

CHAPTER 9-A
Freestyle Rules, Guidelines and Definitions
First, Second, Third, and Fourth Level freestyle

The United States Dressage Federation

Encourages originality and creativity in freestyle, within the context of classical dressage

- Sets guidelines for the riding of freestyle competitions in national competition
- Provides educational materials and activities for competitors, management, and judges
- Proposes recommendations about freestyle to the USDF Advisory Councils on pertinent problems
- Assists in developing a wider audience for dressage through the presentation of musical rides

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USDF Freestyle Committee Mission Statement:

To promote Freestyle and provide educational opportunities dealing with choreography, music and judging. To use musical rides to increase exposure and popularize Freestyle, Quadrille, Pas de Deux and the sport of Dressage.

Eligibility

Dressage musical freestyle is an exciting combination of the technical and artistic aspects of classical dressage. To foster the highest possible technical quality in freestyle performances, competitors are encouraged to attempt freestyle only at the level at which they have already demonstrated proficiency. Refer to USEF Rules, DR 128.9: "Except for USEF/USDF Championship classes and for FEI Pony Riders, FEI Junior and Young Rider Freestyles, in order to enter a freestyle class at any level, a horse/rider combination must have received a minimum score of 58% in the highest test of the declared freestyle level or any test of a higher level at a USEF-recognized competition. A photocopy of the test verifying eligibility must be submitted with the entry for a freestyle class." For verification, access www.usef.org.

General

Dressage musical freestyle is an artistic program created by the rider to present his or her horse to its best advantage in an artistic, musical context.

- It is judged according to technical execution (execution of compulsory movements) and artistic impression (harmony, choreography, degree of difficulty, musicality).
- It is performed in a standard dressage arena (20 x 60 meters).
- A copy of the program is not submitted in advance.
- Current USDF score sheets must be used.
- It is permissible to ride with the reins in one hand.

Time

- The time limit for all USDF freestyles is five minutes. There is no minimum time requirement.
- The bell or whistle will not be sounded at the end of five minutes.
- Movements performed after the time limit has elapsed will not be scored. Two (2) points will be deducted from the total for artistic impression for exceeding the time limit.
- The program is timed and judged from the horse's move-off after the initial halt and salute. Timing will cease at the final halt and salute.
- The rider must either enter the arena or signal the sound engineer within 45 seconds of the entry bell, or be eliminated.
- The rider must enter the arena within 20 seconds of the start of the music, or be eliminated.

Music

- Music is mandatory.
- Riders who edit existing music for the freestyle should consider securing the mechanical rights for that music. (Refer to Rule #16 under Music and Music Media Format.)
- If the music source fails, the competitor may (time permitting and at the discretion of the management)
- Restart
- Be rescheduled.

Judges

- Freestyle competitions must be judged by USEF-licensed dressage judges, at levels appropriate to their license.
- Two or three judges may be located on the short end of the arena, or one may sit on the long side.
- If more than one judge is officiating, all judges should score both technical execution and artistic impression.

Equipment and Turnout

- Attire, tack, and saddlery for all freestyle classes must comply with USEF DR 120 and DR 121. Costume classes, etc., may also be offered, if conditions are clearly stated in the prize list. Contact USDF for specific information regarding pas de deux and quadrille classes, which are also ridden to music.

ELEMENTS OF A DRESSAGE TEST OR FREESTYLE

- *Dressage Movements*: An exercise as opposed to a figure, transition or a pattern. Dressage Movements are leg yields, rein-back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on haunches, half-pass (trot or canter), flying change, pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe, and passage.
- *Test Movements*: All of the elements to be scored in one box on a dressage test sheet.
- *Figures*: Geometrical component of a dressage test such as circle, change of rein, and figure-of-eight. Erroneously used interchangeably with “movements”.
- *Patterns*: Geometric design formed in the arena when movements, figures and transitions are combined.
- *Combinations*: Direct connection of any movement of figure with another movement or figure.
- *Transitions*: Changes between two different gaits or from one pace to another within the same gait.
- *Gaits*: Any of the various patterns of foot movements (or rhythms) of a horse such as walk, trot, pace, amble, canter or gallop. Walk, trot, and canter are gaits used in dressage.
- *Paces(s)*:
 1. a. Named variations(s) within a gait (at walk; collected, medium, extended and free; at trot and canter: collected, working, medium, and characterized by a given length of stride, as well as by other attributes listed under the individual definitions of the various paces.
 - b. MPM with a gait as determined by stride, length while maintaining essentially the same tempo.
 2. A gait in which the lateral pairs of legs move in unison (not a dressage gait).

