

# Cowboy Dressage®

## Rules & Guidelines



# COWBOY DRESSAGE® RULES & GUIDELINES

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## COMPETITION OBJECTIVES

Judges will be looking for a horse and rider combinations to execute the tests in “Harmony and Partnership”, and rewarding the “Soft Feel” between rider and horse. The rider should show Preparation, Execution, Release, and Relaxation. Judges will also be scoring Precision, Balance, Cadence, Carriage, Control, and Performance, but **Soft Feel (the ability to send messages and the sensitivity and awareness to feel the messages the horse sends back)** is the goal of

Cowboy Dressage® and will be scored accordingly.

**Soft Feel and Light Contact:** Light or soft contact does not mean using long uncommunicative reins and allowing the horse to travel imbalanced. It means Light/Soft contact. **Soft Feel** is achieved when the seat, hands and aids are used correctly. It is the end result of all aids in proper use, balance, rhythm and partnership.

## APPOINTMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

1. **Saddle:** Western tack must be used in all classes. Entries shall be shown with stock saddle but silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. All saddles, with exception to sidesaddles, **must have a horn** to qualify as a western or stock type saddle. Anyone not showing in this type of saddle will be disqualified.
  
2. **Standard Western Bit:** There is no discrimination against any standard Western bit. A Standard Western Bit is defined as having a shank with a maximum overall length of 8 1/2" The mouthpiece consists of a metal bar 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter as measured one inch in from the shank. The bars may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped. Nothing must protrude below the mouthpiece (bar) such as extensions, prongs or rivets designed to intimidate the horse. Rollers attached to the center of the bit are acceptable, and may extend below the bar. Jointed mouthpieces are acceptable and may consist of two or three pieces and may have one or two joints. A three piece mouthpiece may include a connecting ring of 1 1/4" or less in diameter or a connecting flat bar of 3/8", to 3/4" (measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2"), which lies flat in the mouth, or a roller or port as described herein. The port must be no higher than 3 1/2" maximum with roller(s) and covers acceptable. Jointed mouthpieces, half breeds, and spade bits are standard. **Curb chains** and leather curb straps may be used but must be flat, at least 1/2" in width, and lie flat against the jaws of the horse. Two fingers must fit between flat leather or chain curb strap and jaw of horse. **Reins** must be attached to each shank.
  
3. **Snaffle:** A standard snaffle bit is to have smooth bars that have no less than 3/8" diameter. The 3/8" measurement is taken 1" from the snaffle ring. The bars may graduate to a smaller size near center of bit. The rings may be from 2" to 4" outside diameter, either of the loose type, O ring, eggbutt, dee ring, or center mounted without cheeks. If a curb strap is used it must be attached below the reins. The snaffle bit mouthpiece can be single or double jointed.
  
4. **Hackamore:** Hackamores are allowed on any age horse. A hackamore includes a bosal (Rounded in shape, constructed of flexible braided rawhide or leather, and must have a flexible nonmetallic core) with maximum diameter of 3/4" at the cheek, attached to a

suitable headstall. Attached reins may be of hair, rope, or leather. Other material of any kind must not be used in conjunction with a bosal, i.e., steel, metal or chains (Exception: Smooth plastic electrical tape is acceptable). Loping hackamore is allowed.

5. **Prohibited Appliances:** Extends over event/competition grounds for Cowboy Dressage® horses and riders. Horses must not be shown with artificial appliances that would tend to alter their performance; no material of any kind, including tongue-ties, may be placed in the horse's mouth other than a standard western bit or a snaffle bit. Slip or gag bits, rigid donut mouthpieces and flat polo mouthpieces are prohibited. Roping bits with both reins connected to a single ring at center of cross bar must not be used. Any rein design or other device which increases the leverage of the bit is prohibited. Anything that alters the intended use of equipment as provided for in the description of appointments is considered to be an artificial appliance. Wire, rawhide, metal or other substance must not be used in conjunction with or as part of the leather curb strap, or curb chains. Rounded, rolled, braided, or rawhide curb straps are prohibited. No bitless bridles, sidepulls, halter or similar devices.
  
