

WESTERN DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION[®]

OF AMERICA

Western Dressage Glossary

GAITS

Any of the rhythms or footfalls of the horse. Gaits demonstrated in Western Dressage include: walk, jog, and lope. Freedom and regularity should be maintained in all three gaits.

GAITS versus PACES

The three gaits are walk, jog and lope. The paces are the variations of these three gaits (free, working, lengthened, collected).

1 step equals one footfall, not one stride.

WALK

Working Walk:

Four-beat, active, energetic walk with resolutely forward-reaching steps and confident stretch to the bit. Head and neck should swing naturally as a result of a relaxed back and free shoulders. The nose shall be on or slightly in front of the vertical. The hind feet should touch the ground into or beyond the prints of the forefeet.

Free Walk:

A relaxed walk with unconstrained, forward reaching steps where hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the footprints of the forefeet. The horse must be relaxed and be allowed complete freedom to lower his head and neck to stretch forward and down and out. The length of stride, rhythm, the relaxation and swing through his back are of great importance.

Collected Walk:

The horse, remaining “on the bit”, moves resolutely forward with his neck raised and showing a clear self-carriage. The head approaches the vertical position and a light contact is maintained with the mouth. The hind legs are engaged with good flexion of the joints. The gait should remain marching and vigorous, the feet being placed in regular sequence. The steps cover less ground and are higher than at the Working walk, because all the joints bend more markedly. The Collected walk is shorter than the Working walk, and shows greater activity.

Extended Walk

The horse demonstrates optimum ground cover, a lengthened frame and reach to the contact without sacrificing regularity, suppleness of the back and flexion at the poll. Without hurrying, the horse exhibits balance, freedom and over track.

JOG

Working Jog:

An energetic, regular, two-beat jog; the horse must go forward with even and elastic steps. The back must be relaxed and the shoulders free, while there is an obvious push from the hindquarters. The hind legs step actively up under the horse. The horse must show proper balance and maintain light contact with the bit. The horse's nose shall be on or slightly in front of the vertical. In the Introductory and Basics tests, the working jog may be ridden either posting or sitting. In tests first level and above, the working jog should be ridden seated.

Lengthening of Stride:

This is a variation of the Working jog; the horse covers more ground while maintain the same tempo as in the Working jog. Speeding up is a fault. Lengthening of stride may be ridden either posting or sitting.

Free Jog:

This is a pace of moderate lengthening of stride and frame compared to the Working jog. Without hurrying, the horse goes forward in a two-beat gait with a moderate lengthening of stride and frame. The horse should stretch forward and down over the top line with relaxation maintaining balance, tempo, and regularity of the jog on a loose rein. There should be a smooth willing retake of the reins in transition to the working jog. The free jog may be ridden posting or sitting.

Collected Jog:

The horse, remaining “on the bit”, moves forward with the neck raised and arched and showing clear self-carriage. The head approaches the vertical position and a light contact is maintained with the mouth. The hocks are well-engaged and flexed and must maintain an energetic impulsion, enabling the shoulders to move more freely. Although the horse’s steps are shorter than in the other jogs, elasticity and cadence are not lessened. The Collected jog must be ridden seated.

Saddle Gait:

The gaited horse will perform a saddle gait in place of the jog. The saddle gait may be either a lateral or diagonal gait, timely and consistently performed. The tempo, rhythm and foot falls of the gait the rider chooses to perform must not change throughout the test. The gait the horse performs, should be able to be ridden in a working, lengthened, free and collected manner as the Western Dressage test specifies. The quality of the saddle gait is judged by general impression, i.e. the regularity and rhythm of the steps, the cadence and impulsion. This quality originates from the horse having a supple back and well engaged hind quarters, and the ability to maintain the same rhythm and natural balance in all variations of the saddle gait.

