

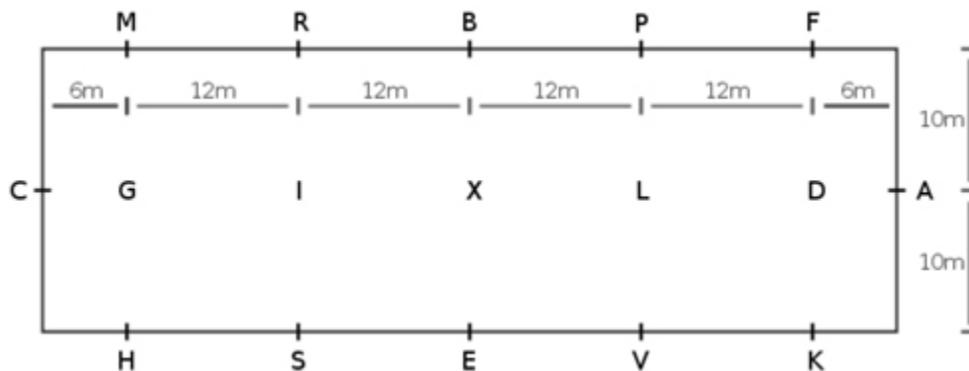
# FAQS for Dressage Niagara

For Equestrian Canada rules visit the EC Website under [Section E – Dressage and Para-Dressage](#)

## What is Dressage?

Dressage is a French term meaning “training” and its purpose is to develop the horse’s natural athletic ability and willingness to work making him calm, supple and attentive to his rider. The first documented treatise on the training of the horse dates back the Greek Xenophon about 400 BC. Dressage has been a competitive Olympic sport since 1900 and was derived from the military use of the horse in war.

Modern dressage competitions (internationally, nationally, and local) occur in a 20m x 60m arena in predetermined patterns in 9 levels of increasing difficulty.



## What are all those letters for?

The dressage tests are usually ridden in the 20m x 60m standard arena but occasionally the Training and some of the First level tests can be scheduled in the 20m x 40m small arena. The letters around the arena are what guide you through the test. They tell you where to start and stop movements, and which directions to go, etc. There is no real meaning to them except through history (the Imperial German Court and German cavalry) but an easy way to remember the order of the letter is “All King Edward's Horses Can Make Big Fences” and the centre letter is “X”. For the higher tests you will need to remember to “RSVP” and the centreline letters “GILD”.

## What are the levels?

The levels in dressage are designed as part of the training scale. For EC competitions, there is Walk/Trot, Training, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Levels, and for FEI there is Prix St. George, Intermediate and Grand Prix. There may be more than one test per level, and each successive test is more difficult than the previous, adding new elements and movements to the tests each time.

## What is a Freestyle?

A Freestyle is the ultimate goal of a dressage rider – riding to music. Sometimes known as Musical Kur, it is a form of dressage where the horse’s paces are set to music to create a competitive dance. A Freestyle test is open to horses competing at the same technical level or higher as the Freestyle. Each

level has required movements, or technical requirements, that must be performed that mirror the training expected in the compulsory tests for that level. The technical execution and artistic impression both count for the score sheet. Finding the right music that matches your horse's movement and personality can be challenging but fun!

**I don't own a horse; can I still become a member?**

Absolutely! Anyone interested in horses, dressage or sports in Niagara can join.

**I don't own a 'Dressage Horse' per se; can I still show?**

If you own or lease a horse, you can show dressage! We have many types, breeds, ages, colours and sizes that show at our club. Any horse/pony and rider can learn dressage. Bring your zebra! Seriously, you can show any equid, including donkeys and mules. Although very popular, unicorns are not permitted at this time.

**I don't own a dressage saddle, what can I do?**

For the lower levels, any English saddle with stirrups is acceptable (all purpose, side saddle, jumping, saddle seat, etc.), in leather or synthetic, in a dark colour, with or without a tree. Western, Australian and any saddle with a horn, is not permitted. Bareback is also not permitted.

