



UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION™

Glossary of Judging Terms

Effective 12.1.2018 to 11.30.2022

To Judges, Trainers, Competitors and Dressage Enthusiasts:

Without a standardized glossary, English-speaking dressage riders, trainers, and judges have been communicating with each other using a language which frequently is not understood the same way by the listener as by the speaker. We have had to make do with interpretations and concepts of vocabulary and terminology gleaned from the literature (much of it translated, and not always accurately) with terms that are used differently by different authors and that have different meanings and nuances in different languages.

The main purpose of this glossary is to improve understanding of, and standardize the usage of, terminology used in judging and in communication between judges. It is not intended to be a comprehensive lexicon of general dressage terminology.

It is hoped that it will improve the communication between judges, competitors, and trainers. If it does fulfill that purpose, it cannot but help to improve the quality of the judging itself, as well as increasing the learning value of the competitive experience.

In determining definitions and usages, the overriding theme in this project has been agreement in usage. "Borrowed" terms (from engineering, music, etc.) have been taken "as is." Dictionary definitions have been used wherever possible and where sufficiently specific. In some cases, choice of definition from among possible suggested or common (but often varying!) usages has been relatively arbitrary based on "majority" input from the judging community; however, in all cases dictionary definitions have been used at least as a taking-off point. Even where there may exist some theoretical or philosophical differences in personal interpretation or usage, it is nevertheless to the great advantage of all concerned if standardized usages are accepted and employed.

ABDUCT

To move a limb away from the horse's midline.

ABOVE THE BIT

A head position in which the horse avoids acceptance of the contact by putting the muzzle forward and upward, also usually retracting the poll.

ACCEPTANCE

Used in reference to the horse's willingness to allow the maintenance of a steady contact, the application of the aids, and/or the placement of the rider's weight. Absence of evasion or resistance.

ACTIVITY

Energy, vigor, liveliness - especially with reference to the motion of the hind legs.

ADDUCT

To move a limb toward or across the horse's midline.

AGAINST THE BIT

The horse presses against the bit with a rigid or unyielding neck/poll/jaw.

ALIGNMENT

1. Referring to the horse, the lining up of the horse's body parts from tail to poll. One of the four aspects of straightness (the other three are parallelism to line of travel, parallelism to line of reference, and directness of line of travel).
2. Referring to the rider
 - a. Vertical alignment refers to the side view of the rider in which the ear, shoulder, hip, and heel are in a vertical line.
 - b. Lateral alignment refers to the front or rear view of the rider in which the weight appears to be evenly distributed on the left and right sides and the rider's body does not collapse in the waistline/core in either direction.
 - c. Rotational alignment refers to the orientation of the front of the rider's body relative to the horse's line of travel or line of reference.

See Quadrille Judging Terms in the Quadrille Rules and Guidelines for special application to judging the quadrille.

AMPLITUDE

Magnitude of range of motion. Same as *Scope*.

BALANCE

Relative distribution of the weight of horse and rider upon the fore and hind legs (longitudinal balance) and the left and right legs (lateral balance). In dressage training, the horse learns to move with the base of support narrowed laterally and shortened longitudinally, which makes the balance less stable but at the same time makes it more mobile (especially the forehand) and susceptible to small external influences (of the rider).

BASICS

The basics form the correct foundation of the progressive training of the horse, independent of the execution of specific test movements. The basics include: pure rhythm with suitable tempo; relaxation/suppleness/elasticity/looseness; correct contact/connection; impulsion, straightness, and longitudinal balance suitable to the level and exercise - in other words, all the criteria of the *Pyramid of Training/Training Scale*.

Correctness of the basics is indicated by the preservation and/or improvement in:

- the purity and quality of the gaits and paces
- the gymnastic ability and physique of the horse, and
- the horse's attitude and rideability

BEAT

Footfall of a hoof or a diagonal pair of hooves that strike the ground virtually simultaneously. The timing of the footfalls determines the rhythm of the stride. The walk has four beats per stride (only two of which are emphasized beats perceived by the rider), the trot has two beats per stride, and the canter has three beats per stride (only one of which is the emphasized beat perceived by the rider).

See also *Beat* in Freestyle Music section, and *Tempo* (regarding counting beats to determine tempo).

BEHIND THE BIT

An evasion in which the horse retracts or shrinks back from the bit/contact. The head may or may not be behind the vertical.

BEHIND THE LEG

Slow to react to the leg, or sluggish or unwilling to move energetically forward, especially while accepting the contact/connection.

BEHIND THE VERTICAL

With the horse's face viewed in profile, the front of the horse's nose falls behind a vertical line dropped from the top of its forehead. The horse may or may not be behind the bit.