(There is obviously some overlap. As examples: a simple change is a test movement and a combination; a half-pass is a dressage movement, but half-pass zigzag in trot is a pattern, and half-pass zigzag in canter with flying change is a combination.)

REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

Technical Execution

- Certain compulsory movements must be incorporated into the freestyle program. These are listed on the score sheet under technical execution.
- Of these, some must be demonstrated on both hands (in both directions). These are so indicated on the score sheet by a dotted line in the column labeled “Preliminary Notes.” The divided space allows judges to score compulsory movements to the left and right.
- Reins in One Hand: There should be no more than three occurrences. This rule can be found in the FEI “Annex VII Directives for Assessing the Degree of Difficulty in a Freestyle Test.”

Artistic Impression

A freestyle may include all elements and movements EXCEPT dressage movements found only in tests above the level of that entered or declared.

- Any figures, patterns, combination, or transitions composed of elements permitted in the declared level are permitted. There are no limitations on shape or combination of figures, even if the resulting configuration is found in higher levels.
- Following is a list of dressage movements (and some combinations and transitions) specifically permitted and forbidden at each level.

FIRST LEVEL

- *Clearly Forbidden*: Reinback, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, half-pass, flying changes, turn on haunches, or canter or walk pirouette, piaffe, passage.
Clearly Allowed: Counter-canter (any configuration), zigzag leg yield, leg yield along wall (like shoulder-in), lengthen trot or canter on 20-meter circle, canter serpentine, walk-canter-walk-canter, halt-canter-halt-canter, 10 meter circle or smaller at trot, 15 meter circle or smaller at canter, all figures including circles regardless of size.

SECOND LEVEL

- *Clearly Forbidden*: Half-pass, flying changes, canter pirouette, piaffe, passage.
Clearly Allowed: Full and double turn on haunches, medium canter and trot on 20-meter circle, medium canter on diagonal, halt-canter-halt-canter, 10 meter circle or smaller at canter.

THIRD LEVEL

Clearly Forbidden:

Tempi changes (4s, 3s, 2s, 1s), canter pirouette, piaffe, passage.

Clearly Allowed:

Everything that is not clearly forbidden, including: half-pass zigzag in trot, half-pass zigzag in canter with flying changes, full and double walk pirouettes.

FOURTH LEVEL

Clearly Forbidden:

Full canter pirouette, tempi changes (2s and 1s), piaffe, passage.

Clearly Allowed:

Everything that is not clearly forbidden.

Score Sheets

Competitors should obtain from USDF the score sheets for the level in which they plan to compete.

Scoring/Judging

Two (2) sets of marks are given—one for technical execution and one for artistic impression. Each set of marks is totalled separately, then the totals are added together and converted to the final percentage score. In the case of two or more judges, scores will be averaged and these averages will comprise the scores for technical execution and artistic impression.

Technical Execution

- Preliminary notes will be given for each execution, in each direction, of each of the compulsory movements. Preliminary notes for compulsory movements are averaged to provide the “judge’s mark.” In the case of compulsory movements that must be shown on both hands, all of the scores in the right column box are added and averaged, and all the scores in the left column box are added and averaged. Those two scores are then averaged for the “judge’s mark.” The judge may make further adjustment to reflect his or her impression of the evenness and consistency of the execution on both hands.
- If a required movement that need not be shown on both hands is not performed, it will receive a score of zero (0) under “final score.”
- If a required movement that must be shown on both hands is not shown at all, it will receive a score of zero (0) under “final score.”
- If a required movement that must be shown on both hands is shown on only one hand, it will receive a zero (0) in one of the columns under “preliminary notes” (L or R as appropriate). The average score of those recorded in the other L or R column will be averaged and the average divided by two (2) to determine the “judge’s mark” for that movement.
- In addition, omission of a required movement or direction may affect the artistic impression.
- In scoring technical execution, “judge’s marks” must be given in half-points or full points (no tenths).

