



USDF
Glossary
of JUDGING
TERMS



TO JUDGES, TRAINERS, COMPETITORS AND DRESSAGE ENTHUSIASTS:

Without a standardized glossary, English-speaking dressage riders, trainers, and judges have been communicating with each other using a language which frequently is not understood the same way by the listener as by the speaker. We have had to make do with interpretations and concepts of vocabulary and terminology gleaned from the literature (much of it translated, and not always accurately) with terms that are used differently by different authors and that have different meanings and nuances in different languages.

The main purpose of this glossary is to improve understanding of, and standardize the usage of, terminology used in judging. It is not intended to be a comprehensive lexicon of general dressage terminology.

It is hoped that it will improve the communication between judges, competitors, and trainers. If it does fulfill that purpose, it cannot but help to improve the quality of the judging itself, as well as increasing the learning value of the competitive experience.

In determining definitions and usages, the overriding theme in this project has been agreement in usage. "Borrowed" terms (from engineering, music, etc.) have been taken "as is." Dictionary definitions have been used wherever possible and where sufficiently specific. In some cases, choice of definition from among possible suggested or common (but often varying!) usages has been relatively arbitrary based on "majority" input from the judging community; however, in all cases dictionary definitions have been used at least as a taking-off point. Even where there may exist some theoretical or philosophical differences in personal interpretation or usage, it is nevertheless to the great advantage of all concerned if standardized usages are accepted and employed.

The four editions of the glossary (of which this is the fourth) were written by J. Ashton Moore and dressage judge, Nancy Thacher with the help of the generous input and assistance of many U.S. dressage judges. It was reviewed, and contributed to, by the late Jaap Pot, Olympic Judge, and the late Baron Hans von Blixen Finecke, Olympic Gold Medalist and trainer, and Dr. Deborah P. Harrison, DVM, FEI Veterinarian, Equine Veterinarian, breeding specialist, and national and international Sporthorse Breeding Judge.

Many of the terms that we use in dressage involve biomechanical issues. Dr. Hilary Clayton BVMS, PhD, MRCVS, biomechanics expert and dressage competitor, has generously contributed her expertise to review these terms for "reality" and accuracy and clarity. Much of the clarification of terminology in this edition of the glossary comes from Dr. Clayton's book, *The Dynamic Horse: A Biomechanical Guide to Equine Movement and Performance*. For more in-depth information about terms briefly covered in the text of the glossary, refer to her many articles in various magazines, and to her books. *

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*The Dynamic Horse

Conditioning the Sport Horse - particularly for the section on 'suppleness.'

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GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

ABDUCT

To move or pull a part of the body *away* from the median axis. The horse's limb(s) step laterally away from the midline.

ABOVE THE BIT

A head position in which the horse avoids acceptance of the contact by putting the muzzle forward and upward, also usually retracting the poll.

ABSOLUTE ELEVATION

The raising of the horse's neck (in isolation) without shifting the horse's balance to the rear.

ACCEPTANCE

Lack of evasion, resistance, or protest; acquiescence. Used in reference to the horse's willingness to allow the maintenance of a steady contact, the application of the aids, and/or the placement of the rider's weight.

ACTIVITY

Energy, vigor, liveliness—referring especially to that of the hind legs.

ADDUCT

To move or pull a part of the body *toward* the median axis. The horse's limb(s) step laterally toward the midline.

AGAINST THE BIT

The horse presses its mouth against the bit with rigid or unyielding neck/poll/jaw.

ALIGNMENT

The lining up of the horse's body parts from tail to poll. One of the three aspects of straightness. See Quadrille Judging Terms for special application to judging quadrille.

AMBLE

An irregular walk rhythm in which the time intervals between the beats are not equal (the interval between the hind hoof and same-side fore hoof is shorter than the interval between the fore hoof and its diagonal hind hoof).

BALANCE

Relative distribution of the weight of horse and rider upon the fore and hind legs (longitudinal balance) and the left and right legs (lateral balance). The horse is in good balance when the base of support is both narrowed laterally and shortened longitudinally ("unstable balance"), thus making it susceptible to small external influences (of the rider), and mobile (especially the forehand). Loss of balance means sudden increase of weight onto the forehand and/or to one side (lengthening or widening the base of support).

BASICS

The basics form the correct foundation of the progressive training of the horse, independent of the execution of specific test movements. The basics include: pure rhythm with suitable tempo; relaxation/suppleness/elasticity/looseness; correct contact/connection; impulsion, straightness, and longitudinal balance suitable to the level and task at hand.

Correctness of the basics is indicated by the preservation and/or improvement in:

1. the purity and quality of the gaits and paces
2. the gymnastic ability and physique of the horse, and
3. the horse's attitude and rideability.

Correct biomechanics, with the horse in a positive mental/emotional state, constitutes correct basics.



BEAT

1. A footfall within a gait. A hoof, or pair of hooves virtually simultaneously, striking the ground. By this definition, the walk has four beats, the trot two, and the canter three.
2. The emphasized beat (as in music). By this definition, the walk has two beats, the trot has two beats, and the canter has one beat. The emphasized beats are the ones the rider “feels.”

BEHIND THE BIT

An evasion in which the horse retracts or shrinks back from the bit/contact. The head may or may not be behind the vertical.

BEHIND THE LEG

1. Unwilling to move forward at the same time as accepting the contact/connection.
2. Slow to react to the leg, or sluggish or unwilling to move energetically forward.

BEHIND THE VERTICAL

The head position in which the horse’s nostril falls behind the imaginary vertical line dropped from the horse’s eye. The horse may or may not be “behind the bit.”

BEND

The laterally arced position in which the horse’s body *appears* to form a uniform curve from poll to tail. Attributes of bending include lateral flexion at the poll, stretching of the outer side of the body, lowering of the inner hip, and adduction of the inner hind and outer fore legs (see Flexion for more in-depth discussion of the elements of bending). Examples of faulty bend are: bending only in the neck, only at the base of the neck, or bent toward the wrong direction.

