

## Helpful definitions from the USEF rulebook:

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

### **The Halt.**

At the halt the horse should stand attentive, engaged, motionless and straight with the weight evenly distributed over all four legs being by pairs abreast with each other. The neck should be raised, the poll high and the head slightly in front of the vertical. While remaining on the bit and maintaining a light and soft contact with the rider's hand, the horse may quietly chomp the bit and should be ready to move off at the slightest indication of the rider

### **The Walk.**

1. The walk is a marching gait in which the footfalls of the horse's feet follow one another in "four time", well marked and maintained in all work at the walk.
2. 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, which might become an ambling movement, is a serious deterioration of the gait.
3. It is at the gait of walk that the imperfections of Dressage are most evident.
4. The following walks are recognized: collected walk, medium walk, extended walk and free walk.

**Medium walk.** A clear, regular and unconstrained walk of moderate lengthening. The horse, remaining on the bit, walks energetically but calmly with even and determined steps, the hind feet touching the ground in front of the footprints of the forefeet. The rider maintains a light, soft and steady contact with the mouth.

**Free Walk.** The free walk is a pace of relaxation in which the horse is allowed complete freedom to lower and stretch out his head and neck.

### **DR104 The Trot.**

The trot is a gait of "two time" on alternate diagonal legs (near left fore and right hind leg and vice versa) separated by a moment of suspension.

4. The following trots are recognized: working trot, collected trot, medium trot and extended trot. Both passage and piaffe are variations of the trot.

**Collected Trot.** The horse remaining on the bit moves forward with his neck raised and arched. The hocks being well engaged maintain an energetic impulsion thus enabling the shoulders to move with greater ease in any direction. The horse's steps are shorter than in the other trots but he is lighter and more mobile.

**Working Trot. This is a pace between the collected and the medium trot in which a horse not yet trained and ready for collected movements shows himself properly balanced and, remaining on the bit, goes forward with even, elastic steps and good hock action.**

**Medium Trot.** This is a pace between the working and the extended trot but more "round" than the latter. The horse goes forward with clear and moderately lengthened steps and with an obvious impulsion from the hindquarters. The rider allows the horse remaining on the bit to carry his head a little more in front of the vertical than at the collected and the working trot and allows him at the same time to lower his head and neck slightly.

**Extended Trot.** The horse 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. The rider allows the horse remaining on the bit without leaning on it to lengthen his frame and to gain ground.

After Training Level, all trot work is executed sitting unless otherwise indicated in the test concerned.

### **The Canter.**

The canter is a 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 movement of suspension with all four feet in the air before the next stride begins. The canter always with light, cadenced and regular strides, should be moved into without hesitation.

The quality of the canter is judged by the general impression, the regularity and lightness of the three time gait originated in the acceptance of the bridle with a supple poll and in the engagement of the hindquarters with an active hock action and by the ability of maintaining the same rhythm and a natural balance even after a transition from one canter to another. The horse should always remain straight on straight lines.

The following canters are recognized: working canter, collected canter, medium canter and extended canter.

**Collected Canter.** The horse remaining on the bit moves forward with his neck raised and arched. The collected canter is marked by the lightness of the forehead and the engagement of the hindquarters: i.e., is characterized by supple, free and mobile shoulders and very active quarters. The horse's strides are shorter than at the other canters but he is lighter and more mobile.

**Working Canter.** This is a pace between the collected and the medium canter in which a horse, not yet trained and ready for collected movements, shows himself properly balanced and remaining on the bit, goes forward with even, light and cadenced strides and good hock action.

**Medium Canter.** This is a pace between the working and the extended canter. The horse goes forward with free, balanced and moderately extended strides and an obvious impulsion from the hindquarters. The rider allows the horse remaining on the bit to carry his head a little more in front of the vertical than at the collected and working canter and allows him at the same time to lower his head and neck slightly. The strides should be long and as even as possible and the whole movement balanced and unconstrained.

**Extended Canter.** The horse covers as much ground as possible. Maintaining the same rhythm he lengthens his strides to the utmost without losing any of his calmness and lightness as a result of great impulsion from the hindquarters. The rider allows the horse remaining on the bit without leaning on it to lower and extend his head and neck; the tip of his nose pointing more or less forward.

### **Transitions.**

The changes of gait and pace should be clearly shown at the prescribed marker; they should be quickly made yet must be smooth and not abrupt. The cadence of a gait or pace should be maintained up to the moment when the gait or pace is changed or the horse halts. The horse should remain light in hand, calm and maintain a correct position.

### **Half-Halt.**

The half-halt is a hardly visible, almost simultaneous, coordinated action of the seat, the legs and the hand of the rider, with the object of increasing the attention and balance of the horse before the execution of several movements or transitions between gaits or paces. In shifting slightly more weight onto the horse's quarters, the engagement of the hind legs and the balance on the haunches are facilitated for the benefit of the lightness of the forehead and the horse's balance as a whole.

### **Changes of Direction.**

At changes of direction the horse should adjust the bend of his body to the curvature of the line he follows remaining supple and following the indications of the rider without any resistance or change of gait, rhythm or speed.

**Stretching the Frame.** The horse gradually takes the reins, stretching forward and downward with light contact, while maintaining balance, rhythm and tempo and quality of the gait.

**Submission**

Submission does not mean subordination, but an obedience revealing its presence by a constant attention, willingness and confidence in the whole behavior of the horse as well as by the harmony, lightness and ease he is displaying in the execution of the different movements. The degree of submission is also manifested by the way the horse accepts the bridle; with a light and soft contact, a supple poll or with resistance to or evasion of the rider's hand; being either above the bit or behind the bit respectively. Putting out the tongue, keeping it above the bit or drawing it up altogether as well as grinding the teeth and swishing the tail are mostly signs of nervousness, tenseness or 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 in the collective mark for submission.

**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 to be guided by a gentle contact with the rider's hand. Speed, of itself, has little to do with impulsion: the result is more often a flattening of the gaits. A prime ingredient of impulsion is the time the horse spends in the air rather than on the ground.

**Common School Figures**