Artistic Impression

- In scoring artistic impression, “judge’s marks” must be given in half-points or full points (no tenths).
- Movements “above the level” should not be rewarded in the artistic impression.

Non-compulsory Movements

Those movements not required on the score sheet and not found in higher-level tests may be rewarded or penalized under “choreography” and/or “degree of difficulty.”

Deductions

- Movements “above the level” (found ONLY in a higher level test) receive a deduction of four points from the total for technical execution for each illegal movement, but not for each recurrence of the same movement.
- Two points will be deducted from the total for artistic impression if the program exceeds five minutes.

Tie

In the case of a tie, the higher total for artistic impression will break the tie.

MUSICAL FREESTYLE GUIDELINES

Music and Music Media Format

(Tape/CD Recordings)

- Any type of music may be selected. The format for the freestyle music should be tape or CD (preferably both for backup purposes). Final preparation of the music in a professional studio is recommended to ensure proper equalization, balance, and decibel levels.

- It is strongly recommended that music for a freestyle ride be of one genre, style, or theme. Mixing musical genres within one program is not recommended.
- Strict tempo of music in relation to gaits is not required. However, for an effective freestyle, the tempo of the music should match the tempo of the horse's gaits.
- Music that can be interpreted choreographically and create highlights is encouraged.
- Vocals are permitted
- The music may begin before, while, or after the horse and rider enter the arena. (It is advisable to arrange for entrance music as a check that the tape is working.)
- A cohesive musical theme will be scored higher than a disjointed mish-mash of musical selections.
- The music tape/CD should be cohesive. Editing should be fluid and smooth. Choppy or disruptive editing on the music tape/CD will detract from the overall artistic impression.
- The music tape/CD should have only the freestyle ride on it. The tape/CD should be clearly labeled (on the music side of the tape) with the competitor's name, horse's name, and level of ride.
- Always bring an extra copy of the music tape/CD to the competition. Mark it in the same way as the original, plus some additional notation indicating that it is a backup copy.
- Written instructions should be submitted with the music tape/CD stating: competitor's name, horse's name and show number, class number, time of ride, level of ride, plus a brief, clear explanation of when to push the "play" button at the start of the ride.
- Before giving the music tape/CD to the person who will run the sound equipment during the competition, cue it up so that the music is ready to play when the "play" button is pushed. (If help is needed, ask the advice of the sound technician.)
- Consult the competition prize list for information about sound checks and to whom to give the tape/CD and instructions.
- Each competitor should be permitted one representative in the sound system booth to supervise the handling of the tape. This person should not interfere with the show announcer or management in any way.
- Evaluation of artistic merit should be based on these guidelines and on a broad artistic appreciation, not on mere personal preference ("I don't like Mozart" or "Only classical music is appropriate").
- According to Section 115 of the Copyright Act, a mechanical license must be obtained for the re-recording of music in any format
- For information on obtaining a mechanical license it is recommended that the rider contact the National Music publisher's Association, Inc. at www.nmpa.org.
- Competitors must pick up their music tapes/CDs before leaving the show.

