HORSESPORT AUSTRALIA

Dressage Rules

Effective: January 2026

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Dressage Events

PREAMBLE

HorseSport Australia (HSA) has adopted the following rules and these rules must be followed by all organisations running HSA Dressage Events.

The sporting spirit whilst adhering as closely as possible to the intention of these Rules, so providing fair conditions for all Competitors is the aim of these rules. In any unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, it is the duty of the Ground Jury (GJ) or the Organising Committee (OC) to make a final decision.

The broadest possible spirit has been considered to allow Organising Committees the fullest freedom in the management of their events and in the preparation of their Programs. Fair and equal conditions for competitors are established in these rules.

These Rules must be read when in conjunction with all Rules and Regulations of HSA.

1. OFFICIAL DRESSAGE TESTS

1.1. USDF (United States Dressage Federation) Tests or equivalent may be used. Other suitable tests may be used at the discretion of the OC.

2. COMMANDED TESTS

2.1. Tests may be called at HSA Dressage Events. Refer Dressage Rule 21.3

3. COPIES OF TESTS

3.1. Copies of the USDF Tests are available on their website. https://www.usdf.org/downloads/forms/index.asp?TypePass=Tests

3.2. The Dressage Tests used by HSA may be changed periodically and it is the responsibility of Competitors, Judges and Organisers to ensure that the currently recommended or available tests are used.

4. JUDGES

4.1. Suitably qualified Judges may be used at the OC's discretion to judge at HSA events unless there are extenuating circumstances and prior written approval is given by HSA.

4.2. It is strongly recommended that two Judges be used for Elementary (or equivalent) and above.

4.2.1. Where there are two or more judges judging the same test, and the result shows a variance in percentage equal to or greater than 8%, the judges must discuss the test in question. Scorers are to alert judges to the variance as soon as possible following completion of the class and provide copies of the tests to assist the discussion. No changes will be made to the marks.

4.3. Judges should be appropriately qualified and experienced for the level they are judging.

4.4. Judges should be positioned around the arena as follows:

C. On the short side, five metres out from the arena on the prolongation of the centre line.

M. On the short side, five metres out from the arena, 2.5 metres in from the prolongation of the long side.

H. On the short side, five metres out from the arena, 2.5 metres in from the prolongation of the long side.

E & B On the long side, 5m out from the arena

4.5. The Chief Judge must be placed at C. When two Judges are used, they should be placed at C and either M, H, E or B.

4.6. Judges must be provided with a Penciller/Scorer and paper or electronic scoring is allowed.

4.7. All Pencillers/Scorers should be provided with a copy of Dressage Rules.

4.8. A Judge should not be asked to judge in excess of 35 Competitors on any one day. However, this is at the discretion of the Judge.

4.9. Competitors must not compete under a Judge who:

- Is the current owner of the competitor's horse,
- Has owned the competitor's horse within the past 12 months,
- Is an immediate relative of the competitor or
- Is a trainer or pupil of the competitor.

Notes: A trainer is defined as a person regularly:

4.9.1. Ie. Six hours of lessons or more in the previous three months train

4.9.2. Coaches a horse, rider or combination (not necessarily for renumeration).

4.9.3. Instruction received at Club training activities is not a breach of this rule.

5. WARM-UP AREA

5.1. An area must be set aside for Competitors to use for warming-up purposes. If the area is fenced it must be done in a manner which does not pose a hazard to the safety of horse and rider.

6. RIDING IN WARM-UP AND TRAINING AREAS

6.1. Warm-up arenas may be entered by horse either ridden or led but not the competition arena, except when actually competing in a Competition. Failure to comply with this rule will result in penalty of elimination. This Rule applies also when Competition arenas are erected on the days preceding an event.

7. LUNGING OF HORSES

7.1. Horses may be lunged in the warm up and training areas. The following equipment is allowed - One or two direct side reins. Double sliding side reins, bearing, running or balancing reins are not permitted when lunging or riding, under penalty of elimination.
7.2. Lunging cavessons are permitted.
7.3. Long reining is not allowed. Only 1 lunge rein.
7.4. Snaffle with a cavesson, Hanoverian or a normal dropped noseband, Mexican noseband or a Flash noseband, running martingales (with snaffle only), boots and bandages are permitted whilst lunging.
7.5. Double bridles may not be used whilst lunging.
7.6. Mounted riders are not permitted whilst lunging anywhere at the event.

8. ARENAS

8.1. 60 x 20 metre arenas are used for all tests and ridden individually.
8.2. Arenas should be set out to the dimensions shown in the diagram in Notes to Assist Riders.
8.3. The arena should be level and separated from the public by a distance all round of 10 metres if possible; but a minimum of at least 5 metres is required. This includes between arenas.
8.4. The arena must be marked by a (continuous) surround not exceeding 0.5 metres high. It may be marked in the following ways:

a) Portable, prefabricated, arena specific materials such as plastic or timber boards or PVC pipes supported by plastic stands,

b) Lengths of suspended plastic chain.
c) Fixed, rounded edging including timber telegraph poles, heavy duty, flexible poly pipe (such edging to be a minimum of 25cm diameter) or a low wooden fence.
d) The following requirements must be observed:
    - Surrounds to be stable enough to withstand moderately windy conditions,
    - Materials to be in a contrasting colour to the arena surface,
    - Where the surround is suspended from uprights, it must be clearly off the ground, temporary poles may be placed on the ground,
    - The following materials may not be used in the construction of an arena:
    - Electric fencing tape, rope, plasticized cable or other similar, continuous, unbreakable product.
    - Driven in stakes or steel droppers.