6. **Reins and Rein Hold:**
  - a. Loop and any type western rein is allowed.
  - b. Two hands allowed with a standard western bit or snaffle.
  - c. If a rider chooses to ride one handed, they may not switch to two hands at any time during the test. To do so will cause an error each time. Three errors in one test will cause elimination.
  - d. No extra points given for riding one hand.
  - e. **Romel Reins** must be ridden with one hand on the reins and one hand on the romel, and the rider must not switch hands. **The fingers may be open and fanned, but may not slip down between the reins** (Judges will treat it as an error each occurrence). Touching bridle reins between the rein hand and the bit with the romel hand will result in penalties. **If the reins are split and ridden two-handed, the judge should ring the bell to inform the rider that the reins must be ridden one-handed and post a 10 point deduction under penalties/errors at the bottom of the score sheet**, in addition to any other penalties incurred. For a horse "straight-up in the bridle" or in the "two-rein" please refer to the VAQUERO REQUIREMENTS for correct way to manage and hold reins.
  
7. **Further Appointments:**
  - a. One Crop or **Whip** is allowed, with a maximum length of 42" (including lash). Excessive use will be penalized.
  - b. **Spurs** are allowed. Excessive use will be penalized.

- c. A **Cavesson** (nose band) is allowed with a bit or snaffle. Cavesson must be western type, no crank or flash type allowed. Two fingers must fit between cavesson and jaw of horse.

## STATUS AND AGE DEFINITIONS

1. **Open:** Rider that is 18 years or older, **who does** make a living or receive income from training, teaching/lessons or clinics.
2. **Amateur:** Rider that is 18 years or older, **who does not** make a living or receive income from training, teaching/lessons or clinics.
3. **Junior:** Rider that is 17 years and under. Juniors must wear a helmet when competing or riding, and are not allowed to ride or manage a stallion in any class or on the event grounds.
4. **Silver:** Rider that is 60 years or older. (Honorary Status, may also be open or amateur)
5. **Lead Line:** Rider that is 7 years and under. (See Partnership On The Ground Section)

**Age of The Rider:** The Cowboy Dressage® Rider's age is based on January 1 of that calendar year, regardless of the month foaled. Example: A rider foaled anytime in the year 2010 is considered one year old on January 1, 2011 and two years old on January 1, 2012. This rider may show lead line till December 31, 2017. January 1, 2018 this rider is now eight years old. This rider may show as a junior through December 31, 2027. January 1, 2028 this rider is now eighteen years old and may have an amateur, or open, status. WHAT AN HONOR IT WILL BE ON JANUARY 1, 2070 WHEN THEY BECOME A SILVER RIDER!

**Age of The Horse:** The Cowboy Dressage® Horse's age is based on January 1 of that calendar year, regardless of the month foaled. Example: A horse foaled anytime in the year 2010 is considered one year old on January 1, 2011 and two years old on January 1, 2012.

**Recommendations For Showing The Younger Horse:** It has always been our goal to have as few rules as possible. The Cowboy Dressage World Partners want its Handshake members to consider the age and performance level (Physical and mental) when choosing test levels. The topic of showing 3 year olds under saddle is an issue that keeps coming up. In a world of high-end competition, futurities and high dollar pay outs the horse often suffers. Because Cowboy Dressage does honor the horse, here is what we wish from our exhibitors.

Choose the moral high ground. Do what is best for your horse. Be patient, be kind, be thoughtful. Your horse will thank you.