LOPE

The lope is a gait with three equal, regular beats with time of suspension after the third beat. One stride equals 3 beats, or three footfalls. This gait may be demonstrated on right or left lead. Footfall sequence in right lead is: left hind, right hind and left fore together, right fore, then suspension. Footfall sequence in left lead: right hind, left hind and right fore together, left fore, then suspension.

The lope has a typically slower tempo than a canter and must keep the three-beat rhythm or the regularity is lost. Excessive speed or slowness must be penalized.

The correct lope must be balanced, rhythmic, and with three beats with a clear time of suspension; it must be straight, adjustable and supple, showing willingness to move forward in self-carriage with engaged hindquarters.

The quality of the lope is judged by the general impression, i.e. the regularity and lightness of the steps. The uphill tendency of the forehand and the steady cadence, originating from engagement of the hindquarters transmit the energy from back to front and connect into a willing acceptance of the bridle. The horse's mouth is quiet and his poll is soft. The horse should always remain straight on straight lines and correctly bent on curved lines.

The following lopes are recognized: Collected lope, Working lope, and Lengthening of Strides and Counter Lope.

Collected Lope.

The horse, remaining "on the bit", moves forward in a three-beat cadence with the neck raised and arched. The hocks are well-engaged and maintain an energetic impulsion, enabling the shoulders to move more freely, demonstrating self-carriage and an uphill tendency. The horse's strides are shorter than in the other lopes, without losing elasticity and cadence.

Working Lope.

While maintaining the three beat cadence, the horse must go forward with even and elastic steps. The back must be relaxed and the shoulders free; there is an obvious push from the hindquarters and the hind legs step actively up under the horse. The horse must maintain light contact with the bit and his nose shall be on or slightly in front of the vertical.

Lengthening of Strides.

This is a variation of the Working lope; the horse covers more ground through lengthening its frame while maintaining the same tempo as in the Working lope. Excessive speed will be penalized.

Counter-lope.

The counter lope is a balancing and straightening movement. The horse appears to be cantering on the incorrect lead to the direction of travel. The horse lopes in a correct sequence to the left on the right lead; the horse lopes to the right in a correct sequence on the left lead.

Change of lead through the Jog.

This is a change of lead where the horse is brought back into the jog and after 3-5 strides, strikes off into a lope with the other leg leading.

Change of lead through the Walk.

This is a movement in which, after a direct transition out of the lope into a walk, with 3-5 clearly defined steps at the walk, an immediate transition is made into the other lead. This is considered a Simple Lead Change when done through the walk.

Flying change of lead.

The flying change of lead will ideally begin with the sequence of the new outside hind leg, the diagonal pair and followed by the new leading front leg. The change of lead of the hind and front leg take place immediately after the moment of suspension without a break of gait. The aids should be precise and unobtrusive. Flying changes of lead can also be executed in series. For example, flying changes can be performed at every 4th, 3rd, 2nd or at every stride. The horse, even in the series, remains light, calm and straight with lively impulsion, maintaining the same rhythm and balance. In order to not restrict or restrain the lightness, fluency and groundcover of the flying changes in series, enough impulsion and forwardness must be maintained. The flying lead changes show the reaction, sensitivity and obedience of the horse to the aids.

Pirouette, half pirouette, quarter pirouette at the lope:

The lope pirouette is a circle or part of a circle executed on two tracks with the forehand moving around the haunches. The haunches are lowered to afford the lightness required to maintain the proper lope sequence throughout. The horse is slightly bent in the direction of the turn and lightly on the bit. The quality of the pirouette is further demonstrated by the relatively small size of the turn, suppleness, balance, fluidity and maintenance of forward intention.

Quarter Pirouette: the quarter pirouette is a preliminary exercise to prepare the horse for half and full pirouettes. While the demands of a smaller figure of a quarter turn consisting of 2-3 strides are less, the same criteria for full pirouettes apply.

The strength and balance required for the pirouette is further demonstrated by the ability to perform the half-pirouette, full pirouette and sequences of multiple pirouettes. Impulsion, willingness to carry and engagement behind in the pirouette create a highly collected lope while maintaining a calm, confident demeanor which is the hallmark of the Western Dressage horse.