9. MARKERS

9.1. The letters outside the enclosure should be placed approximately 0.5 metres from the fence and clearly marked.

9.2. A gap of one metre each side of the centre line must be left at 'A' to form an entrance and the 'A' marker placed far enough back (10 metres if possible) to allow the Competitors to enter the arena on a straight track.

10. INSPECTION OF AREAS

10.1. The Judge must check that the arena is satisfactory and, if necessary, have it modified at their discretion prior to commencement of the competition. Once the Competition has commenced, the conditions must stay (as far as possible) the same for the following Competitors.

11. SADDLERY AND EQUIPMENT

11.1. It is the Competitor's responsibility to abide by the Rules. Failure to comply will incur elimination.

11.2. Only saddlery and equipment specified within these Rules is permitted in competitions.

12. SADDLES

12.1. Any type of English saddle may be used. Dressage saddles are preferred.

12.2. Saddles may be used with or without a saddle cloth. Saddle cloths may be square or shaped.
12.3. Saddles must be secured by at least two points of attachment (eg: double buckle girth or girth and surcingle).
12.4. Breastplates and fore-girths are permitted.
12.5. A crupper may be worn.
12.6. Saddle covers (such as sheepskin or rain covers) shall not be used in a test.
12.7. Safety stirrups and enhancements, including toe stoppers are permitted.
12.8. Lock in stirrups, stirrup tie downs and magnetised stirrups are not permitted.

13. BRIDLES

13.1. A snaffle bridle is compulsory for all tests up to and including Elementary (or equivalent level). A snaffle bridle is an English-type bridle with a single snaffle-type bit and one set of reins. Reins can be made of leather, cotton synthetic or a mix of these materials. There must be no elastic inserts, loops or otherwise along the length of the rein. Padding is permitted under bridles as long as it is securely attached, but any padding used must be discreet and applied to the underside of the bridle only. One eared bridles are not permitted.
13.2. Competitions at Medium (or equivalent level) have the option of using a bridle with a snaffle bit or a double bridle. A double bridle is an English-type bridle with a bridoon (snaffle) bit and a curb bit with curb chain (metal or leather or a combination), both fitted with a set of reins.
13.3. A Micklem Competition bridle with snaffle bit (pictured) may be used in all levels. The optional bit attachment (bit clip) is not permitted.

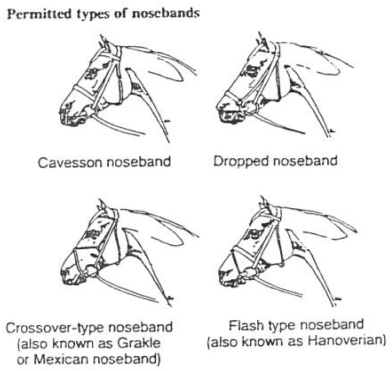
14. NOSEBANDS

14.1. Wearing of a noseband is optional. Permitted nosebands are illustrated below. The wearing of two nosebands simultaneously or the wearing of non-approved nosebands is not permitted.
14.2. The following nosebands may be used on a snaffle bridle:

- Cavesson noseband
- Dropped noseband
- Flash (or Hanoverian) noseband
- Crossed (Grackle or Mexican) Noseband

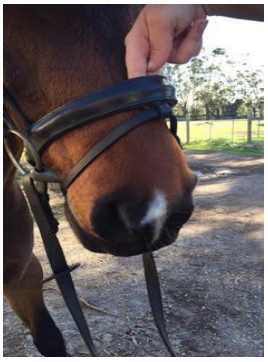
14.3. Only a Cavesson noseband shall be used with a double bridle.

14.4. Nosebands and curb chains must never be so tightly fixed as to harm the horse or interfere with the horse's breathing. Two fingers should be easily inserted under the noseband on the bridge of the nose – see photo. An Official may direct the rider to demonstrate that the noseband is correctly fitted. The Ground Jury shall rule on the fit of nosebands in cases where the rider refuses to comply with this rule.



