

What Judges look for!

Judged subjectively, dressage relies on a body of accredited judges positioned at designated points around the dressage arena to assess the performance of horse and rider. Whilst accuracy is important, the quality of the movement and the adherence to classical principles also govern the mark awarded out of ten (10). The judge is judging the performance of the horse in the first place, however, the effectiveness of the rider is recorded at the conclusion the test together with other collective marks.

The basic quality a dressage judge wants to see in a horse during a competition is rhythm. Each horse has its own natural rhythm for walk, trot and canter. It must not be ridden out of that rhythm during changes in movement or pace, and when the tempo increases, it must show that it can optimise its natural rhythm. The horse must be well balanced at all times, carrying the rider with ease. It must also be flexible so as to be able to bend its whole body effortlessly around curves and on circles.

Judges look for 'impulsion' or the 'power of the hindquarters' - meaning the horse is using its body most effectively. This is shown in springy, strong steps, which cover the ground without rushing.

Freestyle to Music competitions are judged on Technical and Artistic presentation. A winning freestyle test must not only be technically sound, but offer great expression, with visual excitement - this is when the craft of dressage becomes an art.