### **HONOR YOUR HORSE, WHATEVER THE AGE!**

- Horses Under 4: The “Partnership Division,” the “Walk, Jog Division,” and “Walk, Jog, Lope Tests 1 and 2” are appropriate for young horses. The more advanced tests are not.
- Horses Under 5: Young for the two-rein. (SEE VAQUERO REQUIREMENTS)
- Horses Under 6: Young for straight-up in the bridle. (SEE VAQUERO REQUIREMENTS)

## **ATTIRE**

### **Mandatory Attire**

1. Approved Safety Riding Helmets are mandatory for all junior riders while competing, or riding, on the show grounds.
2. Riders must wear suitable western hat or protective headgear.
3. Necktie, kerchief, bolo tie or pin (In very hot weather, show committee may dismiss this requirement).
4. Long-sleeved shirt with any type collar.
5. Trousers, pants, or riding skirt (a one-piece long-sleeved equitation suit is acceptable, provided it includes a collar).
6. Any rider not wearing mandatory attire will receive a penalty of **6 points** off their score.
7. Boots are required, no riding type shoes allowed.
8. Any sidesaddle rider’s attire must have a “Western Theme” and Appearance.

### **Optional Attire**

1. A vest, jacket, coat and/or sweater may also be worn.
2. Chinks or Chaps
3. Gloves
4. ***For Partnership On The Ground only*** - Adults (18 yrs and older) may choose to wear tennis shoes or other appropriate Equestrian, light weight, footwear. All juniors (17 and under) must wear boots.

## **FREESTYLE**

The Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle truly represents the freedom loved by the western rider, exemplifying the spirit of the American Cowboy. Cowboy Dressage® maneuvers originate from moves a working western horse must use in performing its duties, and have been refined to the high level of competition existing today. Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle not only provides an opportunity to use these maneuvers creatively, but also to expand them to music by means of choreography. Riders are encouraged to use musical scores to showcase the athletic ability of the horse in a crowd appealing way.

### **General Freestyle Rules**

1. All **Cowboy Dressage® Rules & Guidelines** apply to the Freestyle Tests – please read the Cowboy Dressage® Rules & Guidelines thoroughly.
2. The rider must supply 2 CD's with up to 4 minutes of music to show management, along with a list of props, labeled with name, ride time or order of go and entry number. **Music and prop list must be left at office when number is picked up or entries are made.**
3. Exhibitors are required to discuss any **special equipment** with management prior to the class as to its suitability.
4. Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle may offer an Open and Amateur/Junior Freestyle Division. Management will reserve the right to run them concurrently or separately.
5. It is customary to stop and **salute** the judge at the beginning and end of the Freestyle.
6. The **horse's vision** cannot be obstructed by props in any way at any time.
7. Two riders may show in a Freestyle Test. Only one will have a number and be judged. The other rider is considered a "prop."

**Time limit:** A maximum of four (4) minutes including any Introductions. The time limit begins

when the music or introductions starts (whichever is first) and ends when the music stops and salute is given.

**Mounted:** Exhibitors are only judged astride (under saddle).

**Costumes:** Permitted but not required. Emphasis is placed on performing the Cowboy Dressage® maneuvers to music. Management will reserve the right to rule whether a competitor's music or dress may be inappropriate or offensive to the spirit and nature of the event. Management may also determine the use of special lighting and equipment.

## Freestyle Tests and Their Requirements

### Walk Jog Required Maneuvers:

1. A minimum of one (1) 10 Meter circle Working Jog to the left and right.
2. A minimum of one (1) 20 Meter circle Free Jog to the left and right.
3. A minimum of one (1) stop, back 4-6 steps.
4. 20 Meters of Working Walk
5. 20 Meters of Free Walk

### Walk Jog Lope Required Maneuvers:

1. A minimum of one (1) full turn on the haunches to the left and right.
2. A minimum of one (1) half turn on the forehand to the left and right.
3. A minimum of one (1) stop, back 4-6 steps.
4. A minimum of one (1) lead change at the lope through jog from right to left
5. A minimum of one (1) lead change at the lope through jog from left to right

### Drill Team:

In the Cowboy Dressage® Drill Team Freestyle Test there are no required maneuvers. The Judge will consider and score the ability of the group to perform as a cohesive unit, musicality, choreography, Harmony and Partnership, and particularly Soft Feel, and the suitability of maneuvers for the training level and ability of the horses and riders.