**Must I use a white saddle pad?**

If a saddle pad is used, it must be solid white, off-white, grey, black or other dark colour. It may have piping of a different colour to the pad. Riders may have sponsor, stable, Canadian flag or club logo on their pad – the maximum logo area is 200 cm<sup>2</sup> on each side and a maximum of one sponsor's logo per side.

**Where do I get the show entry forms?**

You can download entry forms from our website [www.dressageniagara.com](http://www.dressageniagara.com) or email us at [info@dressageniagara.com](mailto:info@dressageniagara.com) and we will send you the forms. Forms will also be printed and available at our clinics and shows. Entry forms must be submitted and postmarked 9 days before the show date. Late entries are subject to a late fee and only accepted if space permits, at the discretion of the competition committee.

**What classes can my horse enter?**

You can sign up for 2 consecutive EC competition levels. For example, you can enter your horse for Training and First Level but not Training and Second Level. Your coach can advise which level(s) you should be entering; however, it is recommended that you enter at least one level below what you are currently training at home. A horse may compete to a maximum of four tests per day, including a Freestyle test, and can have more than one rider; however, the riders must be competing in different divisions (e.g. Junior and Open). The current dressage tests can be found at <https://www.equestrian.ca/sport/dressage/tests>.

**What does it mean by Junior, Open and Adult Amateur?**

The Open category is for all competitors, regardless of age or professional status. Junior is a protected category open to all athletes until the end of the calendar year in which they reach the age of 18.

Amateur is another protected category for all athletes who are over the age of 18 and are not receiving remuneration from: teaching or training in the horse industry; showing/schooling in EC-sanctioned competitions; or acting as an agent or accepting commissions for the sale/lease of a horse. An Amateur status is issued by EC on your EC sport license cards; you must pay the appropriate fees and sign the amateur declaration on your sport license application/renewal form. For more information, please see Article E 3.4 Categories and Eligibility to Compete of the EC rules.

### **What is the difference between Bronze and Silver Levels of competition?**

A few years back, Equestrian Canada standardized our Canadian showing program. Bronze would be the equivalent of a local schooling level and Silver is the old Trillium or Provincial level of showing. There is also Gold for National and Platinum for International. If you're just starting out, try Bronze level! Silver level is a little more expensive and you will need to have your horse recorded with Equestrian Canada (previously known as a passport), but it allows you to qualify and compete at the Silver Championships at the end of the year.

### **What is CADORA?**

CADORA stands for Canadian Dressage Owners and Riders Association, another organization dedicated to the development of dressage in Canada, and another way you can qualify for Silver and Bronze year-end awards. Visit <http://ontario.cadora.ca> for more information. You do not need to be a CADORA member to be a member of or show at Dressage Niagara.

### **Can I ride an eventing test?**

The EC Eventing Dressage phase tests are a little different than the EC Dressage competition tests. The EC Eventing levels are Entry, Pre-Training, Training, and Preliminary with 2 dressage tests per level. Dressage Niagara only offers the EC Dressage competition Walk/Trot to Intermediate I tests at their sanctioned shows. The EC Eventing Entry, Pre-Training and Training level dressage tests are similar to EC Dressage Training level tests, and the EC Eventing Preliminary tests are similar to EC First Level tests.

### **What about Para-Dressage?**

Dressage Niagara also offers the National Para-Dressage Tests (<https://www.equestrian.ca/sport/para-equestrian/tests>) at all of their recognized shows.

### **How do I know when I'm ready to show?**

Of course, ask your coach to see if they think you're ready and what level and test you should ride, but you're welcome to come out to a show to watch, ask questions and see what it involves before entering. We do offer Walk/Trot tests and all tests may be ridden Hors Concours.

### **What is Hors Concours?**

Hors concours means that you can participate without competing for a prize. You still pay an entry fee, be judged by the judge, receive your tests to get feedback on how you did, but you will not be considered for placings or ribbons. It allows you and your horse to experience competing without the pressure of actual competition and not worry about scoring but still get the opinion of a judge. You will not be considered for high point of the day or year-end awards.

**Can I just come and school my horse?**

Yes. You will need to complete an entry form and a small fee will apply, but you can come and school your horse on the property with the exception of the show ring. You will need to display your show number at all times while schooling your horse on the show grounds. All riders require their Ontario Equestrian membership to be on the property for insurance purposes. If you would like to enter the show ring, consider riding a test horse concours.