TERMINOLOGY

ABOVE THE BIT

The horse is avoiding contact with the bit by raising his head/muzzle forward/upward; usually due to avoiding the aids of the rider and lacks balance throughout the horse's body. When he is above the bit he practically inverts at the poll.

ACCEPTANCE

A willing horse responds favorably to the rider's aids. Absence of evasion or resistance.

ACTIVITY

Energy, vigor, liveliness associated with stimulating effort and motion of the hind legs.

ADJUSTABILITY

The ability to shorten or lengthen the stride and the topline of the horse within a gait and/or pace without changing the tempo. An athletic horse shows this capacity naturally, and his ability to do so is further developed by correct training.

BALANCE

Relative distribution of the weight of the horse and rider upon the fore and hind limbs (longitudinal balance) and the left and right limbs (lateral balance).

BEHIND THE BIT

Avoiding contact with the bit, but not necessarily being behind the vertical.

BEHIND THE LEG

Slow to move forward off the leg. Sluggish or unwilling to move forward into the contact of the reins.

BEHIND THE VERTICAL

The frontal plane of the horse's head is behind the vertical line and he is actually looking at the ground.

BEND

The laterally curved position in which the horse's body as would be viewed from above appears to form a uniform arc from poll to tail. Examples of faulty bend are: bending only in the neck, bending only at the base of the neck or bent toward the wrong direction (counter bent).

BEYOND THE SCOPE

A horse which is over ridden at a level beyond his current stage of training or ability often times results in mental and physical tension and resistance.

CADENCE

The marked accentuation of the rhythm and emphasized beat that is a result of a steady and suitable tempo harmonizing with a springy impulsion.

CHANGE OF REIN

A change of direction within the enclosure in which the horse/rider are travelling. The rein facing the center of this enclosure is called the "inside rein". The one to the outside of the enclosure is therefore the "outside rein".

COLLECTION

Collection is not to be confused with "headset", nor with slower or shorter strides. Collected paces have relatively shorter steps and more uphill balance, while the frame is shorter and the neck is stretched and arched upward. The horse should reach calmly to contact with the bit with the nose nearly at, but never behind, the vertical. At collected trot and canter, the support phase of the hind legs is more pronounced than in the other paces of the gait.

Collection is achieved by increased weight-bearing of the horse's haunches, thereby lowering the croup and lightening the forehand to allow the shoulders more freedom. The horse stride becomes markedly shorter but gain animation and height.

Many riders erroneously shorten the horse's strides by pulling on the reins, believing that shorter and slower steps = collection. Collection is NOT produced by such incorrect aids.

Instead, using seat and leg aids, riding the horse briefly into a slightly firmer contact, will cause the horse to round and lower his croup and step in more deeply under himself from behind.

CONTACT

Absence of slack in the rein “Correct contact” or “acceptance of contact” is determined by the elasticity of the connection between horse and rider.

CONNECTION

State at which there is no blockage, break, or slack in the circuit that joins the horse and rider into a single, harmonious, elastic unit. A prerequisite for thoroughness. The energy generated in the hindquarters by the driving aids must flow through the whole body of the horse and is received in the rider's hands.

CORRECT STEPPING THROUGH or STEPPING THROUGH FROM BEHIND

The hind leg swings forward from a bent hip and stifle, resulting in a connection of the push from the hind leg bringing his hind feet closer to the mid-point of his belly (as seen from the side), up through a relaxed and supple back and neck, to a soft mouth that is receptive to the rider's hand. It is an absolute opposite from “pushing out behind”.

CROSS-LOPE OR DISUNITED

The fore and hind legs are on different leads.

DISOBEDIENCE

Willful determination to avoid what is asked or determination to do what is not asked.

DOWNHILL OR ON THE FOREHAND

Poor longitudinal balance with failure to elevate the withers and/or lower the haunches.