## JUDGING:

**Required Maneuvers Section:** This will receive a separate totaled score, up to 110, based on Technical Merits. If any of the Required Maneuvers (listed above) are not performed, the entire "Required Maneuvers Section" (Including Additional Maneuvers) will not receive a score. This means, only the Artistic Impression Section will receive a score.

**Additional Maneuvers:** These are allowed in a Freestyle and shall be given appropriate credit: rollbacks, speed variations, half pass and leg yield, passage, piaffe, pirouette and tempi changes, etc. Additional repetitions of required maneuvers are permissible, but will only add or subtract from the existing scores already given for the required maneuvers (not as additional scores). The fact that circles are not required maneuvers, does not diminish their

importance in providing the rider a method to demonstrate Harmony and Partnership.

**Artistic Impression Section:** This receives a totaled score, up to 50, using the following criteria.

1. **Choreography:** The planning and arranging of movements, steps and patterns for dancing in rhythm with the music.
2. **Originality:** Determination if the presentation brings “anything new” to the development of Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle, such as new moves; maneuvers, ways of presenting the required maneuvers, or increased difficulty.
3. **Musicality:** how music is used in the presentation to develop the theme or “mood” of the performance. Judged by the presentation’s appeal to the senses and the emotional aspects of the ride, whether it is serious, humorous, or romantic.
4. **Harmony and Partnership:** The heart of horse and rider beats as one. Magic occurs between horse and rider that sets them apart. Harmony is more than just function; it is when the pair becomes artistic partners in movement and thought.

**Penalty Application:** In any instance where a judge is uncertain as to whether or not a penalty has occurred, the benefit of doubt should always go to the rider.

### **Eliminations and Exceptions**

**The following are cause for dismissal and no score.**

1. Fall to the ground by the horse or rider
2. Dismount of the rider
3. Balking
4. Running away where it is obviously not part of the performance
5. Equipment failure that delays the pattern even if the failure is part of the costume or a prop, and exceeding the four (4) minute time limit
6. Leaving the Cowboy Dressage® court

**The following are allowed and will not be penalized:**

1. Changing of hands on the reins or use of no hands on the reins
2. Inclusion of non- traditional, cued, or trained responses. For example, a horse taught to bow as part of the performance is not to be considered a fall to the ground. Since no set pattern is specified in Freestyle, inclusion of maneuvers not required must not be considered a penalty situation.

**Equipment:** Judges are asked to apply more liberal guidelines in deciding what equipment or tack is allowable in the Freestyle.

1. All equipment must meet general Cowboy Dressage® Rules & Guidelines (See APPOINTMENTS AND EQUIPMENT). *Exception:* A **bridleless** presentation with a

neck rope or reins, as long as the neck rope is smooth and loose. A judge must stop any ride when safety and control becomes a concern.

2. **Use of whip/crop** – only one whip may be carried during a ride.
3. Other non-traditional equipment is allowable at Management's discretion.

## **PARTNERSHIP ON THE GROUND**

Groundwork is the foundation for all horses and riders. Maneuvers on the ground, as in riding maneuvers, are based on straight lines and circles, thus helping to create a lasting partnership. The Partnership on the Ground Tests are designed to promote this partnership. As in all of the Cowboy Dressage® Tests, SOFT FEEL is our mission, encouraging harmony, balance, precision, and relaxation (the goal of our endeavors). Cowboy Dressage World is looking forward to seeing the progress that the Partnership Division will bring.

- Handlers will be asked to walk and jog their horses on both circles and straight lines.
- Handlers will be expected to guide their horse from both sides and to be able to change sides smoothly, while changing the lead from one hand to the other.
- Each handler/horse combination will be judged on the horse's gaits, soft feel, harmony and partnership, and the handler's guidance and use of the aids.