**My horse is outside 24/7, how *clean* does he have to be for the show?**

If you own a mudpuppy or a horse named 'Pigpen', we understand. Although there is really no rule about showing a freshly bathed, lemon-scented, squeaky-clean equine with impossibly-white whites, it is respectful to the judge to have a well-groomed horse. Braiding the mane is recommended for recognized events, plus it shows off the horse's neckline to the judge. Your horse should look happy, healthy and dust free. They can keep their whiskers.

**I can't wait to show! What time can I arrive at the show grounds?**

The show office will be open 30 minutes before the start of the show, but set up crew and barn staff will be available before then. All horse MUST be wearing their show numbers the day of the show when walking the showgrounds and warming up.

**Can I trailer in the night before?**

Yes. Overnight stabling is available; however, schooling your horse in the show ring once the ring is set up (after 3 pm the day before the show) is not permitted. Please ask the property manager or the set up crew where you can school your horse.

**What do I wear?**

It is required that you wear appropriate head gear/safety helmet at all times while mounted. Formal show attire is recommended at schooling shows and required at recognized shows. At schooling shows/clinics, nice polos or button down shirts with short sleeves are appropriate. Do not wear sleeveless shirts or T-shirts. Keep colors conservative, and clothes should fit nicely. Hunt seat show attire is acceptable. Dark coloured half chaps may only be worn for Bronze level riders. Gloves are required; spurs and whips are optional. See EC rules Article E 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 for more info. Long hair should be kept in a hair net or tied back in a braid or a bun; no ponytails.

**When I get to wear a top hat and tails?**

All riders are now required to safety helmets at all levels of EC competitions, top hats are no longer permitted. Long-tailed coats, or the Shadbelly, are not seen until the FEI levels. A dark hunt coat or a short-tailed dressage jacket is fine. You may also wear a dark tailored dressage vest or eventing vest with a long sleeve white or off-white show shirt.

**Do I need to go out and buy a double bridle?**

For lower levels, a simple, dark coloured snaffle bridle is ideal. A double bridle, also known as a Full or Weymouth bridle, has 2 bits (one snaffle, one curb) and 4 reins, and is optional for Third Level and up. See the EC rules Article E 4.2 for acceptable bridles, nosebands, reins and bits. Bitless bridles and bridleless are not permitted.

**What if it's extremely hot? Do I have to wear my show jacket?**

The steward/judge will decide the day of the show if jackets are excused, but you only need to wear your jacket while in the show ring. Don't forget that your show shirt must have sleeves (short or long)! If you're wearing a stock tie, tie or collar, make sure that it is pinned to your show shirt. If jackets are excused, ties and collars can be removed.

**Is there an order of go?**

All of our tests have a scheduled time, so plan accordingly! Have your horse sufficiently warmed up and ready to ride your test at the designated time. Our whipper-in will help you to keep on schedule and let you know when to be ready to enter in the ring. You can enter the surrounding competition ring after the previous rider has finished their test and has saluted the judge. If the tests are running early, you can choose to wait until your scheduled time or go sooner. If the classes are running late, the whipper-in will give you an approximate time before you're required to enter in the ring. Please note that it is your responsibility to enter the ring on time, otherwise delays may be penalized.

**How do I get my ride times?**

Times will be available on our website and posted on our Facebook page the Thursday before the show.

**Can I hand walk my horse around the ring before I show?**

Unfortunately, there is no hand walking of horses once the show ring has been set up; however, prior to your test you can ride your horse around the show ring in the time permitted before starting your test and entering the ring at A.