BIOMECHANICS

The application of the principles and techniques of mechanics (the branch of physics that deals with the motion of material bodies and the phenomena of the action of forces on bodies) to the structure, function, and capabilities of living organisms. (Webster)

Correct biomechanics, with the horse in a positive mental/emotional state, constitute correct basics.

BLOCKED

Impaired in the connection due to sustained muscular contraction, creating rigidity.

BPM

Beats per minute, as may be measured by a metronome.

BROKEN NECKLINE

The position of the neck in which there is excessive longitudinal flexion approximately one third of the way down the neck, so that the poll is no longer the highest point of the skeleton, and the topline of the neck no longer forms an even, smooth arc.

CADENCE

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

CARRIAGE

The posture of the horse, most easily evaluated when viewing the horse’s profile or outline.

CENTER OF MASS (CENTER OF GRAVITY)

The point at which the mass of the body can be considered to be concentrated, and around which its weight is evenly distributed or balanced. The horse’s center of mass is located at the 13th or 14th rib and just below the line from the point of the shoulder to the point of the hip. This puts it below the seat of the saddle.



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

CHEWING THE BIT

The movements of the horse's mouth—gently and softly mouthing the bit—showing mobility and relaxation of the jaw and causing secretion of saliva for a “wet mouth.” Not to be confused with snapping or grinding of the teeth.

CLARITY/CLEAR

1. Used in reference to the rhythm, marked distinction between the footfalls and phases of a gait.
2. Used in reference to transitions between paces (within a gait), well demarcated change in length of stride; used in reference to transitions from one gait to another, the maintenance of pure rhythm in both gaits.

CLEAN

Referring to a flying change, the change of lead is from a pure canter on one lead to a pure canter on the other lead (without trot steps or disunited strides).

CLOSED HALT

A posture at the halt in which the horse is secure in balance and attitude and has the hind legs sufficiently under the body.

COLLECTION/COLLECTED (WALK, TROT, OR CANTER)

Increased engagement and lifting of the forehand, with shorter steps relative to the other paces of the gaits, while maintaining energy and self-carriage. The horse's outline becomes shorter from bit to hip, with the neck and withers stretched and arched upward.

(Note: It is a common misconception that the hind legs step further forward under the body in collection. This is not consonant with the shorter strides required in collection. At the trot and canter, the hind feet are picked up relatively sooner after passing under the hip, and spend relatively longer on the ground [support phase] than in the other paces of the gait.)

CONFIDENCE

The boldness and self-assurance with which the horse performs, and the trust in his partnership with the rider.

CONNECTION/CONNECTED

State in which there is no blockage, break, or slack in the circuit that joins horse and rider into a single, harmonious, elastic unit. A prerequisite for Throughness.

(Note: The third tier of the Training Pyramid is represented by the concept of “Connection” in the U.S., and by the concept of “Contact” [translation of “*Anlehnung*”] by the FEI [see the sections Foreign Terms and Pyramid of Training].)

CONSTRAINED

Forced or compelled against the will. Not necessarily the same as restrained. (The horse may be constrained to bend or flex, or to move forward at speed.)

CONSTRUCTED

Limited by constraint, restraint, or sustained muscular contraction. Held together, forcefully shortened, or physically tight.

CONTACT

The reins are stretched so that they form a straight line, not a loop. “Correct contact” or “acceptance of contact” is determined by the elasticity of the connection between horse and rider.

(Note: The third tier of the Training Pyramid is represented by the concept of “Connection” in the U.S., and by the concept of “Contact” [translation of “*Anlehnung*”] by the FEI [see Foreign Terms section].)



CORRECTNESS

The straightness of the action of the limbs (e.g., faults would be winging, paddling, twisting hocks). Not the same as Purity. Dressage judges deal with Correctness only indirectly, that is, to the degree that it affects the purity or quality of the gait. Breeding class judges address correctness directly.

CROOKEDNESS

1. Lack of parallelism to line of travel (e.g., haunches left or right of centerline or circle line), or to line of reference (e.g., in leg yielding—haunches leading or trailing).
2. Misalignment of the horse's body parts from tail to poll. (e.g., popped shoulder or twisted neck).
3. Lack of directness of line of travel (e.g., weaving).

CROSS-CANTER

The horse canters on one lead in front and the other lead behind. Same as Disunited.

DEFINITION/DEFINED

Used in reference to transitions between paces (within a gait), well demarcated change in length of stride; used in reference to transitions from one gait to another, the maintenance of pure rhythm in both gaits.

DISOBEDIENCE

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

DISSOCIATION, DIAGONAL DISSOCIATION (ALSO DIAGONAL ADVANCED PLACEMENT OR DAP)

The hooves of a diagonal pair of limbs (in trot or canter) do not contact the ground at the same moment.

1. Positive Dissociation—the hind hoof of the diagonal pair touches the ground first (as in canter pirouette and racing gallop—4 beats.)
2. Negative Dissociation—the front hoof of the diagonal pair touches the ground first (as in lazy, con strained, or disorganized canter—4 beats).

DISTINCTION/DISTINCT

Used in reference to transitions between paces (within a gait), well demarcated change in length of stride; used in reference to transitions from one gait to another, the maintenance of pure rhythm in both gaits.

DISUNITED (CANTER)

The horse canters on one lead in front and the other lead behind. Same as Cross-canter.

DRAGGING

Refers to dragging of the hind feet or inactivity of the hind legs (rather than to lack of parallelism in leg-yield and half-pass) or to dragging of the feet in rein-back.

ELASTICITY

The ability or tendency to stretch and contract the musculature smoothly, giving the impression of stretchiness or springiness.