BEND

The laterally curved position in which the horse's body, as would be viewed from above, *appears* to form a uniform arc from poll to tail. Components of bending include lateral flexion at the poll, stretching of the outer side of the body, lowering of the inner hip, and adduction of the inner hind and outer fore legs (see *Flexion* for more in-depth discussion of the elements of bending). Examples of faulty bend are: bending only in the neck, bending only at the base of the neck, or bent toward the wrong direction.

BIOMECHANICS

The application of the principles and techniques of mechanics (the branch of physics that deals with the motion of material bodies and the phenomena of the action of forces on bodies) to the structure, function, and capabilities of living organisms. (Webster)

BLOCKED

Impaired in the connection due to sustained muscular contraction, creating rigidity.

BPM

Beats per minute, as may be measured by a metronome.

BRACED/BRACING

The horse defensively setting/ holding its muscles contracted against an opposing force or an expected opposing force, such as the rider's disturbing legs, seat or hands.

BROKEN NECKLINE

The position of the neck in which there is excessive longitudinal flexion at the joint between the second and third cervical vertebrae, so that the topline of the neck does not form an even, smooth arc and the poll is not the highest point of the skeleton.

CADENCE

The marked accentuation of the rhythm and emphasized beat that is a result of a steady and suitable tempo harmonizing with a springy impulsion.

CARRIAGE

The posture of the horse, most easily evaluated when viewing the horse's profile or outline from the side.

CENTER OF MASS (CENTER OF GRAVITY)

The point at which the mass of the body can be considered to be concentrated, and around which its weight is evenly distributed or balanced. The horse's center of mass is located at the 13th or 14th rib and just below the line from the point of the shoulder to the point of the hip. This puts it below the seat of the saddle. In collection, the horse's body rotates around the center of mass.

CHEWING THE BIT

The movements of the horse's mouth—gently and softly mouthing the bit—showing mobility and relaxation of the jaw and causing secretion of saliva for a "wet mouth." Not to be confused with snapping, clacking or grinding of the teeth.

CLARITY/CLEAR

The correct rhythm (sequence and timing of the footfalls and phases of a gait). Often-used in relation to maintenance of the correct rhythm of the gaits before and after a transition.

CLEAN

Referring to a flying change, the change of lead is from a pure canter on one lead to a pure canter on the other lead. A clean flying change takes place during the suspension phase, without trot steps or disunited strides.

CLOSED HALT

A posture at the halt in which the horse is secure in balance with a shortened base of support achieved by positioning the hind legs forward underneath the body.

COLLECTION (BALANCE AND LIGHTNESS OF THE FOREHAND FROM INCREASED ENGAGEMENT)

The horse shows collection when he lowers and engages his hindquarters, shortening and narrowing his base of support, resulting in lightness and mobility of the forehand. He shows shorter, but powerful, cadenced steps and strides. The increased elevation must be the result of and relative to the lowering of the hindquarters. **(See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation).**

CONFIDENCE

The boldness and self-assurance with which the horse performs, and the trust in his partnership with the rider.

CONNECTION/CONNECTED

State in which there is no blockage, break, or slack in the circuit that joins horse and rider into a single, harmonious, elastic unit. A prerequisite for throughness.

CONSTRAINED

Forced or compelled against the will - the horse's forward or sideways movement, bend, and/or execution of the required exercise not appearing voluntary.

CONSTRICTED

Limited by constraint, restraint, or sustained muscular contraction. Held together, forcefully shortened, or physically tight.

CONTACT (CONNECTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE BIT THROUGH ACCEPTANCE OF THE AIDS)

The energy generated in the hindquarters by the driving aids must flow through the whole body of the horse and is received in the rider's hands. The contact to the bit must be elastic and adjustable, creating fluent interaction between horse and rider with appropriate changes in the horse's outline. **(See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation).**

CORRECTNESS

The straightness of the action of the limbs (e.g., faults would be winging, paddling, twisting hocks). Not the same as *Purity*. Dressage judges deal with correctness only indirectly, that is, to the degree that it affects the purity or quality of the gait. Correctness is addressed directly in breeding classes.

COUNTER CHANGE OF HAND (USEF DEFINITION)

A movement containing two (2) half passes and the horse should be straight for a moment before changing direction

CROOKEDNESS

Aspects of crookedness:

1. Misalignment of the horse's body parts from tail to poll (e.g. popped shoulder or twisted neck).
2. On straight or curved lines, lack of parallelism of the horse's longitudinal axis to the line of travel (, e.g., haunches left or right of centerline or circle line).
3. In two track/lateral work, lack of parallelism of the horse's longitudinal axis to the line of reference (e.g., haunches leading or trailing in leg yielding).
4. Lack of directness of line of travel – the horse deviating or wandering left &/or right of the desired path of travel (e.g., as in weaving).

