear appropriate light colored shirt with long sleeves or short sleeves. No T-shirts.
 2. Competitors allowed to wear a hat cover and a clear or conservative color rain coat in inclement weather.
- B. Saddles and Equipment - An English type saddle with stirrups is mandatory at all

levels.

1. For Training through Third Levels and below a plain snaffle bridle and a regular cavesson, a dropped nose band, a flash noseband, a crescent nose band, or a crossed nose band are allowed. Noseband must be of leather or leather type material. Third Level and above, same as above, or simple double bridles with cavesson nose bands.
2. Bits - (See [Appendix A](#)) Green Mules must use approved snaffles. Bridled mules may use bits listed in ([Appendix A](#)). **Kimberwick, Pelham bits and twisted wire snaffles are not allowed in dressage.**
3. One whip no longer than 43.3 inches, or 110 cm, including lash, may be carried in all classes.
4. Spurs - English type spurs must be correctly placed on the boot, above the spur rest. Spurs not turned down, except for swan neck, is cause for elimination.

C. Procedures - Judging shall follow current USEF/USDF scoring and procedures.

1. Tests - Show shall state on entry form which tests will be designated green and bridled classes. Copies of the test should be provided to the exhibitors upon request. Current USEF/USDF tests shall be used. Tests change every four years, check USEF for current tests. Green or Amateur may use any training level test, Bridled shall use training level test 3 or any first level or above test to count for AMA year end points.
2. Participation - No mule may be ridden more than once in any Dressage class.
 - a. No mule may compete in any under saddle class if it is less than 36 months of age at time of competition.
 - b. Green mules may enter Training or First level only. Bridled mules may enter any level.
 - c. Mules may enter no more than two consecutive levels at one competition.
 - d. Any class restrictions shall be stated on the entry form.
3. Times - Show management shall draw for ride times prior to show date and make them available to contestants.
 - a. Competitor must be ready to ride at his/her scheduled time or may be eliminated. No competitor can be required to ride prior to his scheduled time.
 - b. Any competitor who does not enter the arena within 45 seconds after the entry bell is rung for his/her ride shall be eliminated.
4. In a movement which must be carried out at a certain point of the arena, it should be done at the moment when the competitor's body is at the letter.

D. Scoring - After each performance and after judge has given all marks, judges' sheets pass to scorers.

1. Show management shall add each test twice, and post the scores within one hour of completion of each class.
 - a. Any math errors discovered on score sheet must be brought to the attention of show management within 1 hour of posting of scores from last class of that show day.
 - b. Judge is free to leave after one hour of posting the scores in order to resolve any errors or ties.
2. Errors - When an "error of course" (takes a wrong turn, omits a movement, etc.) occurs the judge warns by sounding a bell, and may show the point at which the rider must take up the test again and the next movement to be executed. If bell would impede the fluency of the performance, the judge may decide whether or not to ring bell. If judge did not ring bell and movement is repeated and error occurs again only one error is recorded.
 - a. When "error of the test" (rising trot instead of sitting, salutes without reins in one hand, etc.) is made; it is penalized as for an "error of course."
 - b. Competitor is not allowed to repeat a movement of the test unless the judge decides on an error of course (rings the bell). If, however, the rider has started the execution of a movement and tried to do same movement again, the judge must consider the first movement shown only and, at the same time, penalties for an error of course.
 - c. If the judge has not noted an error, the competitor has the benefit of the doubt.

E. Arena - Should be on as level ground as possible. Arena should be separated from the public by at least 15 meters (49.5 feet)

1. Standard arena 60×20 meters, small 40×20 meters. The standard arena must be used for first level and above.
2. Dressage fence should be low, about 12" high. Should be such to prevent hooves from becoming entangled. Fence at 'A' can remain open but letter 'A' must be at least 5 meters away from arena.
3. Letters should be outside enclosure about 0.5 meters away and clearly marked. A red marker may be placed against or painted on the fence to aid the judge.
4. The judge shall be seated (5) meters from the end of arena opposite letter 'C'.
5. Suitable warm up area must be provided.

F. Object and General Principles.

1. The object of Dressage is the harmonious development of the physique and ability of the mule. As a result he is calm, supple, loose and flexible but also confident, attentive and keen thus achieving perfect understanding with his rider.