ELEVATION

1. The raising of the forehand. See "Absolute Elevation" and "Relative Elevation."
2. Applied in piaffe and passage to address the height to which the legs are raised.

ENGAGEMENT

Increased flexion of the lumbosacral joint and the joints of the hind leg during the weight-bearing (support) phase of the stride, thus lowering the croup relative to the forehand ("lightening the forehand").



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

Engagement is “carrying power,” rather than “pushing power.” A prerequisite for upward thrust/impulsion. (Note: Engagement is not flexion of the hocks or “hock action” [as seen most clearly in gaited horses and hackneys] in which the joints of the hind legs are most markedly flexed while the leg is in the air. Nor is engagement the length of the step of the hind leg forward toward the horse’s girth—that is “reach” of the hind leg.)

EVASION

Avoidance of the difficulty, correctness, or purpose of the movement, or of the influence of the rider, often without active resistance or disobedience (e.g., tilting the head, open mouth, broken neckline, etc.). Bit evasions are means of avoiding correct contact with the bit.

EXPRESSION

Increased impulsion, with harmony, balance, and cadence—imbuing the performance with “feeling” and artistic quality.

EXTENSION/EXTENDED (WALK, TROT, OR CANTER)

Stretching and lengthening of the outline and stride of the horse, and, in trot and canter, an increased phase of suspension. The horse covers as much ground as possible with each stride, maintaining nearly the same tempo and relatively uphill balance.

In walk, a pace which shows the maximum length of the stride as well as stretch and oscillation of the neck. The hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the prints of the forefeet.

FALLING IN, FALLING ON INSIDE SHOULDER, FALLING OUT, FALLING OVER OUTSIDE SHOULDER

Lateral deviation of the forehand/foreleg(s) caused by, or causing, loss of balance.

FIGURE

Geometrical component of a dressage test, such as a circle, change of rein, figure of eight. Erroneously used interchangeably with “Movement.”

FLEXIBILITY

Range of motion of joints—the ability to move the joints freely. Suppleness, pliability.

FLEXION

1. In the limbs—articulation of a joint(s) so that the angle between the bones becomes smaller.
2. “At” the poll, there are three directions of movement, the first two of which are described as flexions:
 - a. Direct flexion (or “longitudinal flexion”)—brings the chin toward the underside of the neck.
 - b. Lateral flexion—closes the angle between the cheek and the side of the neck.
 - c. Rotation—causes tilting of the head. See “Poll.”
3. In the rest of the spine, movements occur in the same directions as at the poll but to a lesser degree. It is the combination of these movements that creates carriage, bend, displacement of the ribcage, etc.

FOOTFALL

A hoof, or pair of hooves virtually simultaneously, striking the ground.

FORWARD

To or toward the direction that is ahead or in front of the horse, or moving or tending toward that direction. Forward indicates the direction in which the horse goes (in contrast to sideways, backward, or standing still); it does not indicate how he gets there. References to specifics such as impulsion, energy, reach, length of stride, and tempo more accurately express how the horse should proceed in a forward direction.



FRAME

The longer or shorter outline of the horse dictated by the relative degree of extension or collection. Incorrectly used to address the horse's level of training, as in "Second-Level frame" or "Fourth-Level frame."

FREEDOM

The reach, scope, and lack of constriction in the movement of the fore and hind limbs.

FREE WALK

A pace in which the horse is allowed freedom to lower and stretch out its head and neck. Both the horse's strides and the frame are lengthened. May be performed on a long rein (maintaining contact) or a loose rein (with a loop in the rein—no contact).

GAIT

Any of the various patterns of foot movements (or rhythms) of a horse, such as walk, trot, pace, amble, canter, or gallop. Walk, trot, and canter are gaits used in dressage.

GOOSESTEPPING

Refers to exaggerated or artificial action of the forelegs. Usually applied to the walk.

HALF-HALT

A momentary increase of collection, or an effect of the aids, which increases the attention and improves the balance of the horse.

HASTY

Usually refers to the tempo, though strictly speaking it could refer to MPM. Therefore, it is best to specify (as in "hasty tempo").

HOLLOW BACK

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

HOVERING TROT

See "Passage-like Trot."

HURRIED

Usually refers to the tempo, though strictly speaking it could refer to MPM. Therefore, it is best to specify (as in "hurried tempo").

IMPULSION

Thrust, releasing of the energy stored by engagement. The energy is transmitted through a back that is free from negative tension and is manifested in the horse's elastic, whole-body movement.

Note 1: Impulsion is associated with a phase of suspension such as exists in trot and canter, but which does not exist in walk or piaffe. Therefore, impulsion is not applicable to the walk or the piaffe.

Note 2: Compare the original French with the later English translation of the FEI score sheets under "Impulsion." The English translation of the French reads "the desire to move forward," whereas what the French actually says is "the desire to carry itself forward" ["Le desire de se porter en avant"].

Note 3: For purposes of the Training Pyramid, the German term "*Schwung*" is translated as "Impulsion" [see the sections Foreign Terms and Pyramid of Training].)

INSIDE, INNER, INWARDS

1. The direction toward which the horse should be positioned (laterally) or bent.
2. The side of the horse that is toward the center of the ring.

The former takes precedence if the two are not the same (as in counter-canter or renver).



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

IRREGULAR

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

LATE

Execution after the aids. Usually applied to flying changes and transitions.

LATE BEHIND

In flying changes, the hind legs change after the forelegs.

LATERAL

1. To the side, as in flexion, bend, suppleness, or direction of movement.
2. Impurity in walk (ambling or pacing) or canter; rarely trot.

LENGTHENING OF STRIDE

At trot and canter, a pace in which the stride and outline are elongated, maintaining the same balance and essentially the same tempo as in the working pace.

LIFT

Applied in piaffe and passage to address the height to which the legs are raised.