CROSS-CANTER

The fore and hind legs are on different leads. Same as *Disunited*.

DEFINITION/DEFINED

Used in reference to transitions between paces (within a gait) to indicate a well-demarcated change in length of stride.

DISOBEDIENCE

Willful determination to avoid doing what is asked, or determination to do what is not asked.

DIAGONAL DISSOCIATION (ALSO DIAGONAL ADVANCED PLACEMENT OR DAP)

The hooves of a diagonal pair of limbs (in trot or canter) do not contact the ground at the same moment. The dissociation may be hind-first, which is also called positive DAP, or front-first, which is also called negative DAP. In the trot, hind-first dissociation is usually associated with the horse being uphill. In canter, hind-first dissociation occurs, for instance, in the bounding canter of a young horse and in the pirouette canter.

DISUNITED (CANTER)

The fore and hind legs are on different leads. Same as *Cross-Canter*.

DOWNHILL

Poor longitudinal balance, with failure to elevate the withers and/or lower the haunches. Same as *On The Forehand*.

DRAGGING

Refers to dragging of the hind feet or inactivity of the hind legs or failure to lift the hooves clear of the ground.

ELASTICITY

The ability or tendency to stretch and contract the musculature smoothly, giving the impression of stretchiness or springiness.

ELEVATION

Raised position of the forehand (head, neck, *and* ribcage). The neck is elevated from its base with the poll as the highest point and the face slightly in front of the vertical.

ENGAGEMENT

Increased flexion in joints of the hind legs during the weight-bearing (stance) phase of the stride, lowering the croup relative to the forehand, enabling the back to assist in elevating the forehand, and providing a springboard for upward thrust/impulsion. Engagement is carrying power, rather than pushing power.

At canter and piaffe, there is additional flexion at the hip joints and also greater flexion at the lumbosacral joint, which contribute to the horse's ability to lower the haunches.

Note: Engagement is not flexion of the hocks or "hock action" when the leg is swinging forward (as seen most clearly in gaited horses and hackneys), nor does it describe the forward reach of the hind leg under the horse's body.

EVASION

Avoidance of the difficulty, correctness, or purpose of the movement, or of the influence of the rider, often without active resistance or disobedience (e.g. tilting the head, open mouth, broken neckline, etc.). Bit evasions are means of avoiding correct contact with the bit.

EXERCISE

A designated task that may include movement(s), transition(s), figure(s), and/or pattern(s) to be performed at designated gaits and paces and sometimes at specific places in the arena, e.g. 20-meter circle at working trot, half-pass at collected canter, or simple change of lead.

EXPRESSION

Increased impulsion, with harmony, balance, lightness, and cadence, giving artistic or dramatic effect.

EXTENSION/EXTENDED (WALK, TROT, OR CANTER)

At trot and canter, a pace that shows maximum length of stride, frame, and phase of suspension. The uphill balance is greater than in the lengthening pace. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the collected pace.

At walk, a pace with maximum length of stride and frame, and showing the natural longitudinal oscillation of the neck (while still remaining on contact). The hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the prints of the forefeet.

FALLING IN, FALLING ON INSIDE SHOULDER, FALLING OUT, FALLING OVER OUTSIDE SHOULDER, POPPED SHOULDER

Lateral deviation of the forehand/foreleg(s) associated with a loss of balance.

FIGURE

Geometrical component, such as a circle, change of rein, or figure of eight. A figure is not the same as a movement. Refer to *Movement*.

FLEXIBILITY

Range of motion of joints and the ability to move the joints freely. Also described as *Suppleness*.

FLEXION

In the limbs—articulation of a joint or joints so that the angle between the bones becomes smaller.

At the poll, there are three directions of movement, the first two of which are described as flexions and involve motion of the atlanto-occipital joint:

- Direct or longitudinal flexion brings the chin toward the underside of the neck.
- Lateral flexion closes the angle between the cheek and the side of the neck.
- Rotation (twisting) occurs at the atlanto-axial joint and causes tilting of the head.

In the rest of the spine, movements occur in the same three directions as at the poll: flexion-extension (rounding-hollowing); lateral (left-right) bending, and twisting. The combination of these movements creates carriage, bend, displacement of the ribcage, etc.

FLUENT/FLUENCY

Flowing or moving smoothly and easily. Same as fluid.

FOOTFALL

A hoof striking the ground.

FORWARD

Moving or tending to move toward the direction in which the horse is facing (in contrast to sideways, backward, or standing still); it does not indicate *how* he gets there. References to specifics such as impulsion, energy, freedom, reach, length of stride, into the contact, responsiveness to the leg, and tempo more accurately express *how* the horse should proceed in a forward direction.