15. SNAFFLE BITS

Double bridle with cavesson noseband Bridoon bit and curb with curb chain

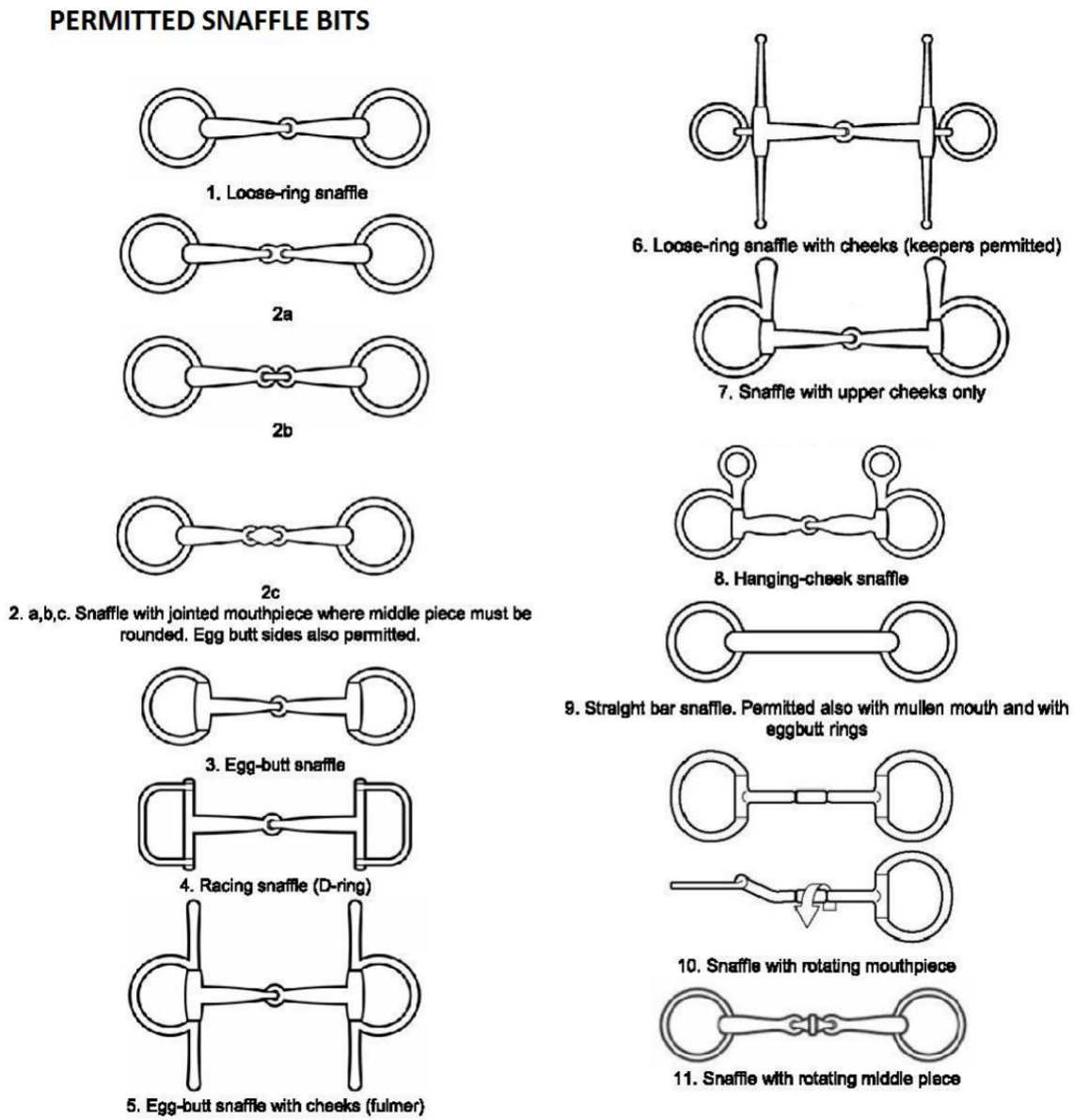


15.1. Only snaffle bits having combinations of the following features are approved for use in Dressage Tests. The use of non-approved bit/s or incorrect thickness of bits will result in elimination. Snaffle bits and bridoons must meet the following criteria:

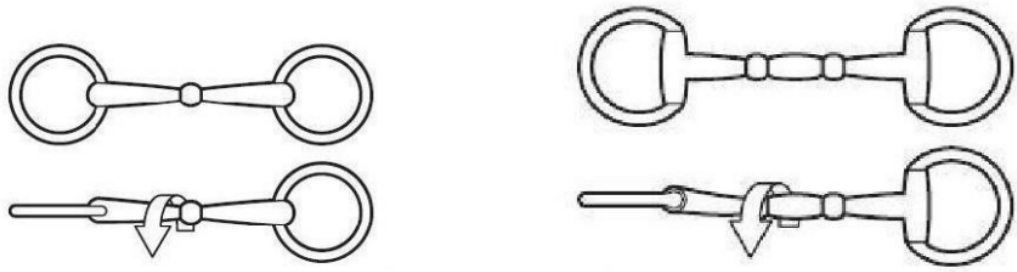
a) Snaffle bits shall be composed of metal (combination of metals allowed) or rigid plastic and may be covered with rubber or latex as per manufactured state.
b) Bits made solely of rubber (fully flexible) or rubber and chain, are not permitted.
c) The minimum diameter of the mouthpiece is 10mm.
d) The diameter of the mouthpiece is measured adjacent to the rings or the cheeks of the mouthpiece.
e) Forward curved bits are permitted but not with hanging cheeks and must have a joint (centrepiece must move) and can have fixed or loose rings.
f) The rein must be free to move on the bit ring and must not be fixed to any secondary ring or 'hook'
g) Hanging cheeks (Baucher-type) are permitted (single or double joint).
h) Mouthpieces may be the same thickness or tapered towards the centre or central joints.
i) There shall not be more than two joints in the mouthpiece.
j) Double-jointed mouth pieces may have one 'roller', or rotating middle piece, in the centre section. Multiple 'rollers' are not permitted.
k) No ridged, sharp or corrugated parts coming into the horse's mouth are allowed. Only rounded, smooth parts is allowed.