LIGHTNESS

Refers to either:

1. The horse's lightness on its feet.
2. The lightness in the reins.

LONG AND LOW

Carriage in which the horse lowers and stretches out its head and neck, reaching forward and downward into contact on a longer rein.

LONGITUDINAL

In the lengthwise dimension (as opposed to lateral), from front-to-back or back-to-front.

LOOSENESS

Freedom from, or release from, negative physical and mental tension. Relaxation.

(Note: "Looseness" is another translation of "*Losgelassenheit*," the second tier of the Training Pyramid—see Foreign Terms section.)

MARCHING

Purposefulness in the steps of the walk.

MEDIUM (WALK, TROT, OR CANTER)

At trot and canter, a pace with a length of stride between that of collected and extended, and a more uphill balance, more forward and upward thrust, and more reach than in the working pace. The movement produced is rounder than that of extension. At walk, a pace with a carriage and length of stride between that of the collected and extended walks (the toes of the hind feet touch the ground in front of the toes of the fore prints).

MOBILITY

Easy maneuverability/nimbleness of the shoulders/forehand/forelegs, made possible by a narrowing and shortening of the horse's base of support.

MOVEMENT

1. The manner in which the horse moves over the ground.
2. Test Movement: a section of a dressage test to be evaluated with one score on a score sheet.



3. Dressage Movement: a exercise, as opposed to a figure, movements are: leg-yield, reinback, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on haunches, half pass (trot or canter), flying change(s), pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe, and passage.

MPM

Meters per minute (universal equivalent of miles per hour).

NODDING/BOBBING

A rhythmic up-and-down or backward and forward action of the horse's head and neck which is not part of the normal mechanic of the gait. It may be caused by the past use of gadgets, by constraint, or by lameness.

OBEDIENCE

Willingness to perform the movement, transition, or figure asked by the rider. May demonstrate resistance or evasion, yet still be "obedient" (e.g., the horse may perform a series of flying changes without mistakes and in the right place but is behind the bit, tilted in the head with mouth open and tail swishing, reluctant to cover enough ground, etc.; thus he obediently performs the task, but not necessarily submissively, supplye, etc.).

ON THE AIDS

Well-connected, on the bit, and calmly and immediately responsive and obedient.

ON THE BIT

Acceptance of contact (without resistance or evasion) with a stretched topline and with lateral and longitudinal flexion as required. The horse's face line is at or slightly in front of the vertical.

ON THE FOREHAND

Poor longitudinal balance, in which the forelegs push the horse forward rather than pushing the forehand upward and body weight backward.

Not necessarily an issue of neck carriage/height.

OUT BEHIND

The hind legs are placed, or act, behind the horse's body.

OUTLINE

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

OUTSIDE, OUTER, OUTWARDS

1. The direction away from which the horse should be positioned or bent.
2. The side that is away from the center of the arena.

The former takes precedence if the two are not the same (as in counter-canter or renvers).

OVERBENT/OVERBENDING

Excessive *lateral* displacement of the neck relative to the horse's body, occurring in the neck itself or at the base of the neck, causing lack of apparent uniformity of the lateral curve of the "bent" horse.

OVERFLEXED

Behind the vertical, due to excessive longitudinal flexion in the poll and/or upper joints of the neck.

OVERSTEP, OVERSTRIDE, OVERTRACK

The placement of the hind foot in front of the print of the forefoot.

OVER-TURNED

Turned more than 180 degrees in a half-pirouette or more than 360 degrees in a full pirouette.



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

PACE(S)

1. a. Named variation(s) within a gait (at walk: collected, medium, extended, and free; at trot and canter: collected, working, medium, and extended) characterized by a given length of stride, as well as by other attributes listed under the individual definitions of the various paces.
- b. MPM within a gait as determined by stride length while maintaining essentially the same tempo.
2. a. Gait in which the lateral pairs of legs move in unison (not a dressage gait).

(Note: The FEI uses the term “Pace” synonymously with “Gait,” and it uses “Variation” to refer to the concept of Pace [definition 1a.] as defined by the USDF.)

PASSAGE-LIKE OR PASSAGEY TROT

A trot in which the phase of support of one diagonal pair of legs is prolonged, while there is a hesitation in the forward travel of the other diagonal pair of legs, giving a floating, hovering impression. Also called “hovering trot.”

PHASE

Part of a stride.

1. Stance phase—hoof is on the ground.
2. Swing phase—hoof is swinging through the air.
3. Aerial phase (suspension phase)—all hooves are in the swing phase; the horse has no contact with the ground.

PIVOTING

Avoidance of picking up a foot in the proper rhythm, turning around a grounded (or “stuck”) foot. Used in reference to pirouettes or turns on the haunches or forehand.

POLL

The highest point of the horse’s skull (the occipital crest). In common dressage usage, “flexion at the poll” refers to the longitudinal flexion (the joint between the skull and the spine, the atlanto-occipital joint), or lateral flexion (the joints behind the skull). See “Flexion.”

POSITION

1. The lateral flexion behind the poll so that the horse “looks” to the side, e.g., “position right” or “position left.”
2. The posture of the rider.

PURITY

The correct order and timing of the footfalls and phases of a gait.

PUSHING OUT

Hind legs operating too far behind the horse, pushing backwards more than carrying.

PYRAMID OF TRAINING

Same as Training Scale. See Pyramid of Training section.

QUADRILLE

For special terminology for quadrille see section on quadrille judging terms.

QUALITY

The quality of a gait refers to its freedom/amplitude, elasticity, fluency, etc. Not the same as “Purity” or “Correctness.”

QUICK

Usually refers to the tempo, though strictly speaking it could refer to MPM. Therefore, it is best to specify (as in “quick tempo”).



RAPID

Usually refers to the tempo, though strictly speaking it could refer to MPM. Therefore, it is best to specify (as in “rapid tempo”).

REACH

Refers to the forward extension of the fore limbs, hind limbs, and neck of the horse (or may be used to refer to any one of these individually).