FRAME

The outline of the horse, which should change according to the length of stride (shorter frame for collection, longer for extension) and which shows degree of uphill versus downhill carriage.

FREEDOM

The reach, scope and lack of constriction in the horse's movement.

FREE WALK

A pace in which the horse freely lowers and stretches out its head and neck, and shows the natural longitudinal oscillation of the neck. The hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the prints of the forefeet, with strides longer than in the medium walk. Can be performed or required on a long rein (maintaining contact) or a loose rein (with a loop in the rein – no contact).

FROM BEHIND

Shorthand for “energy/activity/thrust from the hind legs” (as in “needs more...‘from behind’”).

GAIT

Characteristic limb coordination pattern recognized by the sequence and timing of the footfalls. Gaits used in dressage are walk, trot, and canter.

HALF-HALT

A momentary effect of the aids that increases the attention and improves the balance of the horse.

HARMONY

Used in reference to the relationship between the horse and rider, the partners' positive physical as well as mental/emotional connection, showing rapport, trust, and confidence in one another and resulting in a sense of synchrony, contentment and unity.

HASTY

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

HOLLOW BACK

Sagging or depressed back caused by slackness of the back and belly muscles (passive) or by sustained contraction of the back muscles, impeding swing and elasticity (active).

HORIZONTAL BALANCE

A longitudinal balance between downhill and uphill.

HOVERING TROT

See *Passage-Like Trot*.

HURRIED

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

HYPERFLEXION (ROLLKUR)

Exaggerated flexion of the horse's neck, with a low poll and the face far behind the vertical. There is a spectrum from humanely riding the horse behind the vertical to forcefully or aggressively riding the horse in a hyperflexed position and /or sustaining the hyperflexion for more than a few minutes. There may be a gray area between the acceptable and the abusive that is a matter of judgment.

IMPULSION (ENGAGEMENT AND THE DESIRE TO GO FORWARD)

Used to describe the transmission of an eager and energetic, yet controlled, propulsive thrust generated from the hindquarters into the athletic movement of the horse. **(See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation).**

INSIDE, INNER, INWARDS

1. The direction toward which the horse should be positioned (laterally) or bent.
2. The side of the horse that is toward the center of the ring.

The former takes precedence if the two are not the same (as in counter-canter or renvers).

IRREGULAR

Impure, unlevel, or uneven. Can be momentary or pervasive, and may or may not be due to unsoundness. Should not be used to mean unsteadiness of tempo.

LATE

Execution after the aids or after the prescribed place or letter. Usually applied to flying changes and transitions.

LATE BEHIND

In flying changes, the hind legs change leads after the forelegs change.

LATE IN FRONT

In flying changes, the fore legs change leads after the hind legs change.

LATERAL

1. To the side, as in flexion, bend, suppleness, or direction of movement.
2. Impurity of the gait in which the lateral pairs of legs swing forward somewhat synchronously. If the lateral pairs of legs move totally synchronously, this is called pacing.

LEANING IN

The horse tilts to the inside of a turn or circle, like a motorcycle.

LENGTHENING OF STRIDE

A pace at trot and canter in which the stride, frame and phase of suspension are longer than in the working pace, but the degree of uphill balance required in the medium pace is not expected. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the working pace.

LEVEL BALANCE

A longitudinal balance between downhill and uphill. Same as *Horizontal Balance*.

LIFT

Applied in piaffe and passage to address the height to which the forelegs are raised.

LIGHTNESS

Refers to one of the following:

1. Horse's lightness on its feet.
2. Lightness of the rider's aids/horse's responsiveness to light aids.
3. Lightness/lift of the forehand.

LONG AND LOW

Carriage in which the horse lowers and stretches out its head and neck, reaching forward and downward into contact on a longer rein.

LONGITUDINAL

In the lengthwise, as opposed to lateral, dimension, that is from front-to-back or back-to-front.

LOOSENESS

Freedom from negative physical and mental/emotional tension; relaxation.

MARCHING

Taking purposeful steps in the walk.

MEDIUM (WALK, TROT, OR CANTER)

At trot and canter, a pace of moderate lengthening, with a longer stride than in the collected or working paces but shorter than in the extended pace.

The uphill balance is greater than in the working or lengthening pace, and the length of frame and suspension are between that of the collected and extended paces. The movement produced is rounder than that of extension. The tempo should remain nearly the same as in the collected pace.

At walk, a pace of moderate lengthening, with a length of stride and frame between that of the collected and extended walks, and showing the natural longitudinal oscillation of the neck.

METHODOLOGY

The system that a judge uses to give scores in a consistent and standardized fashion. This results in the correct and logical placement of the competitors in each class.

