

2011 FREESTYLE RULES, GUIDELINES AND DEFINITIONS

Training, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Level Freestyle

MUSICAL FREESTYLE RULES

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 required to enter a freestyle class 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 60% in the highest test of the declared freestyle level or any test of a higher level at a **Federation Licensed or FEI recognized Dressage Competition or "open" Dressage class (i.e. open to all breeds) at a Federation Licensed Competition held prior to the competition where the horse/rider combination is entered to ride a freestyle class.(effective 4/1/2013)** 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.
One (1) point 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 salute.
- The rider must 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.
- Exit music is not allowed.
- If music fails during a Freestyle Test, the rider can leave the arena with permission of the judge at "C". The rider may decide whether to restart the test from the beginning or to commence from the point where the music failed. Judging restarts at the point of interruption. The marks already given do not change.

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 must score both technical execution and artistic impression.
- Technical Execution marks may be given in half or full points. Artistic Impression marks may be given in tenth (.1) points.

Equipment and Turnout

- Attire, tack, and saddlery for all freestyle classes must comply with USEF rules.
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 MUSICAL FREESTYLE

- *Compulsory Elements:* All of the elements to be scored in one box on dressage test sheet, whether movement, figure or transition.
- *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.
- *Figures:* Geometrical component of a dressage test such as circle, serpentine, and figure-of-eight.
- *Transitions:* Changes between two different gaits or from one pace to another within the same gait.
- *Combinations:* Direct connection of any movement or figure with another movement or figure.
- *Patterns:* Geometric design formed in the arena when movements, figures and transitions are combined.

(There is some overlap. As examples: a simple change is a compulsory element 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 and a pattern.)

Other freestyle definitions can be found in the freestyle section of the Glossary of Judging Terms in the Member Guide.

REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

- All compulsory elements 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 elements to the left and right.
- Reins in One Hand: There should be no more than three occurrences.
- A freestyle may include all elements EXCEPT dressage movements found in tests above the level of that entered or declared.
- 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.
- The following is a list of dressage movements (and some combinations and transitions) specifically permitted and forbidden at each level.

Training Level (effective December 1, 2012)

Clearly Forbidden:

Anything not clearly allowed

Clearly Allowed:

Free walk, medium walk, stretch circle, trot circle no smaller than 15 meters, canter circle no smaller than 15 meters, halt-trot, trot-halt, trot-canter, canter-trot, and trot serpentine of a single loop or of multiple loops with loops no smaller than 15 meters

First Level

Clearly Forbidden:

Rein back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, half-pass, flying changes, turn on haunches, canter or walk pirouette, piaffe, passage.

Clearly Allowed:

Counter-canter (any configuration), zigzag leg yield, leg yield along wall (head to wall leg yielding), lengthen trot or canter on 20-meter circle, walk-canter, canter-walk, halt-canter, canter halt, 10 meter circle or smaller (no smaller than 8 meters) at trot, 15 meter circle or smaller (no smaller than 10 meters) 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, canter-halt, 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.

Note that flying changes of lead every third stride and true canter half pirouette are permitted.

It is recommended that competitors obtain the score sheets from the USDF

(<http://www.usdf.org/downloads/forms/index.asp?TypePass=Tests>)

SCORING AND JUDGING

Two (2) sets of marks are given—one for technical execution and one for artistic impression. Each set of marks is totaled separately, and then those 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 competitor's final score.

Technical Execution

- The beginning and end of the freestyle must be executed facing C and marked with a halt and salute.
- Preliminary notes will be given for each execution, in each direction, of each of the compulsory elements. For compulsory elements that must be shown on both hands, "Preliminary Notes" will be given for each hand separately, but all will be considered for the Judge's Mark.
- If a required element 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 element 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 element 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). All marks for the other hand will be considered in the score for that hand. The right and left hand scores will both determine the Judge's Mark.
- In addition, omission of a required element or direction may affect the artistic impression.
- In scoring technical execution, Judge's Mark must be given in half-points or full points (no tenths).
- 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.

"Preliminary Notes," "Judge's Mark," and "Final Score" are columns which appear on the score sheet.