**What if I forget my test before I enter the ring or forget part of it halfway through!?**

Although it is a good idea to have your test memorized and practice it a few times at home, you can elect a caller to read the test for you. No other outside commentary or instructions are permitted (this may result in an elimination). A caller must position themselves as to not obstruct the judge's view so we recommend standing outside the show ring at B or E. The caller will read each movement in order once, but no more than twice, prior to you reaching that part of the movement. Note that the dress code for callers is "smart casual" such as jeans, slacks and mid-length shorts; tank tops and daisy-dukes are not allowed. It is the responsibility of the rider to provide their own caller; however, if you're stuck, you can ask around or ask the show office to see if anyone is available to help you out. We're pretty friendly! All Freestyles must be ridden from memory and cannot be called. If you do go off course, the judge will signal you (either with their bell or whistle), and let you know where you need to start again. You will be given an off course error on your test but you can pick up where you left off and continue on your way.

**Why are there two people in the Judge's Tent at the letter C?**

The person in front of C is the judge and the other person is the scribe. The judge dictates your movement scores and feedback to the scribe. When you are finished the judge will add the collective scores and additional comments. Remember, they are not fire-breathing dragons; they are rooting for you as well and hope that you have a successful ride. Try saying, "Good morning/afternoon!" before you start your test and before the bell/whistle. If you're lucky, the judge might have other comments or

questions about your ride, so after your final salute and you've praised your pony on how well they did, don't immediately turn around and exit, walk on a loose rein to C and thank the judge. Once they've acknowledged you, usually with a nod or a 'thank you', you can now leave the ring.

### **What's a Steward?**

A Steward is primarily responsible for checking equipment for adherence to the EC Dressage rules, such as the length of your whip, your spurs and the bit you are using. If you have any questions about your tack or a question about the rules, please see the steward **prior** to riding your test. Once you've completed your test and are leaving the show ring, the steward will check your equipment at the gate to make sure that you've complied with the appropriate rules. You can dismount after the steward has checked your equipment. Failure to comply with the rules may result in elimination.

### **When are the results posted?**

Please be patient with our show office. As soon as we have received your test(s) from the judge, our show office will calculate your scores and they will be posted up outside of the show office throughout the day. All of the results from the show will be posted on our website the week after the show.

### **Can I see how I did?**

After all of the tests have been ridden and scored in your class/division, and you've returned your rider number, you can collect your tests from the show office.

### **Do I have to jog back into the ring to get my ribbon?**

Due to scheduling of the tests, it may take several hours for your class or division to be completed, posted and awarded. Ribbons may be picked up with your tests at the show office when you return your rider number.

### **What do I do when I'm not showing or riding?**

Keep in mind that this is a show, so if you're near the show ring, try to keep conversations polite and quiet so that it does not disrupt the show office staff, judge or exhibitor. If you're on your horse, stay to the designated warmup areas; if you're not on a horse, please move out of the way of individuals preparing to show or warming up. If you've lost your horse, please go find them. Check the pony paddock. They're always recruiting.

### **Can I bring my friends and family?**

Absolutely! Bring a cheering section, a comfy camp chair and take pictures. All of our shows are free to spectators and food will be available for purchase onsite. Note that some horses are a little spooky with cheering, so please use your discretion. The 'soft clap' is appropriate in most cases. Air horns, sirens and cowbells are frowned upon.

### **Can I bring my dog?**

No. We ask that you leave your pooches and other pets at home for the duration of the event.

### **Can I lunge my horse?**

Yes. We will have a designated area that you can lunge your horse on the day of the show. Horses cannot be lunged in the show arena or warm-up areas, so please obey the signs!

**Can I graze my horse?**

Although the show grounds do have pasture and grassy areas we recommend that you practice biosecurity with your horse(s) to help manage parasites, so ask the property manager beforehand and graze at your own caution.

**Do I need to clean up after my own horse?**

Yes, please! If your horse is in the trailering area, please try to remove all manure when you leave the property. If your horse is in the stabling area, there are muck buckets and forks to clean up.

**Can I help out at a show or clinic?**

Absolutely! We're always looking for volunteers at our events. In fact, it's a requirement for all year-end award contenders. To qualify for year-end awards, all eligible members must be in good standing and have volunteered a minimum of 4 hours at a show. A delegate for the volunteer hours may be chosen provided that the volunteer coordinator is notified of the delegate and the member they represent. At our shows we will need runners, a whipper-in, a scribe, an announcer, and show office staff. We will also need assistance with the show ring(s) and show office setup the day before a show and teardown after show completion.