COMPETITIVE DRESSAGE RULES

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THE FINNISH HOBBYHORSE ASSOCIATION
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GAIT & MOVEMENT RULES

Critical points about gaits, types and other movements shortly explained.

BASIC GAITS

Walk - Walk resembles human walk. At least one foot is touching the ground all the time (= there is no flight between steps).

Trot - Trot resembles human jogging/running. Each step must have a flight in between (neither foot is touching the ground).

Canter - The fastest of the three basic gaits. Canter must have a distinct rhythm and flight. Canter is either left or right depending on the leading leg (i.e. left canter = left leg is leading). Rider and horse are expected to perform true canter (left canter in left turns, right canter in right turns) unless asked otherwise.

GAIT TYPES

Gait types are ways to perform a certain gait; i.e. collected walk, medium trot, extended canter.

Working - The rider's natural way to ride a gait. Most used in low level dressage classes. Horse's head must be leveled above horizontal.

Collected - Short and high steps with the same or slightly slower tempo. Horse's head must be leveled very high, more vertical than horizontal.

Medium - Medium gaits are similar to working gaits - just a little rounder and longer. The step is longer than in collected, but shorter than extended. The horse's head should remain above horizontal position.

Extended - A long stride that may include a slightly faster tempo. The step is round and extends far forward. The horse's head is lower than average, close to horizontal.

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MOVEMENTS

Canter pirouette - Pirouette that is performed in collected canter. Horse's head is high up and positioned to the direction of the pirouette while the rider stays straight. Ideal number of steps for one complete canter pirouette is 5-7 whereas a **half canter pirouette** has to be ridden with 3 steps. **Double canter pirouette** should be done with 10-14 steps. There is two different techniques to do canter pirouette:

1. **One-railed canter pirouette**
   The legs follow the same rail next to each other, so that the rider goes around an imaginary point behind their back.

2. **Two-railed canter pirouette / "supporting leg"**
   The legs canter in two rails as the horse and rider circles an imaginary point behind their back. The leading leg of the canter moves in a larger circular rail than the other leg (supporting leg) which is in a smaller circular rail, close to the point around which the rider and horse rotate.

It is up to the rider to decide in which technique they would like to ride their pirouettes. However, the rider must use the same technique in every canter pirouette during their performance.

Counter-canter - Counterlead canter on purpose (i.e. right canter in left turns, left canter in right turns). The horse is positioned to the canter.

Flying change - The leading leg of the canter is changed from the fly by pushing off and landing on the leading leg of the direction to be changed (e.g. a flying change from right canter to left canter: pushing off with the right leg and landing on the right leg). The rider must position the horse according to the new direction during the flying change and change the rein to match the direction as discreetly as possible.

- **One-tempi changes** - Consecutive flying changes without taking a single canter step in between.
- **Tempi changes every second / third strides** - The rider and horse ride one / two canter strides between each flying change.
- **Simple change of leg at the canter** - In this movement, the flying change does not occur. Simple change of leg at the canter should be done by riding three steps of walk or trot, then striking back off to the canter with a new lead.

Haunches-in & Half-pass - Haunches-in is ridden by positioning the horse and rider from the hip down outwards from the track, and the horse is then bent and positioned to the direction of movement. The legs should cross in every gait, in canter this happens during the flight when the supporting leg momentarily crosses the leading leg. Haunches-in and half-pass must not be ridden in counter-canter.

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- **Half-pass** - The Half-pass is performed in the direction determined by the judge/protocol, either to the right or to the left. When performing to the left, the horse's head is angled to the right, and the position is to the left towards the direction of travel. The toes and feet are placed to the right. When performing to the right, the horse's head is angled to the left, and the position is to the right towards the direction of travel. Toes and feet are placed to the left. The upper body must not be placed at an angle, but should be placed directly in relation to the groove from the hips up. Half-pass must not be ridden in counter-canter

- **Half-pass on the diagonal** - Half-pass is ridden on the diagonal (eg. long diagonal) based on either the original direction or the ordered direction: on the left lead the left side of the diagonal is considered the inner arena and the right side is considered the outer arena. The rider’s legs are positioned towards the outer arena, and the horse is positioned and angled towards the direction of movement.