2. These qualities are revealed by:
 - a. The freedom and regularity of the gaits.
 - b. The harmony, lightness and ease of movements.
 - c. The lightness of the forehand and the engagement of the hindquarters, originating in lively impulsion.
 - d. The acceptance of the bridle with submissiveness throughout and without any tenseness or resistance.
3. The mule thus gives the impression of doing of his own accord what is required of him. Confident and attentive he submits generously to the control of his rider remaining absolutely straight in any movement on a straight line and bending accordingly when moving on a curved line.
4. His walk is regular, free and unconstrained. His trot is free, supple, regular, sustained and active. His canter is united, light and cadenced. His quarters are never inactive or sluggish. They respond to the slightest indication of rider and gives life and spirit to the whole body.
5. By virtue of a lively impulsion and suppleness of his joints, free from the paralyzing effects of resistance the mule obeys willingly and without hesitation and responds to aids calmly and with precision, displaying a natural and harmonious balance both physically and mentally.
6. In all his work even at the halt the mule must be on the bit. A mule is said to be on the bit when the neck is more or less raised and arched according to the stage of training and the extension or collection of the gait and he accepts the bridle with a light and soft contact and submissive throughout. The head should remain in a steady position as a rule slightly in front of the vertical with a supple poll as the highest point of the neck and no resistance should be offered to the rider.
7. Cadence is shown in trot and canter and is the result of the proper harmony that a mule shows when it moves with well marked regularity, impulsion and balance. Cadence must be maintained in all the different trot and canter exercises and all the variations of trot and canter.
8. The rhythm that a mule maintains in all his gaits and paces is fundamental to dressage.

G. Definition of Gaits:

1. Halt - Mule shall stand attentive, engaged, motionless and straight with weight evenly over all four legs. Neck raised, poll high and head slightly in front of the vertical. While remaining on the bit with light and soft contact, mule may quietly chomp bit and be ready to move off at slightest cue.
2. Walk - Marching pace in which footfalls of feet follow one another in "four time" well marked and maintained. When the foreleg and the hindleg on the same side

move almost on the same beat the walk tends to become an almost lateral movement. This irregularity is a serious deterioration of the gait. It is at the gait of walk that the imperfections of Dressage are most evident.

- a. Collected walk - remaining "on the bit" moving forward with neck raised and arched. Head near vertical, light contact on the bit. Hind legs engaged with good hock action. Pace is marching and vigorous, shorter steps but higher with more action than medium walk.
 - b. Medium walk - clear, regular and unconstrained walk of moderate lengthening, energetically, but calm with even and determined steps. The hind feet touching the ground in front of the prints of the forefeet. Steady contact with mouth.
 - c. Extended walk - covering as much ground as possible without haste or loss of regularity of steps. Hind feet over reach prints of forefeet. Rider allows mule to stretch out head and neck without losing contact with mouth.
 - d. Free walk - pace of relaxation in which mule is allowed complete freedom to lower and stretch out head and neck. The degree of ground cover and length of strides, with hind feet stepping clearly in front of the footprints of the front feet, are essential to the quality of the free walk.
3. Trot - two beat pace on alternate diagonal legs separated by a moment of suspension. Always with free, active and regular steps, should be moved into without hesitation. Elastic steps with supple back and well engaged hindquarters, maintaining the same rhythm and natural balance through transitions.
- a. Collected trot - on the bit, with neck raised and arched. Shorter steps but lighter and more mobile.
 - b. Working trot - between collected and medium trot, properly balanced, even, good hock action and impulsion.
 - c. Medium trot - between working and extended trots "but more round". Forward with free and moderately extended steps and obvious impulsion from the hindquarters.
 - d. Extended trot - covers as much ground as possible. Maintaining the same cadence he lengthens his steps to the utmost as a result of great impulsion from the hindquarters. Remains on the bit without leaning on it to lengthen his frame and to gain ground. Balanced and unconstrained.
 - e. All trot work is executed sitting unless otherwise indicated in the test concerned.
4. Canter- gait of "three time", where at canter to the right, for instance, the footfalls follow one another as follows: left hind, left diagonal (simultaneously left fore and right hind), right fore, followed by a moment of suspension with all four

feet off the ground before the next stride begins. Light, cadenced, and regular strides, should be moved into without hesitation. Acceptance of bridle with supple poll and engagement of the hindquarters and active hock action.

- a. Collected canter - lightness of forehand and engaged behind. Characterized by supple, free and mobile shoulders and very active hindquarters. Shorter strides than other canters but lighter and more mobile.
 - b. Working canter - on the bit, balanced, forward light cadenced strides. Between collected and medium. Good hock action showing impulsion.
 - c. Medium canter - free, balanced, moderately extended strides and obvious impulsion from behind. Strides longer with movement balanced and unconstrained. Slightly lower head and neck.
 - d. Extended canter - covers as much ground as possible. Strides lengthened to their utmost without losing calmness or lightness. On the bit without leaning, lowers and extends head and neck, nose forward.
 - e. Change of lead through the trot - mule is brought back into the trot and after a few trot strides is restarted into the canter, with the other leg leading.
 - f. Simple change of lead - brought back immediately into a walk, and after a few clearly defined steps, is restarted immediately into a canter on the opposite lead, with no steps at the trot.
 - g. Flying change of lead - executed during suspension before next stride. Remains light, calm and straight with lively impulsion, maintains same rhythm and balance throughout.
5. Rein Back - equilateral, reverse movement in which feet are raised and set down almost simultaneously by diagonal pairs. Feet well raised and the hind feet remain well in line. On bit maintaining desire to move forward.
- a. Anticipation, resistance or evasion, not straight line, spreading or inactive hind legs, and dragging forefeet are serious faults. If trot or canter required after rein back, should move off immediately without halt or intermediate step.
6. Transitions - Changes of pace and speed should be clearly shown at the prescribed marker. They should be quickly made but smooth and not abrupt. Cadence of pace should be maintained up to the moment when the pace is changed or the mule halts. Remain light in hand, calm and maintain a correct position.
7. Change of Direction - mule should adjust the bend of his body to the curve of line he is following, remaining supple without resistance or change of pace, rhythm or speed.