Choreography

- Each competitive level has specific compulsory elements that must be performed.
- The horse should be shown to its best ability. Special strengths can be maximized while minimizing weaknesses. The design of the ride should be commensurate with the ability of the horse and rider.
- Compulsory elements are those that are listed on the freestyle score sheets. At each level, certain movements must be shown on both reins; these are indicated on the score sheets by a dashed line in the "preliminary notes" column.
- Competitors should be careful not to use movements that are clearly above the level being shown. Refer to "Requirements and Limitations."
- Permitted and compulsory elements may be shown in any pattern, placement, or order.
- A composition that is creative will be scored higher than one that looks like a reworked dressage test set to music.
- The beginning and end of the freestyle should be executed facing C by a halt and salute.
- The freestyle choreography should utilize the entire arena, not just the rails and diagonals. Creativity in the use of figures and space is encouraged. Movements should be presented clearly enough to be easily identifiable by the judge.
- While riders are encouraged to take chances and increase the degree of difficulty, care should be taken to present movements (in terms of choice and placement) that show off the horse's best technical ability.
- The letters of the arena serve as markers only. Movements or figures need not be executed at the letters.
- To encourage the highest possible technical quality in freestyle performances, competitors are urged to perform freestyles at one level below the level at which they are schooling. Poor technical performances will impair the artistic harmony of the ride. However, technical proficiency cannot make up for artistic weakness.

Competition Management

The Prize List

- State level(s) and how results will be tabulated and awarded (combined levels, level of choice, etc.).

- State time and place of sound check.
- State when, where, and to whom the tape and instructions should be delivered.

Classes Offered

- First, Second, Third, and Fourth Level freestyles may be offered as four separate classes or as a combined “USDF Freestyle” class. It is best to separate the classes if entries warrant. When reporting freestyle scores to USDF, the level of each ride must be indicated. FEI Intermediate I, Grand Prix, and Prix St. Georges Young Rider freestyle classes may also be offered, but these are judged according to FEI rules. There are no national Training Level freestyle score sheets.

Score Sheets

- Current USDF score sheets must be used. USDF freestyle score sheets are available from the USDF office. USEF carries the FEI Intermediate I, Grand Prix, and Prix St. Georges Young Rider freestyle score sheets. These scoresheets are copyrighted and may not be photocopied.

Judges

- USDF freestyles must be judged by licensed USEF dressage judges at the levels appropriate to the license.
- Two (2) or three (3) judges may be located on the short end, or one may sit on the long side.

Time

- The rides should be timed with a stopwatch by someone appointed by the competition management. The official timer should have no other duties during the freestyle class except to accurately time the rides. In addition, a backup timer is advisable. The timer should inform the judge immediately when five minutes has elapsed, as well as the final total time used.
- if an official timer is not available, a stopwatch or timer should be provided to the judge for freestyle judging.

Scheduling

- The demands of judging freestyle are considerable and require more time than regular dressage tests. Freestyles should be scheduled at intervals of at least nine or ten minutes.
- Freestyles are intended to be audience pleasers and should always be scheduled at times chosen for maximum audience participation.
- Freestyles should be scheduled so that the music does not interfere with activities in adjacent arenas and so that show announcements do not interfere with the music.
- To encourage entries in freestyle classes, it is suggested to offer a class and awards at each level rather than combining all freestyle levels. At the minimum, classes should be split between USDF/USEF and FEI levels.

Sound and Sound System

- Unless management can obtain a good, clear, loud sound system, freestyle classes should not be offered. An unamplified portable tape/CD player at B does not supply sufficient sound quality or volume.
- If the dressage organizers, announcer, or show facility do not have a decent sound system, management should contact schools, clubs, stores, or members to rent, borrow, or buy equipment
- Well ahead of the competition date, the sound system and acoustics of the facility should be checked. People should be placed at the location of each judge, in the spectator area and in the arena to determine acoustical distortion and volume requirements of the area. (This will change somewhat when the area is filled with people and horses or in the event of wind or weather changes.)
- Competitors may request a sound check of their tape/CD. Management should determine and post schedules of time allowed for sound checks (with sound technicians) well in advance of the class.
- The prize list should state when, where, and to whom the tape/CD and instructions should be delivered and when the sound check may be made.

Reporting Scores to USDF

- Freestyle scores from every ride performed must be reported to USDF. Regular USDF Class Report forms may be used
- Report the name and USDF number of the horse, rider, and owner.
- Report the judges of every freestyle class.
- If several levels are combined into one class, report the level of every entrant’s ride.
- For each ride, report the total points for technical execution, the total points for artistic impression, and the total percentage for the ride. If several judges officiate, report the points awarded by each judge.
- In the case of a tie, the higher total for artistic impression will break the tie.