REGULARITY

Purity of the gait and (at walk and trot) evenness of the length of the steps and levelness of the height of the steps taken by the front or hind pairs of legs (i.e., the left and right legs of the pair are symmetrical in height and length of step).

(Note: In the first collective mark on a dressage test, “Gaits [Freedom and Regularity],” “Regularity” is used to address purity and soundness. It does not address the tempo of the horse.)

RELATIVE ELEVATION

The raising of the forehand coupled with the lowering of the hindquarters, involving shifting of the horse’s balance to the rear.

RELAX/RELAXATION

1. Referring to the horse’s mental/emotional state: calmness, without anxiety or nervousness.
2. Referring to the horse’s physical state: commonly used to indicate the absence of muscular tension (contraction) other than that needed for optimal carriage, strength, and range and fluency of movement.

Often the physical and mental/emotional states go hand in hand.

(Note: For purposes of the Training Pyramid, the German term “*Losgelassenheit*” is translated as “Relaxation” by the USDF and as “Suppleness” by the FEI [see the sections Foreign Terms and Pyramid of Training].)

RELEASE

As used in the tests, the brief release of the contact, wherein the rider in one clear motion extends the hand(s) forward along the crest of the horse’s neck, then rides for several strides without contact. Its purpose is to demonstrate that, even with loose rein(s), the horse maintains its carriage, balance, pace, and tempo. This corresponds to the German expression “*Überstreichen*.”

RESISTANCE

Active, rigid opposition to the connection or to the aids of the rider (e.g., against or above the bit). Not the same as Disobedience or Evasion. The horse can be resistant, yet still obedient (perform the required task). Can be momentary or pervasive, willful or unintentional.

RHYTHM

The recurring characteristic sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait. For purposes of dressage, the only correct rhythms are those of the pure walk, trot, and canter, and reinback and piaffe (not those of amble, pace, rack, etc).

(Note 1: “Rhythm” is sometimes used mistakenly to mean “tempo” [*rate of repetition* of the rhythm]. This usage is not consistent with the correct English definition of “rhythm” [per Webster], nor with its normal usage in the music.

Note 2: In English, there is no one term that covers both the rhythm [as defined above] and the tempo, as does the term “*Takt*” in German. This has caused confusion because “*Takt*” has commonly been translated as Rhythm. For purposes of the Training Pyramid, the German term “*Takt*” is translated as “Rhythm” and is used as shorthand for both the rhythm itself [as defined above] and the suitable rate of repetition of the rhythm [tempo]. See the sections Foreign Terms and Pyramid of Training.)



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

ROCKING/ROCKING HORSE CANTER

A canter in which the neck/forehand goes too much up and down as a result of lack of sufficient ground coverage, lack of sufficient engagement, or interference by the rider.

ROUNDNESS

1. The convexity of the profile of the horse's topline, and concavity of the underline of the neck.
2. The circular, as opposed to linear or flat, quality characterizing the movements or action of the horse's limbs.

RUNNING

Excess MPM and/or quickness of tempo relative to the engagement and balance expected of the pace or movement. Usually used in reference to lengthened, medium or extended trot or canter, or canter departs.

RUSHED

Usually refers to the tempo, though strictly speaking it could refer to MPM. Therefore, it is best to specify (as in "rushed tempo").

SCOPE

Amplitude (reach and roundness) of movement.

SELF-CARRIAGE

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

SLACK

1. Used in reference to the reins: lacking contact.
2. Used in reference to the condition of the musculature (e.g., "slack loin").

SNATCHING

1. Attempting to jerk the reins through the rider's hands.
2. Used in reference to one or both hind legs: picking up the leg(s) jerkily and sometimes excessively high.

SPEED

Meters per minute, i.e., how much ground is covered per unit of time. The horse's speed can be changed by adjusting the length of stride, adjusting the tempo, or both. Increased tempo does not necessarily mean increased speed. Not to be confused with impulsion. The term "Speed" applies to the tempo only if explicitly so stated.

STEP

Referring to either the front or hind pair of legs, the movement that involves transfer from one limb to the other. Steps are measured between the footfall of one hoof and the footfall of the other hoof of the pair. For counting purposes, the steps of only the front OR rear pair of limbs are counted.

STIFF/STIFFNESS

Inability (as opposed to unwillingness) to flex the joints or stretch the musculature to the degree and in the way required to perform the task at hand. The opposite of Suppleness. Not to be confused with "tense" or "resistant."

STRAIGHTNESS

1. Parallelism to required line of travel (e.g., haunches neither left nor right of centerline or circle line), or to line of reference (e.g., in leg yielding—haunches neither leading nor trailing).
2. Proper alignment of the horse's body parts from poll to tail (e.g., not a popped shoulder or twisted neck).
3. Directness of line of travel (e.g., not weaving).



STRIDE

Cycle of movements that is completed when the horse's legs regain their initial positions. Length of stride refers to the amount of ground covered by the entire cycle.

STRUNG OUT

Too elongated; lacking good carriage, longitudinal balance, and connection.

STUCK

A foot remains too long grounded, thus breaking the rhythm of the gait. Usually applied to pirouette and turn on haunches.

SUBMISSION

Compliance and throughness. The yielding of the horse's will to that of the rider, as revealed by a constant attention and confidence in the attitude of the horse, as well as by the harmony with the rider and willingness to:

1. perform the required task
2. operate with correct basics (see Glossary definition of Basics, and Pyramid of Training section).

SUPPLENESS

Range of motion of joints. Pliability, flexibility. The opposite of Stiffness. A horse's suppleness is largely determined by genetics but may over time be improved through training.

SUSPENSION

The moment or phase of the trot or canter in which the horse has no feet on the ground.

SWINGING

In series of flying changes, piaffe, or passage, the alternating left and right lateral displacement of the shoulders and/or haunches.