15.2. Bits with gag action are not permitted.
15.3. Bit guards and cheekers are not permitted.
15.4. Wrapping of bits is not permitted.
15.5. A Pelham bit is not permitted in any dressage test.
15.6. Port mouth bits are permitted.

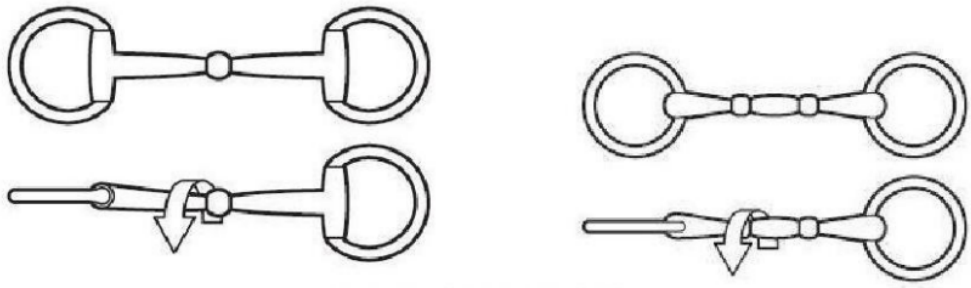
Keeping with the definition above, some of the types of bits permitted are described and illustrated above.



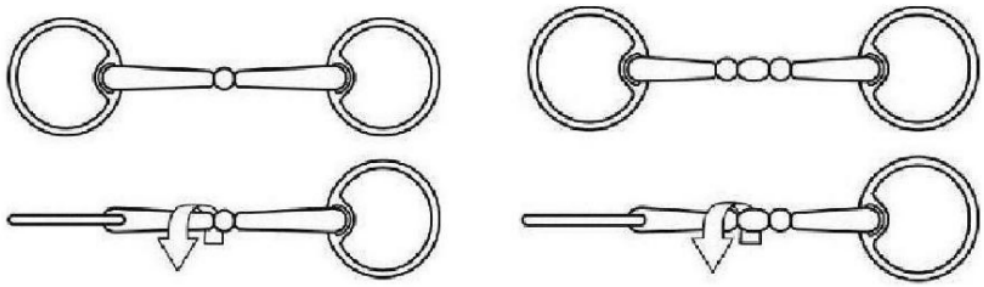
Rotary Bits – Single Jointed **Rotary Bits – Double Jointed**



12. Rotary bit with rotating middle piece



12. Rotary bit with rotating middle piece



13 Rotary bit with rotating middle piece and looped rings

Also permitted but not illustrated are:

- Half moon – port mouthed – curved mouthpiece (i.e.: a consistent curve from the rings),
- Rubber or synthetic bits – covering metal (but not chain) both jointed and unjointed,
- Sweet iron bit,
- Snaffle bit with a port between the rings is permitted.

16. DOUBLE BRIDLE

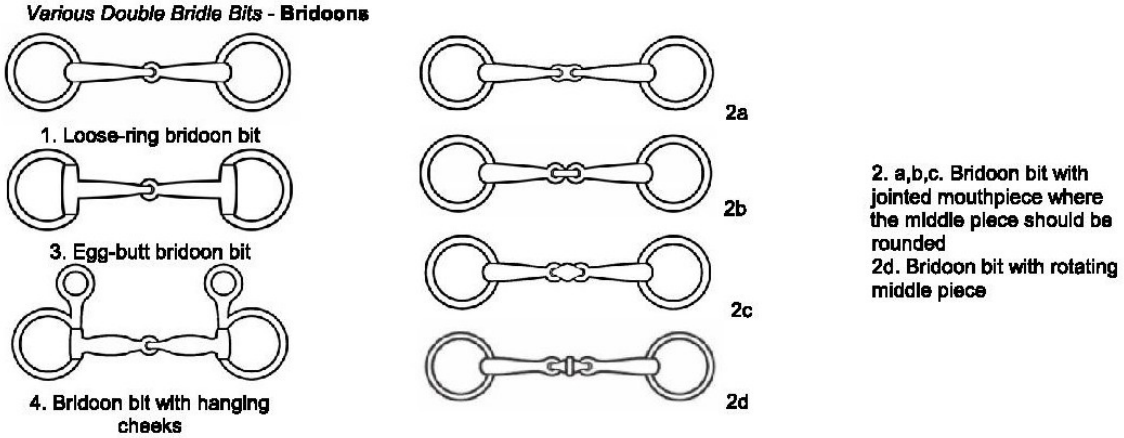
16.1. A double bridle is an English-type bridle with a bridoon (snaffle) bit and a curb bit and curb chain (metal or leather or a combination), both fitted with a set of reins. The upper cheek must not be longer than the lower cheek.

16.2. A double bridle is optional for Medium and Advanced Level (or equivalent levels).

16.3. If metal bits are used, all parts of the bit coming into the horse's mouth must be of metal (not necessarily the same metal).

