

## Driven Dressage Basics

Taking the mystery out of dressage....



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## What is the judge looking for, anyway?



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## How can I get a better score on my test?



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How can I improve communication with my horse???



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Theory comes first.....

Understanding the Dressage Training Scale

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Collection  
Straightness  
Impulsion  
Contact/Connection  
Suppleness/Looseness  
Rhythm/Relaxation

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Judges use the training scale...

- To evaluate your horse's training
- To score your test according to the requirements at each level

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You can use the training scale...

To form a better partnership between you and your horse, if you compete or if you just enjoy a drive down the trail

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## Rhythm and Relaxation

The first and **most important** step in the training scale

Affects all steps on the scale



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Mental and Physical Relaxation allow the horse to step in the natural rhythm of each gait

- Walk – Four Beat
- Trot – Two Beat
- Canter – Three Beat
- Rein Back – Two Beat

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## Rhythm and Relaxation

- The horse is working with his back
- Regularity of steps AND strides in all gaits and transitions
- Does the horse track up?

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**Rhythm and Relaxation**

Tempo is a key part of this step

Tempo is the rate of repetition of footfalls in a gait, fast or slow

Each horse has a tempo in which it can relax, balance and swing, depending upon it's confirmation, level of training and strength.

Very important in training!

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**Rhythm and Relaxation**

**Regularity of steps and strides in all gaits and transitions**

**Example:**

**Trot to walk transition - horse trots in the same rhythm and tempo, then makes a change to walk going forward in long, even strides.**

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**Collection**  
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**Rhythm/Relaxation**

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**Suppleness and Looseness**

Builds on rhythm and relaxation  
and cannot exist without them

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**Types of Suppleness**

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**Lateral:** **Sideways Bend**

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Lateral Bend is the degree to which a horse can bend his body and neck sideways, on a circle or sideways.



A correct bend is consistent from head to tail, horse slightly bent to the inside of circles and figures.

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### Longitudinal Bend



Looseness of the poll, neck, back and haunches allowing horse to stretch onto the bit

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### The horse's frame/outline.....

Should be able to be shortened or lengthened at will

Should match the work he is being asked to do

Should not be a static thing - a headset is not what we are looking for

Goes along with the horse's level of strength and balance and the range he can show will increase as his training progresses

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### Frame changing with training...



Five year old



Nine year old

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### Clues to identifying Suppleness and Looseness:

- ❖ Mouth closed and mouthing bit quietly
- ❖ Tail swinging softly
- ❖ The horse allows itself to be driven forward, pushed toward the hand.

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### Suppleness and Looseness in a young horse



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### Contact/Acceptance of the Bit

Acceptance and response to the rein aids while in a round outline with a mouth that is relaxed

A light, soft but constant contact, horse obedient and submissive

Aids passing through a supple poll



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### Contact/Acceptance of the Bit

Good contact can be seen when:

- ❖The horse's back is raised
- ❖His quarters are engaged
- ❖His poll is the highest point
- ❖His jaw is relaxed
- ❖His nose is a bit in front of the vertical

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**Impulsion**

- Energy, not speed
- Free flowing energy
- Lively active steps

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**Impulsion**



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**Impulsion**

Good impulsion is shown when a horse steps under his barrel and engages his hocks.

The horse shows a desire to go forward

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**Impulsion**



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**Collection**  
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**Straightness**

Horses are crooked by nature

Good training focuses on developing both sides and both hind legs of the horse so he steps through equally

A horse is straight when the hind foot steps into the line of the front foot, on straight lines or on curved lines

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**Collection**

**Straightness**

**Impulsion**

**Contact/Connection**

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**Collection**

The Holy Grail!!

When all elements are present, true collection can occur

Requires strength built through correct daily work

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## Identifying Collection

Look for:

- ❖ Lowering of the haunches
- ❖ Lightness of the shoulders and forehead
- ❖ Shorter and higher steps
- ❖ More bend in the joints of the hind legs
- ❖ Withers look higher
- ❖ The horse seems to move uphill
- ❖ Neck more raised
- ❖ Head closer to the vertical

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## Each step of the scale builds on the one below it

Each step is being worked while training, with emphasis on laying a correct base for the pyramid, and confirming each step before focusing on the next one

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## Questions on the Training Scale?



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## Preparing for your Dressage Test

What you must know before embarking on this journey....

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**Know Your Test!**

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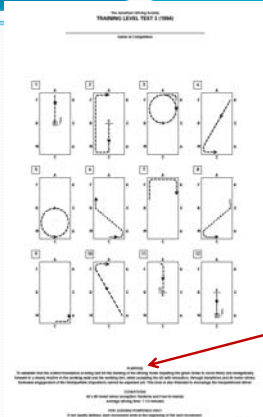
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Read and understand the purpose of the test and what is being looked for at that level

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The image shows a portion of a performance test sheet with a table of rows and columns. A red callout box with the text "Understand what the collective marks mean" has an arrow pointing to a specific row in the table. The table contains various performance metrics and scores.