SWINGING BACK

The springy motion that occurs when the thrust off the hind legs is transmitted through a stretched topline by trunk muscles that contract and "decontract" rhythmically rather than remaining either rigid or slack.

SWINGING HEAD

The horse's muzzle moves left-and-right (in trot and canter) or in circles (usually in canter), indicating constraint or incorrect acceptance of contact/connection.

TEMPO

Rate of repetition of the rhythm, the strides, or of the emphasized beats—beats per minute, as may be measured by a metronome (in walk and trot, the footfalls of both forelegs are typically counted, and in canter the footfall of the leading foreleg is typically counted).

(**Note:** Historically often used in Europe to denote what the USDF defines as Pace. Therefore, the FEI does not currently use the word Tempo in its Rule Book but uses the terms Rhythm and Cadence instead.)

TENSE/TENSION

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

THROUGHNESS/THROUGH

State in which the rider's aids/influences go freely through to all parts of the horse, from back to front and front to back (e.g., the rein aids go through and reach and influence the hind legs). Prerequisites for this state are good connection and positive mental/emotional state.



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

(Note: “Throughness” is a shortening of “throughlettingness,” the literal translation of the German term “*Durchlässigkeit*.” See Pyramid of Training section for further explanation.)

TILTING

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

TOE FLICKING

Refers to the exaggerated or artificial action of the forelegs. Usually applied to the trot.

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 stretching and arching the neck and rounding the back. The horse can stretch its topline independently of the height of the neck.

TRACK/TRACKS

1. (verb) Referring to a foot or feet, to travel in a line or path (e.g., the horse tracks straight with his left hind).
(noun) The lines of travel of feet, viewed and counted by the observer as the horse approaches him (e.g., number of tracks for shoulder-in).
2. Direction of travel, as in “track right” (when all corners are right turns, and right hand is toward the center of the arena).
3. Used to refer to lateral movements—movements on “two tracks.”
4. The path next to the rail in an arena.

TRACKING UP

The hind feet step into the prints of the forefeet.

TRAILING

1. Usually applied in half-pass and leg-yielding to describe the lack of parallelism to the long axis of the arena (trailing haunches).
2. Sometimes used to refer to the operation of the hind legs too far behind the horse (as in “trailing hind legs”).

TRAINING SCALE

Same as Pyramid of Training. (See Pyramid of Training section.)

UNEVEN

An irregularity in walk or trot in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically the right leg making a different *length* of step than the left leg.

UNLEVEL

An irregularity in walk or trot in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically the right leg making a different *height* of step than the left leg.

UPHILL

A longitudinal balance and carriage with well-engaged hindquarters and lifted withers.

WIDE BEHIND

The horse travels with the hind feet further apart than the fore feet (an evasion of engagement which occurs most commonly in piaffe, lengthening of stride in trot, and hind legs spread in halt).

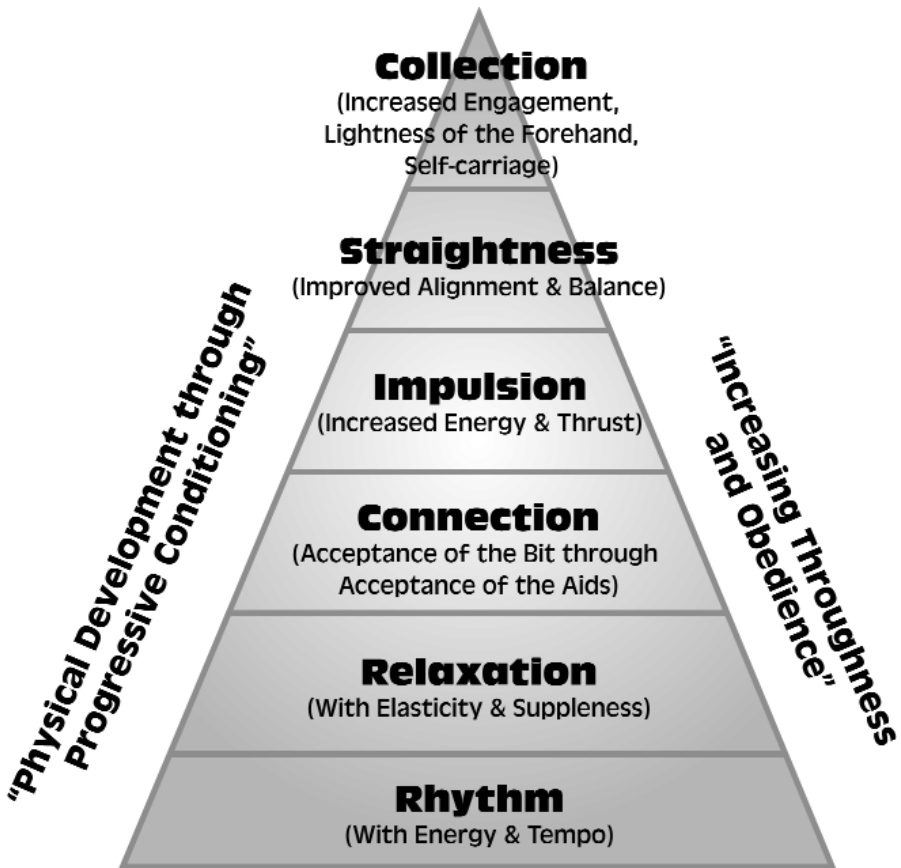
WORKING (TROT OR CANTER)

A pace in which the horse goes in an energetic but calm way, with a length of stride between that of the collected and medium paces.



PYRAMID OF TRAINING
(TRAINING SCALE)

Pyramid of Training





GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

PREMISE

Historically, the training of horses was developed mainly for military purposes. Horses were and still are to this day a valuable economic and cultural asset. Therefore, it makes good sense to train them with humane and careful methods based on the nature and physiology of the horse, so that they are able to lead long, healthy, and useful lives. These methods were refined for centuries—the earliest surviving evidence are books by the Greek general and horseman Xenophon (ca. 400 B.C.) and have become known as “Classical Horsemanship.” Unfortunately, there have been many instances when these traditions have been violated in different cultures and by various individuals.