**Equipment:** Rope halter and lead, or leather halter and lead (no shanks or chains allowed)

**Attire For Handler:** Refer to Attire Section. *For Partnership on the ground only* - Adults (18 yrs and older) may choose to wear tennis shoes or other appropriate Equestrian light weight footwear. All juniors (17 and under) must wear boots.

**Acknowledging The Judge:** the handler may either nod or salute with their free hand.

**Alignment:** The body of the horse is on the line of travel. Example, when coming up centerline, the horse is straddling the centerline, with the handler to the side of the line.

**Slack In Rope:** The handler should have approximately 16" of slack in the rope throughout the performance. After the final salute, leaving the arena, the slack can be approximately 3'.

**Placement Of Horse In Relation To Handler:** The handler should be next to the horse near where the base of the neck attaches to the shoulder. There should be a respectful distance between the horse and handler. The horse should transition willingly and stay alongside the handler with only voice and subtle body cues.

**Lead Line:** Horses must be lead from a **halter under the bridle**, not from the bit. If a curb strap is used it is recommended that it be loose. All riders must wear a helmet. Lead Line is open to all children aged 7 and under. Each child is allowed one “leader” and one “spotter.” A spotter may walk alongside the rider for additional support. Spotters are allowed to touch the rider. All riders will receive a blue ribbon!!!

## VAQUERO REQUIREMENTS

*Chinks, chaps, ropes, and hobbles are strongly encouraged, as they are all common working gear for the Vaquero.*

### **SNAFFLE/HACKAMORE**



Hackamore 1



Hackamore 2



Hackamore 3



Hackamore 4

The **Snaffle/Hackamore** will be used with a mecate rein, no split reins, and must be one continuous rein to be traditional. **Snaffles** should have slobber straps to connect the mecate to

the bit. Hair rope, cotton, sisal, hemp, maguey, etc., are encouraged. The mecate is approximately the same diameter of the bosal to be appropriate. When using the snaffle or hackamore the test may be ridden **one handed**, but must remain either one or two handed for the entire test or penalties will be incurred. This horsemanship is about finesse. When riding one handed, at this stage, **splitting the reins** with fingers will be permissible (touching reins between the rein hand and the bosal or snaffle with the free hand will also cause penalties).

**TWO-REIN:** The **two-rein** stage is an integral element in the process of making a finished Vaquero Bridle Horse. It is used as a transition between the hackamore and Straight-Up in the Bridle. A bosal and mecate used at this stage would be no more than 1/2" diameter.



Two-Rein 1



Two-Rein 2



Two-Rein 3



Two-Rein 4



Two-Rein 5

During the **Two-Rein** stage, the bridle reins (the romel reins that are attached to the bit) are **ALWAYS** both in one hand. However, the rider may split the mecate reins so that one mecate rein is in the left hand and the other is held in the right hand. The rider may carry the bridle

reins, together, either in the left or right hand, but the bridle reins **MUST** stay together and in the same hand. **The rider may use both the mecate reins and the bridle reins in one hand**; all **MUST** remain together in that same hand for the entire test and the rider is not to touch reins between rein hand and bosal/bit with free hand. If riding one handed the rider is not allowed to put fingers between the reins, the **fingers may be open and fanned, but may not slip down between the reins**. Splitting bridle reins (-10), improper rein hold, and switching rein hold will incur error/penalties with each occurrence. Three errors result in elimination.