- **Zigzag half-pass** - Zigzag half-pass is half-pass where the rider always changes direction of the half-pass after a certain number of steps. During the first set of steps the rider and horse moves away from the centre line, and during the last set of steps the rider and horse returns to the centre line. During the half-passes in between the first and the last, the rider and horse crosses the centre line symmetrically, leaving the number of steps in half on both sides. When done in canter, the canter is always changed when the direction changes. The number of steps is indicated, for example, in the manner 3-6-6-6-3, whereby the direction is changed at the hyphens. (3 steps, change, 6 steps, change, 6 steps, change...). The lead changes are performed forward, and not counted as half-pass steps.

Shoulder-in - The rider's feet and horse’s head are positioned and bent inwards from the track. The riders upper body should stay straight compared to the arena. Shoulder-in is not normally ridden diagonally. Can be ridden in any gait.

Leg yield - The movement is done by stepping off from the rail in a diagonal line, stepping crosswise. The hobbyhorse should be flexed very slightly away from the movement.

Turn to the forehand - The horse and rider changes direction in a 180-degree turn, the head of the hobbyhorse being the pivot point. The legs move in two tracks and the horse is slightly positioned in the direction of the changing round.

Turn to the haunches - A half of pirouette in walk. Ideal number of steps in turn to the haunches is 4.

Passage - In passage, leg is lifted from the hips in 90 degree angle from knee up to approximately the same height as hips, and bended to the same angle from the knee. The leg then straightens down. Each step has a distinct flight and passage moves forward in slow rhythm. Horse's position is collected. Legs must not get in front of each other or cross from the frontal view at any point of the step.

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Piaffe - In piaffe, leg is lifted from the hips in 90 degree angle from knee up to approximately the same height as hips, and bended to the same angle from the knee. . The leg then must straighten down. Each step has a distinct flight and the movement stays in place. The rhythm is slow and the horse's position is collected. Legs must not get in front of each other or cross from the frontal view at any point of the step.

Piaffe pirouette - In a piaffe pirouette, the rider rides piaffe around an imaginary point behind their back on a circular rail. The ideal number of steps is 7-9. The horse is positioned according to the rotation direction of the pirouette, while the rider is completely straight. The ideal number of steps for **half piaffe pirouette** is 4, and for a **double pirouette** 14-18.

Walk pirouette - Pirouette that is performed in collected walk. The legs should cross. The horse is positioned in the direction of rotation of the pirouette while the rider stays straight. The ideal number of steps for one complete pirouette in walk is 8-10. A half walk pirouette is called turn to the haunches.

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TECHNICAL RULES

HOLDING THE REINS

The reins are held in both hands of the rider; outer hand on stick and reins, inner hand only on reins. The hands should stay close to each other in fists and not move. The fists should be positioned upwards, and the thumbs should be on top of the fists. When the direction changes, the hold of reins is changed to match the new direction as discreetly as possible. The bit contact is to be kept steady at all times unless told otherwise (e.g. free walk/walk with long reins).

UPPER BODY

Rider's posture should be good and silent; straight or slightly leaning backwards without any extra movement, such as swinging from shoulders.

LEGS

The competitor must aim for equal use of both legs, as well as versatile and active use of the muscles. When performing movements, the competitor should strive for comprehensive activity of the leg muscles and joints, for example in the forms of flexion, effort, extension, bending and range of motion. In dressage, the goal is to make the movement as smooth as possible, so for example the ankle should be extended in movements where it is possible.

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EQUIPMENT RULES

HOBBYHORSE'S TACK

Hobbyhorse must wear bridle. The model of the bridle is free of choice in level Advanced B and lower.
Starting from level Advanced A, the bridle must include two reins. The reins must not be attached to the same point in the bridle: i.e. two reins in the same ring of the same bit is not allowed, but two reins in different rings of the same bit is allowed (double bridle, pelham...). This enables the rider to use even a bitless bridle as long as the requirement is fulfilled.