MOBILITY

Easy maneuverability/nimbleness of the shoulders/forehand/forelegs, made possible by a narrowing and shortening of the horse's base of support.

MOVEMENT

1. The manner in which the horse moves over the ground: way of moving.
2. Test movement: a section of a dressage test to be evaluated with one score on a score sheet.
3. Dressage Movements: these are: leg-yield, rein back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on haunches, half pass (trot or canter), flying change(s), pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe, and passage.

For the purpose of the current freestyle tests, *forbidden movement(s)* refers to #2.

MPM OR MPH

Meters per minute or miles per hour – measures of speed.

NODDING/BOBBING

A rhythmic up-and-down or backward and forward action of the horse's head and neck which is not part of the normal mechanic of the gait. It may be caused by the past use of gadgets, by constraint, or by lameness.

OBEDIENCE

Submission in reference to the accurate performance of the required exercise, in contrast to submission in regard to the basics. The horse may demonstrate resistance or evasion (lack of submission in the basics), yet still be "obedient." For example, if the horse performs a series of flying changes without mistakes and in the correct place but is behind the vertical, tilting his head and swishing his tail, he performs the exercise obediently, but is not submissive in regard to the basics.

ON THE AIDS

The horse reacts to the rider's aids willingly, confidently, immediately, and correctly.

ON THE BIT

Acceptance of contact (without resistance or evasion) with a stretched topline and with lateral and longitudinal flexion as required. The horse's face line is, as a rule, slightly in front of the vertical.

ON THE FOREHAND

Poor longitudinal balance, with failure to elevate the withers and/or lower the haunches. Same as *Downhill*.

OUT BEHIND

Hind legs operating too far behind the horse, which favors pushing at the expense of carrying.

OUTLINE

The profile or silhouette of the horse, showing the horse's carriage or posture.

OUTSIDE, OUTER, OUTWARDS

1. The direction away from which the horse should be positioned or bent.
2. The side that is away from the center of the arena.

The former takes precedence if the two are not the same (as in counter-canter or renvers).

OVERBENT/OVERBENDING

Excessive *lateral* displacement of the neck relative to the horse's body, occurring in the neck itself or at the base of the neck, causing lack of apparent uniformity of the lateral curve of the "bent" horse.

Note: In the U.S., the term overbent is based on the amount of lateral bending, and the term over-flexed is based on the amount of longitudinal flexion (rounding). In other countries, overbent is often used to indicate excessive longitudinal flexion at the poll and/or upper joints of the neck.

OVERFLEXED

Behind the vertical, due to excessive longitudinal flexion at the poll and/or upper joints of the neck.

OVERSTEP, OVERSTRIDE, OVERTRACK

Placement of the hind foot in front of the print of the forefoot.

OVER THE BACK OR TOPLINE

The horse stretching and rounding the back or topline.

OVER-TURNED

Turned more than 180 degrees in a half-pirouette or more than 360 degrees in a full pirouette.

PACE(S)

1. Variations within a gait. The named paces are: at walk: collected, medium, extended, free; at trot and canter: collected, working, lengthening of stride, medium, extended. Each named pace is characterized by a given length of stride as well as by other attributes listed under their individual definitions.
A horse can go at any pace on the spectrum from highly collected to fully extended (the named paces are points on that continuum), corresponding to slower or faster MPM. Optimally, any stride length is performed in the horse's ideal tempo.
2. Gait in which the lateral pairs of legs move in unison (not considered a dressage gait). If the lateral pairs move somewhat but not entirely synchronously, this is sometimes called "pacey" or "pacing tendency" or "lateral" or "lateral tendency." This faulty lateral tendency may be seen in walk or canter.

Note: The U.S. uses the terms "gait and pace" where the FEI uses the terms "pace and variation."

PASSAGE-LIKE OR PASSAGEY TROT

A trot in which there is a hesitation in the forward swing of the diagonal pairs of legs, so that they appear to hover momentarily.

PHASE

Limb Phases are part of the cycle of limb movement.

- Stance phase: foot on the ground
- Swing phase: foot moving through the air

Support Phases are differentiated according to which limbs are in the stance and swing phases.

- An aerial or suspension phase occurs when none of the limbs is in contact with the ground (all limbs are in the swing phase).
- Each gait has a characteristic sequence of support phases:
 - o The walk has 8 support phases in each stride.
 - o The trot has 2 support phases and 2 suspension phases in each stride.
 - o The canter has 5 support phases and 1 suspension phase in each stride.

PIVOTING

Failure to pick up a foot in the rhythm of the gait, such that the horse swivels around the grounded (or "stuck") foot. Used in reference to pirouettes or turns on the haunches or forehand.