16.4. **BRIDOON** – only bridoons having combinations of the following features are permitted:

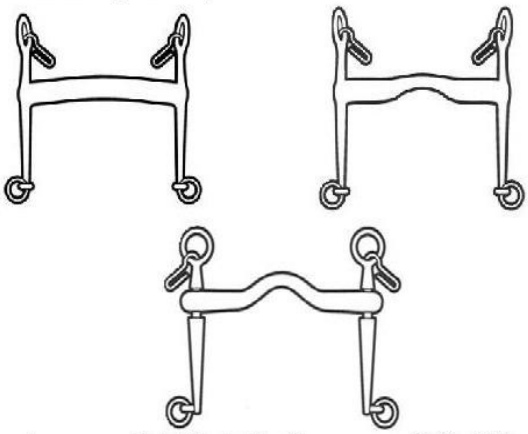
a) Must be made of metal or rigid plastic and may be covered with rubber/latex (manufactured state).
b) Bits made only of rubber or rubber and chain are not permitted.
c) The minimum diameter of the mouthpiece is 10mm.
d) Double-jointed mouthpieces may have one 'roller', or rotating middle piece, in the centre section. Multiple 'rollers' are not permitted.
e) Wrapping of bit with any kind of material is not permitted
f) Flexible rubber bits are not permitted.
g) The diameter of the mouthpiece must be such so as not to hurt the horse.
h) The minimum is stated above. Permitted Bridoon bits illustrated below.



16.5. **CURB** - The curb bit must be of a type as detailed in the illustrations below.

a) The curb must be made of metal or rigid plastic and may be covered with rubber (manufactured state).
b) Bits made only of rubber or rubber and chain no permitted.
c) The upper cheek must not be longer than the lower cheek.
d) Curb 'chain' can be made of metal, leather or a combination. Cover for curb 'chain' can be made of leather, rubber or sheep skin. Curb chain hooks may be fixed.
e) The curb chain must be correctly fitted (must lie flat against the horse's chin).
f) The minimum diameter of the mouthpiece is 12mm.
g) The lever arm of the curb bit is limited to 10cm (length below the mouth piece).
h) If the curb has a sliding mouthpiece, the lever arm of the curb bit below the mouth piece should not measure more than 10cm when the mouth piece is at the uppermost position.

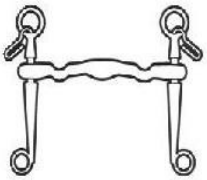
Curbs (curb chain hooks may be fixed)



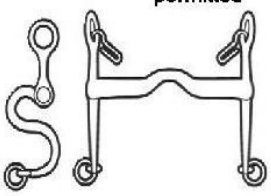
5. Half-moon curb bit

6.+7. Curb bit with straight cheeks and port

8. Curb bit with port and sliding mouthpiece (Weymouth). A curb bit with rotating lever arm also permitted



9. Variation of bits no. 6, 7 and 8

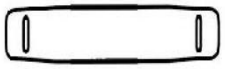


10. Curb bit with S-curved cheeks

16.6. Optional items (not compulsory)
- Lip strap
- Leather cover for curb chain
- Rubber cover for curb chain

12. Lip strap

13. Leather cover for curb chain



14. Rubber or sheep skin cover for curb chain.

15. Curb chain (metal, leather or combination) – refer to 2.11.2

17. SHOES, BOOTS AND BANDAGES

17.1. Horses are not required to be shod.
17.2. Glued on shoes or shells are permitted provided the bulbs of the heels and the coronet bands are clearly visible. Removable over boots / hoof boots satisfying the above design requirements are permitted.
17.3. Protective coverings such as boots and/or bandages are permitted in the warm-up but are not permitted in the competition arena.
17.4. Any form of protective skin covering on the horse such as plaster/tape/belly-band covering or towel, whether the skin is broken or not, is strictly forbidden at an event when the horse is under saddle during training, warm-up and competition and will entail elimination.

18. SPURS

18.1. Spurs are allowed
18.2. Spurs, if worn, must be identical on both sides – they must be a pair.
18.3. Spurs must be made of metal or hard plastic.
18.4. A curved or straight shank must point directly back from the centre of the spur when on the rider's boot; rowels also must point directly back from the centre of the spur.
18.5. The tip of the shank must not point inwards.
18.6. The arms of the spur must be smooth.
18.7. If rowels are used, they must be blunt/smooth and free to rotate.
18.8. Daisy rowels are permitted.
18.9. Rowels must be in a vertical plane.

18.10. Soft touch spurs with a rolling ball on either plane are permitted.
18.11. Metal spurs with hard plastic knobs are permitted.
18.12. Dummy spurs with no shank are permitted.
18.13. Impuls spurs are permitted.
18.14. Spursuaders are permitted.
18.15. Swan neck spurs are permitted.
18.16. Non-compliance or incorrect spurs will entail elimination

19. WHIPS

19.1. A whip not exceeding 1.2 metres in its entirety (including the compulsory tassel or flap) may be carried in all tests.

20. MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

20.1. Running martingales, correctly fitted with stopper/keepers on the reins and neck strap, may be used in Preparatory and Preliminary only. Running martingales may be used on other horses in warms up arenas and training areas but not in tests.
20.2. Monkey grips are permitted and neck straps are permitted at all levels with at least one attachment to the saddle.
20.3. Standing martingales, ear plugs and blinkers and are not permitted in warm up or training areas or in Tests under penalty of elimination.
20.4. Nose nets are permitted to be used in competitions and warm-up.
20.5. Ear bonnets are permitted and may also provide noise reduction. However, ear bonnets must not cover the horse's eyes, must not be attached to the noseband and ear plugs are not permitted. Spot checks for ear plugs may be conducted at the completion of the test by the Gear Steward, Technical Delegate, Judge or Ground Jury.