ELASTICITY

The smooth stretch and contraction of muscles that give the steps spring and bounce, achieved by a horse moving with suppleness.

ELEMENTS

Basic components that may be included in freestyle choreography. The elements are movements, figures and transitions.

ENERGY

The willingness of the horse to give over to the rider the impulsion necessary to do a task.

ENGAGEMENT

The ability of the horse to place the hind legs under the body to lighten the forehand. This is seen by the power of the hocks pushing the horse forward. Lack of Engagement is totally opposite. The horse appears to be life- less.

EVASION

Avoidance of the difficulty, correctness or purpose of the movement or the influence of the rider.

EXERCISE

A designated task that may include movement(s), transitions, figures and/or patterns to be performed at designated gaits and paces and sometimes at specific places in the arena i.e. 20 meter circle at working jog, shoulder in at collected jog.

EXPRESSION OR EXPRESSIVE

Increased impulsion, with harmony, balance, lightness and cadence giving artistic or dramatic effect

FIGURE

Geometrical component such as a circle, change of rein, or serpentine. A figure is not the same as a movement.

FLUID OR FLUENT

Flowing or moving smoothly and easily. Unconstrained in movement.

FORBIDDEN MOVEMENTS

In freestyle, movements not appropriate to the level being performed.

FORWARD

Forward does not imply speed. Rather, it is a term that encapsulates all the relevant terminology of how a horse is forward: impulsion, energy, freedom reach into the contact, responsiveness to the leg and consistency of tempo.

HALF HALT or SHORTENING OF FRAME

A method of bringing the horse to a higher degree of balance and mental attention. The half-halt can be performed in many different ways that may include the use of legs, seat and hands.

HARMONY

Used in reference to the relationship between horse and rider, the partners' positive physical as well as mental/emotional connection, demonstrating rapport, understanding, trust and confidence in one another resulting in a sense of synchrony, contentment and unity.

HOLLOW BACK

Sagging or depressed back and belly muscles (passive) or by sustained contraction of the back muscles impeding swing and elasticity (active).

IMPULSION

Desire to move forward. Relaxation and swing of the back; elasticity of the steps, correct stepping through and under from behind. Impulsion describes the willingness of the horse to allow its forward energy to be used and shaped by the rider. Impulsion has a phase of suspension, as in the jog and lope, and does therefore not apply to the walk.

IN FRONT OF THE LEG

The horse willingly moves forward off the leg into the bit allowing his frame to be sustained or adjusted.

IRREGULAR

Impure, un-level or uneven gait. Can be momentary or pervasive and may not be due to unsoundness. Should not be used to mean unsteadiness of tempo.

LENGTHENING OF STRIDE

A pace at jog and lope in which the stride, frame and reach are longer than at the working pace, but the degree of uphill balance required in an extension is not expected. The tempo remains virtually the same as in the working paces.

LIGHTNESS

Refers to either the horse's lightness on its feet or the lightness in the reins.

MOVEMENT

The manner in which the horse moves over the ground.

Test movement: a section of a western dressage test to be evaluated with a score.

Western Dressage movements are: leg-yield, rein back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on the haunches, turn on the forehand, half pass (jog or lope), simple changes, flying changes, pirouette at lope. A Western Dressage movement is not a figure, pattern, transition, or combination of those.

ON THE BIT

The horse is correctly connected from BACK TO FRONT and willingly accepting contact with the bit. In fact, at that time he should accept rider's seat, weight and leg aids as well.

OUTLINE

The profile or the silhouette of the horse, showing the horse's carriage or posture.

QUICKENS

When a horse shortens its stride and quickens the tempo.

REGULARITY

The purity of the gait. At walk and jog, denotes symmetry in terms evenness of the length of the steps, levelness of the height of the steps and equality of the time interval between the steps of the left and right forelimbs or the left and right hind limbs.

NOTE: In the first collective mark on a western dressage test, Gaits (freedom and regularity), regularity is used to address purity and soundness, not to address the horse's tempo.