Artistic Impression

- In scoring artistic impression, Judge's Marks may be given in tenths (.1) increments.
- Movements "above the level" should not be rewarded in the artistic impression.
- 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."
- Elements performed after the time limit has elapsed will not be scored, and a penalty of (1) point will be deducted from the Total Artistic Impression.

Tie

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

UNDERSTANDING THE ARTISTIC IMPRESSION

(Bold italic denotes the exact wording of the artistic side of the 2011 USDF Freestyle Score Sheet. Coefficients listed are for First through Fourth Levels)

- **Harmony between horse and rider (coefficient 3)**

The willing and un-coerced cooperation and partnership between horse and rider; the ability to accomplish the choreographic patterns with ease; the rider's use of subtle aids for communication.

- **Choreography -- use of arena, design cohesiveness, balance, and creativity (coefficient 4)**
Complete and balanced use of space. Logical development and clarity of construction.
Balanced use of rein. Construction of combinations and patterns.
- **Degree of difficulty (coefficient 2)**
Well-calculated risks. The horse/rider team performs a single element or a combination of elements in a way that exceeds the expectation of the level.
- **Music – suitability, seamlessness, cohesiveness (coefficient 3)**
Appropriateness of the music to the type and character of horse. Cuts and transitions are smooth and create an overall flow of the music. Music selections are from one genre, style, or theme.
- **Interpretation – music expresses gaits, use of phrasing & dynamics (coefficient 3)**
Appropriateness of the rhythm and tempo of the music to the gaits of the horse. Choreography reflects changes in the music.

Note: The coefficients for Training Level (effective December1,2012) differ from First through Fourth Levels and are as follows: Harmony 4, Choreography 4, Degree of Difficulty 1, Music 3, Interpretation 3.

MUSICAL FREESTYLE GUIDELINES

Music

- Any type of music may be selected.
 - 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. A cohesive musical theme will be scored higher than a disjointed arrangement of musical selections.
 - 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
 - Entrance music is optional but advised, as it provides a sound check.
 - Editing should be fluid and smooth. Choppy or disruptive editing will detract from the overall artistic impression.
 - Evaluation of artistic merit should be based on the Music and Interpretation categories of the score sheet and on a broad artistic appreciation, not on mere personal preference ("I don't like Mozart" or "Only classical music is appropriate").
 - The format for the freestyle music should be a CD. Final preparation of the music in a professional studio is recommended to ensure proper equalization, balance, and decibel levels.
 - The CD should have only the freestyle ride on it. It should be clearly labeled with the competitor's name, horse's name, and level of ride.
 - Always bring an extra copy of the music to the competition. Mark it in the same way as the original, plus some additional notation indicating that it is a backup copy. ALWAYS HAVE IT READILY AVAILABLE.
 - Consult the competition prize list for information about sound checks and to whom the CD should go.
 - Each competitor should be permitted one representative in the sound system booth to supervise the handling of the music. This person should not interfere with the show announcer or management in any way.
 - 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 at www.nmpa.org.
 - Competitors must pick up their music CDs before leaving the show. If the competitor does not pick up their music show management has the option to discard the material.
- **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 elements must be shown in both directions; these are indicated on the score sheets by a dashed line in the "Preliminary Notes" column.

- Competitors should not 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. However, the construction should still be logical, clear, and understandable.
- 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 ability to not over-face the horse. Points for difficulty are only awarded when the attempt is performed well.
- The letters of the arena serve as markers. 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. This will allow for more confidence in the performance and better artistic impression.
- At Fourth Level, tempi changes (3s) may be used to enhance choreography but does not replace the requirement to perform tempi changes (4s).

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 CD and instructions should be delivered.

Classes Offered

- Training (effective December 1, 2012), First, Second, Third, and Fourth Level freestyles may be offered as four separate classes or as a combined “USDF Freestyle” class. However 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 USEF or USDF Training Level freestyle score sheets.

Score Sheets

- Current USDF score sheets must be used. USDF freestyle score sheets are available at www.usdf.org. FEI Intermediate I, Grand Prix, and Prix St. Georges Young Rider freestyle score sheets are available at www.fei.org. These score sheets 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 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 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 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.