Music Licensing

USEF has contracts with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI) to license all USEF-recognized and endorsed competitions and events held in the United States effective 7/1/01.

These contracts grant non-exclusive licenses to USEF for its recognized and endorsed competitions and events to perform, present, or cause the live and recorded performance of all non-dramatic renditions of the separate musical compositions in the ASCAP and BMI repertoires. These repertoires include all copyrighted musical compositions written or published by ASCAP or BMI members or members of affiliated foreign performing rights societies. While some competitions feature music as part of the class, for example in dressage — freestyle to music, many use music for entertainment purposes. The licenses provide another valuable benefit to USEF-recognized and endorsed competitions.

Competition management may request additional information regarding the terms and limitations of both agreements by contacting the USEF office at (859) 258-2472.

UNDERSTANDING THE ARTISTIC SCORE SHEET

(Bold italic denotes the exact wording of the artistic side of the 2007 USDF Freestyle Score Sheet.)

- **Rhythm, energy and elasticity (coefficient 2)**
Correctness of gaits; impulsion.
- **Harmony between horse and rider (coefficient 2)**
Submission—throughness; absence of resistance.
- **Choreography, use of arena, inventiveness, design cohesiveness, balance, ingenuity and creativity (coefficient 3)**
Construction of patterns and combinations of patterns. Logical development and clarity of construction.
Balance in use
of space and use of gaits.
- **Degree of difficulty (coefficient 1)**
Well-calculated risks. The horse/rider team successfully performs a single element or a combination of elements in a
way that exceeds the requirement of the level.
- **Choice of music & interpretation of music – suitability, cohesiveness, editing, phrasing and dynamics (coefficient 4)**
Appropriateness of rhythm and tempo to type and gaits of horse. Music selections are from one genre, style, or theme. Cuts and transitions are smooth and create an overall flow of the music. Choreography reflects changes in the music.



Freestyle Comparisons

Level	USDF Rules for First – Fourth Level Freestyles	USEF & FEI Rules for FEI Level Freestyles
Maximum and Minimum Time Limits	There is a maximum time (time limit) but no minimum time.	There is a maximum time (time limit) and a minimum time.
Time Limit Deductions	Two points are deducted from the total for Artistic Impression for exceeding the time limit. There is no minimum time or specified deduction.	There is a two point deduction from the total for artistic presentation for being over the time limit or under the minimum time.
Points, Half-Points	Judges marks for Technical Execution and Artistic Impression must be given in half-points or full points (no tenths).	Only full marks are allowed on the Technical (left) side, and only full or half marks on the Artistic (right) side (no tenths).
Above the Level Movements	Movements “above the level” are penalized by a four-point deduction from the total for Technical Execution for each illegal movement, but not for each recurrence of the same movement.	A rider rotating more than half pirouette at Young Rider Freestyle, one full pirouette at Intermediate I, or double pirouette at Grand Prix will receive “0” for the movement, plus a score for choreography and degree of difficulty no higher than “5”. All other movements “above the level” declared shall be penalized by elimination.

Level	USDF Rules for First – Fourth Level Freestyles	USEF & FEI Rules for FEI Level Freestyles
Music After the Halt	Exit music is not regulated. Note: A competitor is not penalized for exit music, either after the final halt/salute or when exiting the arena.	Music must cease at the final salute. Note: In other words, the competitor is eliminated for exit music.
Time of Entry	The rider must enter the arena or signal the sound engineer within 45 seconds of the bell, and the rider must enter the arena within 20 seconds of the start of the music, or will be eliminated.	The competitor must enter the ring within 45 seconds of the bell, and a rider must enter the arena within 20 seconds of the music starting. Note: A competitor is eliminated for exceeding these time limits.
Halt and Salute	At the beginning and end of a freestyle test, a halt with a salute is compulsory. The halt must be executed facing “C.” A rider who does not halt for the salute is eliminated.	At the beginning and end, a halt with a salute is compulsory. Note: There is no recommendation or requirement that the competitor must face C for the halt and salute. A rider who does not halt for the salute is eliminated.