REACH

Refers to forward or lateral reach of the forelimbs, hind limbs, neck/poll, muzzle, or one side of the horse (as in needs to reach into the outside rein) May be used to refer to any of these individually.

RELAXATION

Relaxation refers to the horse's mental state (calmness without anxiety or nervousness) as well as to his physical state (the absence of negative muscular tension) other than the need for optimal carriage, strength, and range and fluency of movement. The horse learns to accept the influence of the rider without becoming tense.

REGULARITY

The purity of the gait at the walk and jog, denotes symmetry in terms of evenness of the length of the steps, levelness in the height of the steps and equality of the time interval between the left and right forelimbs or the left and right hind limbs. Note: in the first collective mark on a Western Dressage test, "GAITS" (freedom and regularity) regularity is used to addresses the purity and soundness, not to address the horse's tempo.

RHYTHM

The recurring characteristic sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a gait e.g. four-beat, three-beat, two- beat. For Western Dressage purposes, the only correct rhythms are those of pure walk, jog,

lope and rein back. Rhythm is sometimes mistakenly used to mean “tempo” (rate of repetition of rhythm).

SCOPE

Within the horse’s natural ability or current level of athleticism, training and understanding. Also largeness of range of motion, reach and freedom

SELF-CARRIAGE

State in which the horse carries itself in balance without taking support or balancing on the rider’s hand.

STEP

Referring to either the front or hind pair of legs, the movement that involves the transfer from one limb to the other. For counting purposes, the steps of only the front OR rear pair of limbs are counted. The front limbs should each be counted in a rein back and the rear steps each counted for moving in the direction the horse is facing. Four steps of the back would be counted as right front, left front, right front, left front. Four steps forward: right hind, left hind, right hind, left hind.

STRAIGHTNESS

The horse should always be straight on straight lines and correctly and evenly bent from poll to tail on curved lines.

STRIDE

Cycle of movements that is completed when the horse’s legs regain their initial position of the full count of the gait. Both diagonals of the jog would comprise one stride of the two beat jog. A stride of the lope is the completion of the three beat rhythm. (The left lead count is right hind, left hind and right front together, left front followed by a moment of suspension before the count begins again.

Walk sequence: left hind, left front, right hind, right front. One complete stride of walk would include a count of both hind limbs OR both front limbs.

SUBMISSION

Harmony between horse and rider = working as a TEAM with respect and mutual understanding. Attention and confidence; ease of movements and acceptance of the bridle while always staying up in the poll and keeping the nose in front of the vertical. Expectation of the degree of lightness increases as the horse is advanced in his training.

SUPPLENESS

Range of motion of the joints and the ability to move the joints freely. Pliability, flexibility, the opposite of stiffness. A horse's suppleness is largely determined by conformation and genetics but may be improved or negatively impacted over time through training.

TEMPO

Rate of repetition of the footfalls. The tempo best for gymnastic development is individual to the horse.

TENSE/TENSION

Referring to the horse's mental/emotional state: anxious, nervous.

Referring to the horse's physical state: commonly used to indicate undesired muscular contraction. Often, the physical and mental/emotional state go hand in hand.

THROUGHNESS

The horse is said to be "through" when the rider's aids can connect the horse's back to his front, and vice versa, without any blocking resistance.

TILTING

Tipping or cocking the head (lowering one ear) – an evasion.

TOPLINE

Profile from the poll to the tail along the top of the crest of the neck and along the spine. The horse lengthens or stretches its topline by rounding its neck and back and lifting its thorax and belly. The horse can stretch its topline irrespective of the height of its neck.

UPHILL

Longitudinally well balanced as a consequence of engagement of the hindquarters (which allows the back muscles to assist in elevating the forehand) and engagement of the thoracic sling muscles to lift the forehand. The pushing forces from the hindquarters are balanced with the elevating forces of the forelimbs.

ZIG-ZAG

A movement containing more than two half-passes with changes of direction.