21. EXECUTION OF TESTS

21.1. All movements contained in Tests must be executed in the order laid down in the Test. In a movement, which must be carried out at a certain point of the arena, it is at the moment when a rider's body is above this point that the movement must be executed.
21.2. All Tests begin with the entry at A and end after the salute at the end of the Test, as soon as the horse moves forward. Any incidents occurring before the beginning or after the end of the Test have no effect on the marks with the exception of falls and/or resistances which may endanger rider/horse/judge/public, both of which may be penalised by elimination under rules 27.2 & 30.3. The Competitor should leave the arena in the way that is prescribed in the text of the Test.

21.3. Any outside intervention by voice, signs etc. is considered as assistance to a rider or horse. A rider or horse receiving assistance must be eliminated. Where Test Callers are allowed, it is the responsibility of the Competitor to ensure that only the printed text or extracts therefrom is read out and that no other form of assistance is given. A Commander may read each movement once or twice only. Failure to observe this Rule may incur elimination. Riders are not permitted to wear headphones during a Test.

22. SALUTE

22.1. All riders must take the reins in one hand when saluting. The penalty for not doing so being as for an error of Test. A whip may be held in either hand at the salute.

23. ERRORS AND PENALTIES INVOLVED

23.1. When a competitor makes an error of the course (takes a wrong turn, omits a movement, etc.) the Judge warns the Competitor by sounding the Bell. The Judge shows the rider, if necessary, the point at which he must take up the Test again and the next movement to be executed, then leaves him to continue by himself. However, in some cases, although the Competitor makes an error of the course, the sounding of the Bell would unnecessarily impede the fluency of the performance, for instance if the Competitor makes a transition from trot to walk at V instead of K or, trotting up the centre line from A, makes a transition to walk at X instead of G - it is up to Judge to decide whether to sound the Bell or not.

23.2. When a Competitor makes an error in the Test; (trots rising instead of sitting, at the salute does not take the reins in one hand, etc.) the Competitor must be penalised as for an error of the course. In principle a 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 Competitor has started the execution of a movement and tries to do the same movement again, the Judge must consider the first movement shown only and at the same time penalise for an error of course.

23.3. Every error of the course, whether the Bell is sounded or not, must be penalised:

- The first time by 2 points
- The second time by 4 points
- The third time by 8 points.
- The fourth time the Competitor is eliminated, although he may continue his performance to the end, the marks being awarded in the ordinary way.

23.4. If the Judge has not noted an error, the Competitor has the benefit of the doubt.

23.5. If a horse enters at the wrong gait and/or prior to the judge ringing the bell, the Judge should direct the Competitor to leave the arena and re- enter when signaled to do so at the correct gait. An error of course must be given.

23.6. When more than one judge is used, should there be a difference of opinion as to whether an error of test or error of course occurred, the Chief Judge's opinion shall prevail.

24. USE OF VOICE

24.1. The use of the voice is discouraged but allowed at the discretion of the judge. If the use of the voice is considered excessive, the judge may penalize with a deduction of 2 marks on each occasion, from those that would otherwise have been awarded for the movement where this occurred.

25. LEAVING THE ARENA

25.1. A horse leaving the arena completely, with all four feet, during a Dressage Competition between the time of entry and the time of exit at A will be eliminated. At the Judge's discretion, the Competitor may continue the riding of the Test, and the movements should be marked in the normal way. The Test sheet is to be clearly marked "Rider Eliminated".

26. LAMENSS

26.1. In the case of marked lameness, the Judge informs the rider that he/she is eliminated. There is no appeal against this decision.

27. DISMOUNTING/FALL OF RIDER

27.1. The rider must be mounted on entering and leaving the arena. If, after the rider has entered the arena, he dismounts without a reason acceptable to the Judge, no marks will be given for the movement.

27.1.1. A fall of horse and/or rider, occurring from the time the judge signals to start the test until departure from the arena at A following completion of the test, will result in elimination from the class. A fall of rider is considered to have occurred if any part of the rider's body makes unintentional contact with the ground or any solid surface. A horse is considered to have fallen when the shoulder and quarters have touched the ground. All rider falls occurring at the event venue must be reported to the Event Office by way of notation on the score sheet. The Ground Jury, Technical Delegate or HSA representative may eliminate a rider or horse from the event at any time following a fall, on the grounds that their further participation risks the health and safety of the rider or the welfare of the horse.

27.2. A dropped whip or spectacles may be handed to the rider without dismounting.
27.3. A rider will be eliminated if not mounted when leaving the arena

28. GRINDING OF TEETH AND TRAIL SWISHING

28.1. Grinding the teeth and swishing the tail are signs of nervousness, tenseness or resistance on the part of the horse and must be taken into account by the Judge in their marks for the movement concerned, as well as in the collective marks for submission.

29. THE POSITION OF THE AIDS OF THE RIDER

29.1. Riding with both hands is compulsory at all Dressage Competitions unless otherwise stated in the Test, except when leaving the arena at a walk after having finished the Test, at the rider's discretion.