POLL

The highest point of the horse's skull (the occipital crest). In common dressage usage, however, "flexion at the poll" refers to the longitudinal or lateral flexion at the joint between the skull and the first cervical vertebra, the atlanto-occipital joint. See *Flexion*.

POSITION

1. Lateral flexion at the poll so that the horse “looks” to the side, e.g., “positioned right” or “positioned left.”
2. Posture of the rider.

PURITY

Referring to the gait, the correctness of the rhythm as determined by the sequence and timing of the footfalls and phases of the gait.

PUSHING OUT

Hind legs operating too far behind the horse, which favors pushing at the expense of carrying.

PYRAMID OF TRAINING

To ensure that classical principles and traditions are honored and adhered to in our present day culture, the Pyramid of Training (Training Scale) evolved as a means to illustrate the different steps/concepts, which are essential ingredients in the correct training of a horse. It is important to realize that these “steps” are interrelated.

QUADRILLE

Team riding; choreography traditionally performed by four horses, though groups may have six, eight, ten or even twelve horses. For special terminology related to this, see *Quadrille Rules and Guidelines available on the USDF website*

QUALITY (OF GAIT)

The quality of a gait refers to its freedom, elasticity, flexibility, looseness, fluency and amplitude.

Not the same as purity or correctness.

QUICK

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

RAPID

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

REACH

Refers to forward or lateral reach of the fore limbs, hind limbs, neck/poll, muzzle, or one side of the horse (as in “needs reach into outside rein”). May be used to refer to any of these individually.

REGULARITY

Purity of the gait. At walk and trot, denotes symmetry in terms of evenness of the length of the steps, levelness of the height of the steps, and equality of the time interval between the steps of the left and right forelimbs, or the left and right hind limbs.

Note: In the first collective mark on a dressage test, “Gaits (freedom and regularity),” regularity is used to address purity and soundness, not to address the horse’s tempo.

RELAX/RELAXATION

1. Referring to the horse’s mental/emotional state: calm, without anxiety or nervousness.
2. Referring to the horse’s physical state: commonly used to indicate the absence of muscular contraction other than that needed for optimal carriage, strength, and range and fluency of movement.

Usually the physical and mental/emotional states go hand in hand.

RELEASE

As used in the tests, the brief release of the contact, wherein the rider in one clear motion extends the hand(s) forward along the crest of the horse’s neck, then rides for several strides without contact. Its purpose is to demonstrate that, even with loose rein(s), the horse maintains its carriage, balance, pace, and tempo. This corresponds to the German expression “*Überstreichen*.”

RESISTANCE

Active or rigid opposition to the connection or to the aids of the rider (e.g. against or above the bit). Not the same as disobedience or evasion. The horse can be resistant, yet still obedient (perform the exercise). Can be momentary or pervasive, willful or unintentional.

RESTRAINED/ RESTRAINT

Prevention (of the horse by the rider) from moving freely in any direction – usually a function of pulling backward on the reins.

RHYTHM (REGULARITY AND TEMPO)

The characteristic sequence of footfalls and timing of a pure walk, pure trot, and pure canter. The rhythm should be expressed with energy and in a suitable and consistent tempo, with the horse remaining in the balance and self-carriage appropriate to its level of training. **(See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation).**

ROCKING/ROCKING HORSE CANTER

A canter in which the neck/forehand goes too much up and down as a result of lack of sufficient ground coverage, lack of sufficient engagement, or interference by the rider.

ROUNDNESS

1. The convexity of the profile of the horse’s topline, which is accompanied by concavity of the underline of the neck.
2. The circular (as opposed to linear or flat) quality characterizing the movements, action, or trajectory of the horse’s limbs.

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3. Shape of figure (such as a circle).

RUNNING

Increased speed (MPM) due to quickening the tempo rather than lengthening the strides with appropriate periods of suspension. Usually used in reference to lengthened, medium or extended trot or canter, or quickening the trot tempo before a canter depart.

RUSHED

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

SCOPE

Magnitude of range of motion. Same as *Amplitude*.

SEAT

The rider's trunk, which includes the pelvis, spine, and rib cage, with supporting musculature. The control of the seat determines the dynamic influence and balance of the rider and harmony with the horse's movement within each gait and exercise.

SELF-CARRIAGE

State in which the horse carries itself in balance without taking support or balancing on the rider's hand.

SLACK

1. Used in reference to the reins: without contact.
2. Used in reference to the condition of the musculature (e.g. "slack loin").

SNATCHING

1. Horse attempting to jerk the reins through the rider's hands.
2. Picking up the leg(s) jerkily and sometimes excessively high.