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### Gaits

Walk, trot and canter if called for

Good paces must be exhibited

If one pace is incorrect, the score will be affected

Example: Uneven steps at times during the test may affect the Gait score

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### Impulsion

How the horse moves forward

Whether the movements are elastic

Whether the back is supple and relaxed

How the hind legs are engaged

Does the horse track up?

Is energy and desire to move forward there?

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## Submission

Fulfillment of the criteria of the test

Cooperation

Harmony, lightness and ease of movement

Acceptance of the bit

Lightness of the forehand

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## Harmony



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## Could be more submissive.....



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### Driver

Does the driver seesaw reins?

Is soft contact sustained throughout test?

Balanced?

Good posture?

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### Driver

Quiet, organized and workmanlike?

Does the driver help or hinder their horse?

Is the horse prepared properly before each movement?

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Going off course - it happens to everyone –

**what to do?**

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## Know The ADS Rulebook!

- Descriptions of what is expected at each level is in the rule book
- Explanations of each gait and how they are judged is in the rulebook

The ADS rulebook is your driven dressage bible, it's available free online, study it!

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## Things to know and do.....

- You have 90 seconds after the bell rings to enter the ring
- You can use your voice and whip appropriately during your test
- Accuracy is important, it shows off your horse's training and shows focus and concentration
- Leave the ring as called for on your test sheet, usually a working trot
- Leave the ring at A

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## Questions about preparing for your dressage test?



Ready to jump in?

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# Training for Dressage

Strategies for Success

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- ## Most Importantly....
- ❖ Have a clear mental picture of what you want
  - ❖ Mark the correct behavior when it happens as a reward
  - ❖ Be consistent in your requests and your rewards

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**Training for Dressage**  
Before training begins.....  
Make your horse as comfortable as possible

Does he have enough....  
Exercise?  
Turnout?

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**Training for Dressage**

Make your horse as comfortable as possible

Adjust his diet for his work

Have his teeth done on a regular basis

Feet cared for on a timely basis

Chiropractic can work wonders!

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**Drive with your aids,  
not with corrections**

- Have a 'neutral' contact
- When correction is necessary, correct, then reward by lightening your contact for a second
- Go back to your neutral contact
- Drive with your aids, not with corrections

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**Training For Dressage**

During daily training, the need to stay active must be instilled in your horse

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**Training for Dressage**

Encourage your horse to be a 'body mover' instead of a 'leg mover'

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**Training for Dressage**

Teach your horse to respond to your aids promptly

Teach your horse to respond to your voice aids

Don't use your horse's mouth as a brake!

Use your hands to shape and guide your horse

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**Whoa means Whoa!**

Teach your horse to stand when working with him on the ground

Work on this every day, on the ground and in the carriage

He **MUST** stand still when asked and he **CAN** learn this skill through consistent work

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**Training for Dressage**

**Rein Back**

- Teach your horse to back on the ground from your voice
- Work on this daily when you are handling your horse
- Use your voice to back in harness so your horse understands your request and don't **PULL** your horse back, guide him back, step by deliberate step

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**Training for Dressage**

Don't change equipment just before a show

If you have a 'show' harness, use it the week before the show, and the bridle every day before the show.

Work at home on how long and what warm up routine works best for your horse

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**Training for Dressage**  
Work on your driving skills

- Lessons
- Video and analyze
- Watch driven and ridden dressage
- Read about driven and ridden dressage
- Volunteer to scribe

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**Training for Dressage**

Prepare your horse for turns by positioning him and flexing him to the inside before the turn

Allow him to 'fill up' your outside rein before turning

Good turns and transitions are made in the preparation

Work on your timing so you are in sync with your horse

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**Rein Aids**

Make sure you are helping your horse with his balance throughout your test

Don't pull your horse off balance

- with too much neck bend
- with too much use of inside rein
- by holding him to the outside with your outside rein
- by making your corners and turns too deep

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### Rein Aids

The jobs of the outside rein are to:

- Control the amount of bend
- Regulate the tempo
- Lengthen and shorten the horses frame
- Straighten and assist with balance

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### Rein Aids

The jobs of the inside rein are to:

- Indicate direction, flexion and bend - NOT TO STEER!
- Keep the horse soft and supple

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### Questions on Basic Training Strategies?



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**So much to cover...**



So little time!  
Much more to cover  
but don't want to  
overload you!

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**The End**



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