Horses are no longer used for military purposes (except in very rare instances) but have become our partners in equestrian sports. However, the nature of the horse—even taking into consideration modern scientific revelations—has remained essentially the same. Classical principles have not lost their validity; on the contrary, they will help us to produce a dressage horse that can truly be a work of art.

To ensure that classical principles and traditions are honored and adhered to in our present-day culture, the Pyramid of Training (Training Scale) evolved as a means to illustrate the different steps/concepts which are essential ingredients in the correct training of a horse. It is important to realize that these “steps” are interrelated. One is not supposed to perfect each “step” before attempting the next, but rather use them as reference for understanding the general progression and interactive development from the beginning of training to its culmination.

RHYTHM

(With Energy and Tempo)

Rhythm is the term used for the characteristic sequence of footfalls and timing of a pure walk, pure trot, and pure canter. The rhythm should be expressed with energy and in a suitable and consistent tempo, with the horse remaining in the balance and self-carriage appropriate to its level of training.

RELAXATION

(With Elasticity and Suppleness)

Relaxation refers to the horse’s mental state (calmness without anxiety or nervousness), as well as his physical state (the absence of negative muscular tension). Usually, the mental and physical states go hand in hand. The horse learns to accept the influence of the rider without becoming tense. He acquires positive muscle tone so that he moves with elasticity and a supple, swinging back, allowing the rider to bend him laterally as well as lengthen and shorten his frame.

A horse showing the correct responses when allowed to chew the reins out of the hands is relaxed.

CONNECTION

(Acceptance of the Bit through Acceptance of the Aids)

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. The contact to the bit must be elastic and adjustable, creating fluent interaction between horse and rider with appropriate changes in the horse’s outline.

Acceptance of the bit is identified by the horse quietly chewing the bit. This activates the salivary glands so that the mouth becomes moist and production of saliva is evident. The softly moving tongue should remain under the bit.

The quality of the connection and balance can be evaluated by “*Überstreichen*”, releasing the reins (to demonstrate self carriage) or by allowing the horse to chew the reins out of the hands (to demonstrate relaxation).



IMPULSION

(Increased Energy and Thrust)

Impulsion is the term used to describe the transmission of an eager and energetic, yet controlled, propulsive thrust generated from the hindquarters into the athletic movement of the horse. Impulsion is associated with a phase of suspension such as exists in trot and canter, but not in walk. It is measured by the horse's desire to carry himself forward, the elasticity of his steps, suppleness of his back, and engagement of his hindquarters. Impulsion is necessary to develop medium paces, and later on, with the added ingredient of collection, extended paces.

STRAIGHTNESS

(Improved Alignment and Balance)

A horse is said to be straight when the footfalls of the forehand and the hindquarters are appropriately aligned on straight and curved lines and when his longitudinal axis is in line with the straight or curved track on which he is ridden. By nature every horse is crooked, hollow on one side and stiff on his other side, thereby using one side of his body somewhat differently from the other. This also causes uneven contact in the reins. Appropriate gymnastic exercises develop the horse's symmetry. This allows him to engage both hind legs evenly and prepares him for collection. This process improves the lateral as well as the longitudinal balance of the horse.

COLLECTION

(Increased Engagement, Lightness of the Forehand, Self-Carriage)

The horse shows collection when he lowers and engages his hindquarters—shortening and narrowing his base of support, resulting in lightness and mobility of the forehand. Because the center of mass is shifted backward, the forehand is lightened and elevated; the horse feels more “uphill.” The horse's neck is raised and arched and the whole top line is stretched. He shows shorter, but powerful, cadenced, steps and strides. Elevation must be the result of, and relative to, the lowering of the hindquarters. This is called “Relative Elevation”. It indicates a training problem if the horse raises his neck without displacement of his center of mass to the rear. This is called “Absolute Elevation” and can, if pervasive, adversely affect the horse's health and his way of going. Collection with Relative Elevation will enhance the horse's self-carriage, so that he can be ridden almost entirely off the seat, and the aids of the legs and especially those of the hands can become very light.

ONGOING PURSUIT OF OBEDIENCE AND HARMONY

THROUGHNESS

Throughness is an equestrian term which means the supple, elastic, unblocked, connected state of the horse's musculature and a willing mental state that permits an unrestricted flow of energy from back to front and front to back (circle of the aids), which allows the aids/influences to go through all parts of the horse. A horse is said to be “through” when, by virtue of a lively impulsion and the suppleness of his joints, free from the paralyzing effects of resistance, he obeys willingly and without hesitation and responds to the various aids calmly and with precision, displaying a natural and harmonious balance both physically and mentally. These qualities are the hallmark of a correctly schooled horse.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONDITIONING

Throughout the horse's training, the muscle development and conditioning should be addressed in order to progress without physical or mental harm toward the fulfillment of the horse's potential. The healthy horse's physique develops in a discipline specific way—which allows him to perform increasingly demanding exercises with increasing ease. The correctly developed musculature protects the joints, tendons, and ligaments and contributes to the horse's longevity.



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

FOREIGN TERMS

ANLEHNUNG (GERMAN)

Contact

Note: The third tier of the Training Pyramid is represented by the concept of “Connection” in the U.S. and by the concept of “Contact” (*Anlehnung*) by the FEI (see Glossary and Pyramid of Training section).

DURCHLÄSSIGKEIT (GERMAN)

“Throughlettingness,” shortened to “Throughness.” See Glossary and information under Pyramid of Training section.

GERADERICHTEN (GERMAN)

Straightness. See Glossary and Pyramid of Training section.