SPEED

Meters per minute or miles per hour, i.e. how much ground is covered per unit of time. The horse's speed can be changed by adjusting the length of stride, adjusting the tempo, or both. Increased tempo does not necessarily mean increased speed. Not to be confused with impulsion or tempo.

STEP

Referring to *either* the front *or* hind pair of legs, the movement that involves transfer from one limb to the other. Steps are measured (in time or distance) between the footfall of one hoof and the footfall of the other hoof of the pair. For counting purposes, the steps of only the front *OR* rear pair of limbs are counted.

STIFF/STIFFNESS

Inability (as opposed to unwillingness) to flex the joints or stretch the musculature to the degree and in the way required to perform the task at hand. The opposite of suppleness. Not to be confused with tension, resistance, or bracing.

STRAIGHTNESS (IMPROVED ALIGNMENT AND EQUAL LATERAL SUPPLENESS ON BOTH REINS)

A horse is said to be straight when the footfalls of the forehand and the hindquarters are appropriately aligned on straight and curved lines and when his longitudinal axis is in line with the straight or curved track on which he is ridden. **(See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation).**

STRIDE

Cycle of movements that is completed when the horse's legs regain their initial positions. Length of stride refers to the amount of ground covered by the entire cycle.

STRUNG OUT

Outline too elongated -- horse sprawled out rather than gathered up into connection with good carriage and balance.

STUCK

Instead of being raised in the rhythm of the gait, a foot remains on the ground throughout the entire stride. Usually applied to pirouette and turn on the haunches.

SUBMISSION

The horse's willing cooperation and harmony with the rider, demonstrating an attentive and confident attitude. Willingness to perform the required exercise as well as operate with correct basics. (see *Basics*).

SUPPLENESS (ELASTICITY AND FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY)

Suppleness indicates the absence of negative muscular tension, allowing the joints to move with harmonious flexibility. Elasticity describes the horse who is able to stretch and contract the musculature smoothly and fluently. **(See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation).**

SUSPENSION

The moment or phase of the trot, canter or passage in which the horse has no feet on the ground.

SWINGING

In series of flying changes, piaffe, or passage, the alternating left and right lateral displacement of the shoulders and/or haunches.

SWINGING BACK

The springy motion that occurs when the thrust off the hind legs is transmitted through a stretched topline with trunk muscles that contract and release rhythmically rather than remaining either rigid or slack.

SWINGING HEAD

The horse's muzzle moves left-and-right or in circles, indicating constraint or incorrect acceptance of contact/connection. Same as head wagging.

TEMPO

Rate of repetition of the strides as may be measured by a metronome.

Tempo is measured by counting the number of times per minute that one of the hooves touches down (indicating completion of one full stride). Alternatively, at walk and trot, both emphasized beats of the stride may be counted.

Note: Tempo is often confused with rhythm, speed, pace, or cadence.

TENSE/ TENSENESS/TENSION

1. Referring to the horse's mental/emotional state -- anxious or nervous.
2. Referring to muscular tension, the state in which the muscles are contracted. Too much muscle tension or sustained muscular tension is not desirable, but a certain amount of positive tension is needed for postural support and locomotion.

Often physical and mental/emotional states go hand in hand.

THROUGHNESS/THROUGH

An equestrian term which means the supple, elastic, unblocked, connected state of the horse's musculature and a willing mental state that permits an unrestricted flow of energy from back to front and front to back (circle of the aids), which allows the aids/influences to go through all parts of the horse. (**See Pyramid of Training for complete explanation**).

THRUST

Propulsive forward and upward drive from hindquarters. Required at First Level to achieve improved balance and throughness; at Second Level required to be in a more uphill direction.

TILTING

Tipping or cocking the head (lowering one ear)—an evasion.

TOPLINE

Profile from the poll to the tail along the top of the crest of the neck and along the spine. The horse lengthens or stretches its topline by rounding its neck and back and lifting its thorax and belly. The horse can stretch its topline irrespective of the height of its neck.

TRACK/TRACKS

1. The line(s) of hoof prints laid down as the foot or feet travel their individual path(s). There are two different versions of how to count tracks:
 - a. to address the line of travel of *each* leg in determining the number of paths of travel, as viewed by the observer as the horse approaches him (e.g. three tracks for shoulder-in, four tracks for travers).
 - b. to address front or hind legs as *pair(s)*, such that lateral movements are considered to be "on two tracks," in contrast to when a horse tracks straight.
2. Direction of travel, as in "track right" (when all corners are right turns, and the right hand is toward the center of the arena).
3. Path next to the rail in an arena.

TRACKING UP

The hind feet step into the prints of the forefeet.

TRAILING

1. In half-pass and leg-yield, refers to lack of parallelism to the long axis of the arena (as in trailing *haunches*).
2. The hind legs operating too far behind the horse, which favors pushing at the expense of carrying, especially in the lengthened, medium and extended paces (as in trailing *hind legs*).