Auxiliary reins and other decorative tack are prohibited in all classes in order to reduce the amount of unnecessary tack that may interfere with judging.
Ear bonnets and **leg wraps/bandages** are allowed as long as they are fitting the rider and horse and thus won't cause interference in judging.

The judge or the competition organizer are not obliged to notify the competitor in advance of a possible inconvenience or disqualification caused by competitor's equipment.

RIDER

Riders must wear shoes during performance. There are no other requirements as long as one is clothed.

For dressage riding, it is recommended to use shoes intended for sports, such as jogging or running shoes, barefoot shoes, shoes used in cheerleading, as well as dance shoes, dance or gym slippers that do not slip. Shoes with any kind of heels are prohibited.

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COMPETITION RULES

- Competitor must enter and exit the arena through the gate.
- Performance starts and ends with greeting the judge where the rider nods and/or takes one hand off the reins. The greeting must be controlled and restrained in ready-made programmes
- Performance can start once the judge has greeted the competitor back by nodding or verbally.
- Competitor may continue their performance after forgetting the program twice. Competitor can ask judge for advice on from what task they can continue their performance.
- Asking and receiving advice from anyone other than the judge is forbidden during performance.
- Judge is obliged to write remarks (feedback) if they give 5 or less points on a task.
- Judge must mark at least total points to the sheet.
- Judge and competition organizer are allowed to inspect competitors' condition before and after their performance.

ADDITIONAL RULES TO KÜR AND OTHER FREESTYLE PROGRAMS

Kür and other freestyle programs follow a few additional rules in addition to the rules mentioned above.

- The competitor can use their own creativity in the greetings (for example, curtsey, bowing so that the rider goes down on one knee and extends the other leg straight in front is allowed). Both feet must touch the ground during the greetings.
- All freestyle programs have a time limit. The performance starts and ends in greetings unless the competitor notifies the judge otherwise before the performance. If the time limit is exceeded by 15 seconds or more, the performance is disqualified and the judge/organizer is allowed to interrupt the performance.
- The length of the performance is measured from the soundtrack of the competitors music. The judge has to evaluate all movements that are performed during the music. This includes the movements done before the opening greeting.
- Combining required movements is not allowed: If, for example, 12 piaffe steps and a piaffe pirouette are required to be executed in the freestyle program, the piaffe steps included in the piaffe pirouette are not counted as part of the required 12 piaffe steps.
- In addition to the required movements the judge will have to evaluate for example: the difficulty of the programme, risk taking, creative use of the arena, interpretation of the music and adaption to the choreography, and the structure of the choreography.

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PENALTIES AND ELIMINATIONS

PENALTY POINTS

For the first fault, **2 points** are deducted from the total score of the performance. For the second fault, **4 points** are deducted. The third fault will result in elimination. The following things lead to penalty points:

- Not entering or exiting through arena's gate
- Disobedience, such as bucking, stumbling, kicking the fence so that the fence moves or other movement that cannot be interpreted as dressage movement.
- Not performing the required movement close to the right place or at all. - The rider goes the wrong way but returns within 10 seconds to the right track without stopping or asking the judge for advice.
- Forgetting the route, i.e. stopping to think or not returning to the route within 10 seconds.
- Exceeding time limit by 5 seconds in kür or other freestyle.
- Asking or receiving advice from anyone other than the judge.

LEADS TO ELIMINATION

- Rider scores penalty points for the third time
- Obvious limping or other injury interfering with physical performance during the performance or at the end of the performance
- Falling during performance, when knee or hand touches the ground, or the stick leaves between the riders legs
- The horse is not held between legs
- Hobbyhorse or required equipment breaks during performance
- Wearing no bridle/wearing wrong kind of bridle
- Using auxiliary reins or other tack that interferes the judging
- Starting the performance without judge's greeting
- Exceeding the time limit in kür or other freestyle class by 15 seconds or more - Exiting the arena during performance
- Unsportsmanlike behavior, such as throwing hobbyhorse or other objects, or aggression or bullying directed at others. In repeated or very harmful cases, the judge or competition organizer may, at their discretion, deny the competitor's other starts in the same competitions.

The judge announces or gives a sound signal that is repeated three times as a sign of elimination of the performance. In this case the rider must stop their performance.

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