30. TIME PENALTIES AND RESISTANCE

30.1. HSA Dressage Tests are not timed. Times printed on the Tests are an average and intended to be used as a guide only.
30.2. A horse failing to enter the arena within 90 seconds of the bell being sounded shall be eliminated.
30.3. Any resistance which prevents the continuation of the Test for a period exceeding 20 seconds during the course of a Test shall be penalised by elimination at the judge's discretion. Resistance that may endanger rider, horse, judges or public which occurs from the time the judge signals the start of the test until the horse leaves the arena shall be penalised by elimination without delay. There is no appeal against this decision

31. JUDGES' SHEETS

31.1. Marking sheets, one per Competitor per Judge, must be provided, either on paper or electronic.
31.2. Organisers are permitted to photocopy the relevant Tests applicable to the Event.
31.3. Judging sheets must be made available to Competitors at the time final interim dressage scores are posted to allow adequate time for lodging of protests.
31.4. Competitors taking part in two Dressage Competitions on the same day, judged by the same Judge, shall not have access to their judging sheets before competing in the second Competition.
31.5. Judges' marking sheets with remarks duly signed by the Judge must be treated as confidential until given to the Competitor.

32. UNMARKED MOVEMENT

32.1. If a mark has not been recorded on one of the judging sheets and the Judge cannot recall the movement, or cannot be found, the mark allotted should be the average of the collective marks at the end.

33. SCORING

33.1. Each Judge may allot from 0 - 10 points for each numbered movement. Half marks from 0.5 to 9.5 may also be used both for the movements and collective marks, at the discretion of the Judge. These points are then added together, and any penalty points are deducted to give the Competitor's total score. Dressage is always scored in good (positive) points, therefore, the Competitor with the HIGHEST score has the highest placing.

33.2. Scale Of Marks

10	excellent	5	marginal
9	very good	4	insufficient
8	good	3	fairly bad
7	fairly good	2	bad
6	satisfactory	1	very bad
		0	not executed

33.3. The marks 10 to 0 must be awarded where the performances warrant their use. It is recommended that all movements be given a comment.
33.4. Judges should state reasons when giving marks of below 5 or above 7.
33.5. "Not executed" means that practically nothing of the required movement has been performed.

34. INTERRUPTIONS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

34.1. In the case of any equipment/technical failure or unforeseen circumstances that will interfere with the competition, the Judge at C shall ring the bell to interrupt the test.
34.2. It is recommended, that in clear cases of external disturbance, extreme weather conditions or other extreme circumstances, the same procedure is applied.
34.3. The Technical Delegate/HSA Representative or Organising Committee can request the Judge at C to stop the competition.

34.4. The affected rider should return to complete their test from the point of interruption as directed by the Judge at C.

35. INFORMATION NOTES TO ASSIST RIDERS WANTING TO START COMPETING IN DRESSAFE

35.1. 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 co-efficient mark. At the conclusion of the test the judge further evaluates the test through the Collective marks.

35.2. 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.

35.3. 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.

36. JUDGING THE TESTS

36.1. The dressage marks are as follows. Each Judge may allot from 0 - 10 points for each numbered movement.

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.

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

PREPARATORY (or equivalent)

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

PRELIMINARY (or equivalent)

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

NOVICE (or equivalent)

- 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

MEDIUM & ADVANCED (or equivalent)

- 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

36.3. 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 forehand 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 forehand. 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.

36.4. **PACES: REFER TO FEI RULES FOR DESCRIPTION OF PACES**

1. The regularity of the paces is fundamental to dressage.
2. In levels Medium & Advanced (or equivalent) 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.

	Prep	Prelim	Novice	Elementary	Medium	Adv
Medium walk	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Free walk	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collected walk					☐	☐
Extended walk						☐
Working trot	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lengthened			☐	☐	☐	☐
Collected trot					☐	☐
Medium trot					☐	☐
Extended trot						☐
Working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lengthened canter			☐	☐	☐	☐
Collected					☐	☐
Medium					☐	☐
Extended						☐

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.

36.5. **IMPULSION**

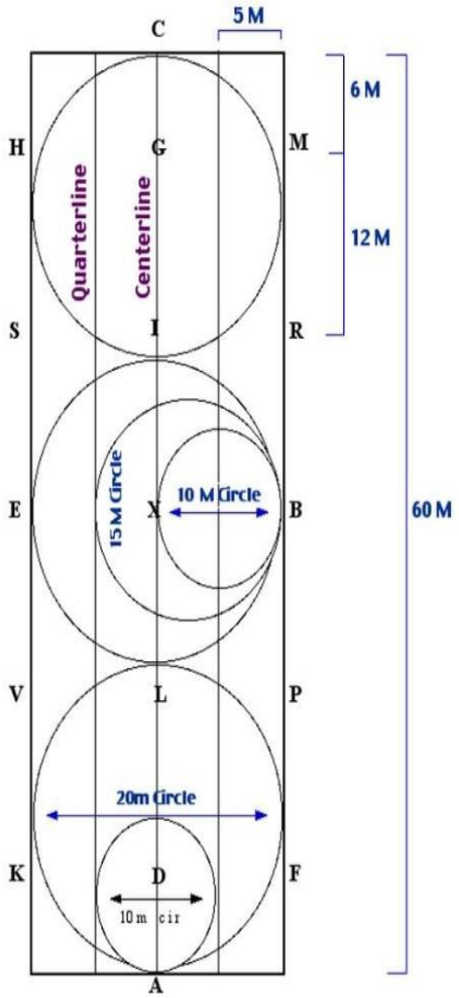
1. Impulsion is the term used to describe the transmission of an eager and energetic, yet controlled, propulsive energy generated from the hindquarters into the athletic movement of the horse. Its ultimate expression can be shown only through the horse's soft and swinging back by gentle contact with the rider's hand.
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.
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.
4. Impulsion is a precondition for a good collection in trot and canter. If there is no impulsion, there is nothing to collect.