LOSGELASSENHEIT (GERMAN)

“Looselettingness” or “Letlooseness,” shortened to “Looseness.” For purposes of the Training Pyramid, the USDF uses the translation “Relaxation” (see Glossary and Pyramid of Training section) and the FEI uses the translation “Suppleness.”

SCHWUNG (GERMAN)

For purposes of the Training Pyramid, “*Schwung*” is translated as “Impulsion.” See Glossary and Pyramid of Training section.

TAKT (GERMAN)

Incorporates BOTH (1) rhythm (the sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait) and (2) tempo (the rate of repetition of the rhythm). For purposes of the Training Pyramid, “Rhythm” is used as shorthand to cover both of these aspects of “*Takt*.” See Glossary and Pyramid of Training section.

ÜBERSTREICHEN (GERMAN)

Release (see Glossary definition).

VERSAMMLUNG (GERMAN)

Collection. See Glossary and Pyramid of Training section.



FREESTYLE JUDGING TERMS

Developed by the USDF Freestyle Committee June 2006

**Denotes terms used on the score sheet*

CHOREOGRAPHY

***BALANCE (IN DESIGN)**

Fairly even use of right and left rein work.

***CHOREOGRAPHY**

Arrangement of gaits, paces, movements, figures, transitions, combinations and patterns that comprise a program.

COMBINATION

Direct connection of any movement or figure with another movement or figure.

***CREATIVITY**

Elements are combined in imaginative ways; interesting or uncommon lines or patterns are used; not test-like.

***DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY**

The horse/rider team successfully performs a single element or a combination of elements in a way that exceeds the requirement of the standard test of the same level.

***DESIGN COHESIVENESS**

Logical, coherent, recognizable construction of the choreography.

***ELEMENTS**

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

***MOVEMENT (DRESSAGE MOVEMENT)**

An exercise as opposed to a figure, transition or a combination of those. The Dressage Movements are: leg-yield, reinback, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on haunches, half pass (trot or canter), flying change(s), pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe and passage.

PATTERN

Geometric design formed in the arena when movements, figures and transitions are combined.

TEST-LIKE

Directly repeating a combination or pattern from the standard test with no variation; lack of creativity.

***USE OF ARENA**

Utilizing the dressage arena space in its entirety; distributing the elements throughout the arena.

MUSIC

BEAT

Underlying pulse of the music.

***COHESIVENESS**

Music is linked by genre, theme or orchestration.

***DYNAMICS**

Variations in the intensity of sound.

***EDITING**

Music has a smooth flow; there are no abrasive cuts, transitions, or fades.

GENRE

Category of music marked by a distinct style such as jazz, Baroque, rock, etc.



GLOSSARY of Judging Terms

***INTERPRETATION**

Choreography reflects the dynamics and phrasing of the music.

LYRICS

Use of words in a song.

ORCHESTRA

Large group of musicians playing together on various instruments, including strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion.

ORCHESTRATION

Arrangement of music for performance by an orchestra, or smaller groupings of instruments.

***PHRASING**

The way sequences of notes are grouped together to form units of melody; the expression of musical sentences.

RHYTHM

In music, the repeated pattern or grouping of musical beats; in dressage, the characteristic sequence of footfalls and phases of a given gait.

STYLE

Distinctive and identifiable form used in artistic expression.

***SUITABILITY**

Music matches and expresses the horse and the gaits.

SYMPHONY

Many sounds playing together; a major work for orchestra; large orchestra.

SYNCOPIATION

Shift in accent that occurs when a normally weak beat is stressed.

TEMPO

In music, the speed of musical beats; in dressage, the rate of repetition of the horse's stride.

THEME

Distinct, recurring and unifying quality or idea.

VOCAL

Human voice used as an instrument.



QUADRILLE JUDGING TERMS

Revised by the USDF Quadrille Committee June 2006

ALIGNMENT

Alignment occurs in two directions; in a column/file or laterally.

Column Alignment: Whether single file or in pairs, refers mainly to centerline work. Alignment should be such that the judge can see only the first rider or riders (in pairs).

Lateral Alignment: Mainly seen when riders turn individually from the long side and go across the arena. The judge should be able to see only the nearest rider when alignment is good. It is the riders' bodies that are aligned, not the horses' heads.

CLOVERLEAF

A figure formed when riders are coming in pairs from opposite direction on the centerline, and at the quarter markers (ten meters from each end of the arena) perform individual ten meter circles, making the E-B line the center between the circles.

COLUMN OR FILE

Used interchangeably to describe riding one behind the other, either single file or double file (in pairs).

FAN FORMATION

When coming down the centerline in pairs for a salute, the second pair splits, and the riders fan out to come up alongside of the center pair.

OBLIQUE

An angular line of travel from the centerline to the side or from the side to the centerline or opposite side of the arena, as opposed to straight across.

PASS THROUGH

Pairs approaching each other, making sufficient room to allow one horse to pass between the approaching two horses.

SPACING

There are two kinds of spacing; column and lateral.

Column Spacing: Refers to distance between riders when riding single file, or pairs when riding in column. Exact distance is not specified—experienced teams can use nose-to-tail spacing, while beginning teams may prefer more distance; essential that it is uniform throughout each movement. Spacing may be changed from movement to movement, depending on the gait or the pattern.

Lateral Spacing: Refers to the spacing between two or more riders when approaching the judge head-on, especially in the salutes. It would also apply in individual turns across the arena, but not easily seen by the judge at "C."

SYNCHRONY

Refers to all riders turning at the same moments, such as left and right individual turns; left and right individual circles and half circles, etc. Everyone must start and finish at the same time.

Alignment very often is dependent on synchrony and that is why, in the collective marks on the test sheet, the two are scored together.

THREAD THE NEEDLE

A movement in which riders coming single file from the corners of the arena cross each other's paths alternately on the centerline.



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