8. Counter-Canter- This is a movement where the rider, for instance on a circle to the left, deliberately makes his mule canter with the right canter lead (with the right fore leading). The counter-canter is a balancing movement. The mule maintains his natural flexion at the poll to the outside of the circle, and the horse is positioned to the side of the leading leg.
9. Collective Marks.
 - a. Gaits- freedom and regularity.
 - b. Impulsion- desire to move forward, elastically of the steps, suppleness of the back, engagement of the hindquarters.
 - c. Submission- attention and confidence, lightness and ease of movements, acceptance of the bridle, lightness on the forehead.
 - d. Riders Position and Seat.
 - e. Riders correct and effective use of aids.
 - f. Harmony between rider and mule.

H. Execution of Tests.

1. Calling Tests, all tests may be called during the competition. Responsibility of competitor to arrange for a person to announce the test. Limited to reading the movement as it is written once only, unless there is doubt of it being heard.
2. Salute. Rider must take the reins in one hand. One arm shall drop loosely at body and incline head in slight bow. Gentlemen shall remove hat.
3. Voice. Using the voice in any way or clicking the tongue once or repeatedly is a serious fault. A deduction of at least 2 marks from those that would have been awarded for the movement where this occurred.
4. Lameness incurs elimination without appeal.

570. Classes/Levels of Competition

- A. Training Level - Confirms that the mule has received proper dressage training as a result of which its muscles are supple and loose, it moves freely forward in clear and steady rhythm, accepting the bit.
- B. First Level - Confirms that the mule, having demonstrated that it has achieved the standard of Training Level (see above), has developed thrust (pushing power) to achieve improved balance and thoroughness and to maintain a more consistent contact with the bit.
- C. Second Level - Having demonstrated that it has achieved the thrust required in the First Level, mule now accepts more weight on the hindquarters (collection); moves with an uphill tendency, especially in the medium gaits; and is reliably on the bit. A greater degree of straightness, bending, suppleness, thoroughness, balance and self

carriage is required than at First Level.

- D. Third Level - Having achieved the requirements of Training, First and Second Levels, demonstrates in each movement, especially in the medium and extended paces and in transitions to and from collected movements, rhythm, suppleness, acceptance of the bit, impulsion, straightness and collection. There must be a clear distinction between paces.
- E. Fourth Level - These tests are of medium difficulty designed to confirm that the mule has acquired a high degree of suppleness, impulsion, balance and lightness while always remaining reliably on the bit, and that its movements are straight, energetic and cadenced with the transitions precise and smooth.

571. Judge a Test

- A. The mark for each movement should establish whether the movement is marginal (5 or below) or higher. A reason should be given for marks 6 and below.
- B. Accuracy should only be a factor if inaccuracy avoids the difficulty of the movement, i.e., a larger circle avoids the difficulty of a 10 meter circle.
- C. If a problem appears once it may be treated lightly, if it appears successively the judge will score it more harshly each time.
- D. Grinding of teeth and wringing of tail are signs of tenseness on the part of the mule and should be considered in the marks for each movement where they appear.
- E. Levels of dressage are offered as a means of evaluating a mule that is changing and shall be considered in light of the degree of training that should have been achieved to be shown at that level.
- F. In the case of a fall of mule or rider the competitor will be eliminated.
- G. If the mule leaves the arena, all four feet between entry and exit the competitor will be eliminated.
- H. A test begins with the entry at A and ends with the final salute. Anything else has no effect on marks.
- I. Mules that enter the arena with tongues tied down will be eliminated.
- J. The judge may stop a test and/or allow a restart from beginning or any appropriate point in the test if, in his/her discretion, some unusual circumstance has occurred to interrupt a test.
- K. Any resistance which prevents the continuation of the test longer than 20 seconds is punished by elimination.
- L. All movements and certain transitions from one to another which have to be marked by the judge(s) are numbered on the judge's sheets. They are marked 0 to 10, 0 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

M. The scale of marks is as follows:

- 10 Excellent
- 9 Very Good
- 8 Good
- 7 Fairly Good
- 6 Satisfactory
- 5 Marginal
- 4 Insufficient
- 3 Fairly Bad
- 2 Bad
- 1 Very Bad
- 0 Not Executed
- “Not Executed” means that practically nothing of the required movement has been performed.