36.6. **SUBMISSION**

1. Fulfilling the main requirements/movements of a Dressage test is the main criterion for submission.
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
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 Prep & Prelim, the horse is expected to work in a natural frame showing acceptance of a light contact. By Novice 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.
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"
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
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.

Figures and movements for lower-level tests are described below.

<u>Descriptions of figures and movements in the higher-level tests can be referenced in the FEI rules.</u>

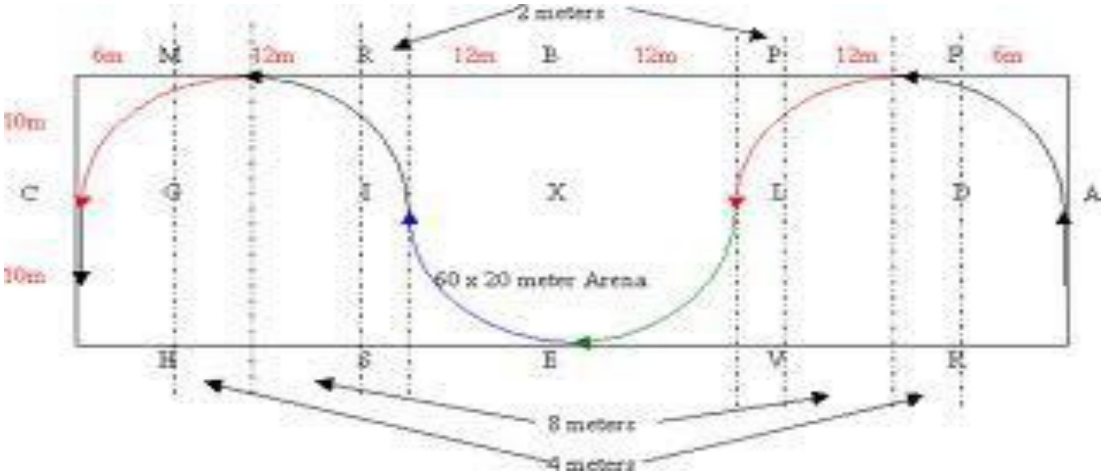


1. **CIRCLES**: In Preparatory & Preliminary, 20m circles are required. Novice, 15m circles are introduced. Circles test the horse's lateral flexibility and engagement of the inside hind leg as well as obedience. The circles and half circles become smaller in diameter in the higher level tests, requiring a greater degree of suppleness, engagement and self carriage.
2. **CHANGE OF DIRECTION**: During changes of direction the horse should adjust the bend of his body to the curvature of the line it follows, remaining supple and following the indications of the rider without any resistance and maintaining pace, rhythm and tempo. Changes of direction in Prep and Prelim are executed as follows:

- Short and long diagonals
- Right angled turns across the center

In level 3 half circle and diagonal return to the track are introduced.

3. **SERPENTINE**: a 3 loop serpentine is introduced in Novice. 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.



4. **HALT**: In Prep & Prelim, the horse is expected to stand attentive and motionless for the prescribed length of time and be ready to move off at the indication of the rider. As the training progresses the quality of the halt will improve. Medium, 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. When a length of time is not specified, the halt should be maintained for 3 seconds.

5. **REIN RELEASE**: a give and take of the inside rein performed over 2-3 strides on a circle is introduced in Novice to encourage riders to develop the horse's balance and suppleness. The judge will be looking for a reasonably well balanced horse and rider with bend achieved through acceptance of the inside leg to the outside rein. The rider moves their inside hand forward towards the bit maintaining a straight line from elbow to hand to the horse's mouth. The forward and returning action of the hand is completed over the prescribed number of strides with a momentary loop in the reins. The action of the hands is smooth and fluent. The horse's rhythm, straightness, balance and outline should not change. In the higher levels, the rein release may involve the inside rein or both reins with the loop in the reins maintained for the nominated number of strides showing the horse's ability to maintain self carriage.

6. **STRETCHING ON A LONG REIN**: stretching on a long rein is introduced in Novice. 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.

7. **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 Prep the expectation is that transitions will be performed within 3 strides of the marker, in Prelim within 2 strides of the marker and Novice within 1 stride of the marker. By Elementary 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. balance, straightness, suppleness and thoroughness. In Prep &

Prelim the horse is not expected to be ridden deeply into corners. By Novice the horse is expected to execute corners on a 1Om diameter curve. By Medium and Advanced, the horse is expected to execute corners on an 8m diameter curve.

- *This information is provided as a guide only.*