TRAJECTORY

The line of travel of the hoof from its lift-off to landing -- the reach, height, and shape of the flight arc of the hoof.

UNEVEN

An irregularity in walk or trot in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically, the right leg making a different *length* of step than the left leg.

UNLEVEL

An irregularity in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically, the right leg making a different *height* of step than the left leg.

UPHILL

Good longitudinal balance, with elevated forehand and lowered croup (engaged hindquarters). The degree of engagement of the hind limbs is balanced with the degree of elevation of the forehand.

WAGGING

The horse's muzzle, head and/or neck moves left-and-right or in circles, indicating constraint or incorrect acceptance of contact/connection.

WIDE BEHIND

The horse travels with the hind feet further apart than the fore feet. This is an evasion of engagement which occurs most commonly in piaffe, halting, and lengthening of stride in trot.

WORKING (TROT OR CANTER)

A pace in which the horse goes forward energetically but calmly, with a length of stride between that of the collected and medium paces. A working trot should have at least a level balance (in contrast to the uphill balance of a collected trot).

ZIG -ZAG

Three or more half passes connected by changes of direction.

Glossary of Judging Terms

FREESTYLE JUDGING TERMS

CHOREOGRAPHY

BALANCE (IN DESIGN)

Fairly even use of right and left rein work.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Arrangement of gaits, paces, movements, figures, transitions, combinations and patterns that comprise a program.

COMBINATION

Direct connection of any movement or figure with another movement or figure.

CREATIVITY

Elements are combined in imaginative ways; interesting or uncommon lines or patterns are used; not test-like.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

How movements, transitions and configurations in the Freestyle relate to those of the current standard tests of the same level.

DESIGN COHESIVENESS

Logical, coherent, recognizable construction of the choreography.

ELEMENTS

Basic components that may be included in freestyle choreography, such as the movements, figures, and transitions.

HARMONY

The willing and un-coerced cooperation and partnership between horse and rider; the ability to accomplish the choreographic patterns with ease.

See also *Harmony* in main Glossary.

MOVEMENT

1. The manner in which the horse moves over the ground; way of moving.
2. Test movement: a section of a dressage test to be evaluated with one score on a score sheet.
3. Dressage Movements: these are: leg-yield, rein back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on haunches, half pass (trot or canter), flying change(s), pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe, and passage.

For the purpose of the current freestyle tests, *forbidden movement(s)* refers to #2.

PATTERN

Geometric design formed in the arena when movements, figures and transitions are combined.

TEST-LIKE

Directly repeating a combination or pattern from the current standard tests with no variation in its pattern or location.

USE OF ARENA

Utilizing the dressage arena space in its entirety; distributing the elements throughout the arena.

MUSIC

BEAT

The underlying pulse of the music (which corresponds to the emphasized beat(s) of the stride). Expressed musically, the walk has two beats per stride, the trot has two beats per stride, and the canter has one beat per stride.

See also *Beat* in Main Glossary.

COHESIVENESS

Music is linked by genre, theme or instrumentation.

DYNAMICS

Variations in the intensity of sound.

GENRE

Category of music marked by a distinct style such as jazz, baroque, rock, etc.

INTERPRETATION

Appropriateness of the rhythm and tempo of the music to the gaits of the horse; choreography reflects the dynamics and phrasing of the music.

LYRICS

Use of words in a song.

MUSIC EXPRESSES GAITS

Each music selection gives the impression of the gait it accompanies; the tempo of the music matches the footfalls of the horse.

ORCHESTRA

Large group of musicians playing together on various instruments, including strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion.

ORCHESTRATION

Arrangement of music for performance by an orchestra, or smaller groupings of instruments.

PHRASING

The way sequences of notes are grouped together to form units of melody, the expression of musical sentences so that the choreography reflects changes in the music.

RHYTHM

The repeated pattern or grouping of musical beats. Also *Rhythm* in Main Glossary.

SEAMLESSNESS

Cuts and transitions are smooth and create an overall flow of the music.

STYLE

Distinctive and identifiable form used in artistic expression.

SUITABILITY

Appropriateness of the music to the type and character of the horse.

SYMPHONY

Many sounds playing together; a major work for orchestra; large orchestra.

SYNCOPATION

Shift in accent that occurs when a normally weak beat is stressed.

TEMPO

Measured by a metronome, the rate of repetition of the stride (in canter) or the rate of repetition of the emphasized beats of the stride (in walk and trot). See also *Beat* and *Tempo* in Main Glossary.

THEME

Distinct, recurring and unifying quality or idea.

VOCAL

Human voice used as an instrument.