See correct sample photos above. **(Bit Requirements on next page)**

**We would like to see that no horse UNDER the age of 5 compete in this section.**

### **BIT REQUIREMENTS: For Two-Rein and Straight-Up Bridle Horses**

**Solid mouthpieces are traditional to Vaquero training.** Most traditional spoons on a spade bit are minimum 3 1/2" and do not exceed 4 1/2". Solid or loose cheek bits may be used, depending upon the rider's preference. A **leather curb** strap only will be allowed with a bit in this division. Rein Chains are traditional and are used between the romel reins and the bit (chains are optional). **Romel** style reins are to be used (Read "Reins" paragraph in APPOINTMENTS AND EQUIPMENT)

### **STRAIGHT-UP BRIDLE HORSE**



Straight-Up Bridle 1



Straight-Up Bridle 2



Straight-Up Bridle 3

**A horse Straight-Up in the Bridle must be ridden one handed.** The bridle reins **MUST** remain in the same hand for the duration of the test. Switching hands, as well as using two hands on the bridle reins (-10), or touching bridle reins between the rein hand and the bit with the free hand will result in penalties. Riders riding straight up bridle horses in Cowboy Dressage are not allowed to put fingers between the reins. **The fingers may be open and fanned, but may not slip down between the reins.** Judges will treat it as an error each occurrence.

A **bosalito** (3/8" or smaller) with a get-down (lead rope) is permissible, but must be loose enough around the muzzle so as not to function as a cavesson.

(Bit requirements above)

We would like to see that no horse UNDER the age of 6 compete in this section.

## ADDITIONAL RIDER GUIDELINES

- **Judge's Pre-show Meeting:** Cowboy Dressage® expects each judge to meet with exhibitors approximately 20 minutes before the first tests begin to introduce themselves and answer any questions. The meeting should be posted on the entry form and/or the premium list as well as announced.
- **Calling Tests:** All Cowboy Dressage® Tests may be called during the competition (with the exception of Freestyle). It is the responsibility of the competitor to arrange for a person to call their test. Unless an exception is made by the judge, the caller must start with the first movement. Lateness and errors in calling the ride will not excuse the rider from "error/penalties". Calling the test is limited to reading the movement as it is written. Repeating a directive is allowed and a microphone is optional.
- **Voice:** The quiet use of the voice or clicking the tongue once or repeatedly is permitted.
- **Salute:** At the salute riders must take the reins in one hand while giving a salute to the judge. A rider has the option to remove their hat.
- **Timing:** The execution of the tests is not timed.
- **Test Purpose:** This is printed on the score sheet. The horse shall be considered in light of the degree of training it should have achieved to be shown at that level. The levels of Cowboy Dressage® are offered as a means of evaluating a horse that is progressing.
- **Ride Time:** No competitor can be required to ride prior to his scheduled time. The competitor is allowed to begin their test after the sound of the bell. Exceeding 45 seconds before entering the arena, after the bell has sounded, would entail elimination. A test begins with the entry at A and ends after the final salute. The competitor should leave the arena at "A" at a free walk, on a long or loose rein.
- **Bell Rings During The Test:** This means the caller should pause, and the rider must stop and look to the judge. The Judge will explain why they stopped the ride and how to proceed. At times unusual circumstances occur and interrupt a test. Time-outs are not permitted in Cowboy Dressage®.
- **Corners:** These are to be ridden to the degree of the smallest circle in the test (10M).
- **Petting:** Riders are allowed to pet their horses as a reward.

- **Stallions:** You must be at least 18 years old to ride, or manage, a stallion on the grounds.
- **Wrong Concept:** Grinding of the teeth and wringing of the tail are signs of tenseness or resistance on the part of the horse and would be considered in the marks for each movement where they appear, as well as in the Collective Marks. Horses with tongues over the bit, or perform with an open mouth, shall be marked down. Any rider who hangs or bangs on a horse's mouth, rides with their horse's head behind the vertical, or with over flexion will be penalized. If a problem appears once it may be treated lightly by the judge. If it appears successively, they will score it more harshly each time.

## JUDGING GUIDELINES

All movements and certain transitions from one to another, that have to be marked by the judge, are numbered on the judge's sheets. They are marked 1 to 10 (half **points** are utilized when judging Cowboy Dressage®. e.g. 6.5). It is important to know the word assigned to the number as it helps you to determine the basic score, before adding or subtracting the modifiers. When judging Cowboy Dressage®, many different breeds and types of horses will pass in front of the judge. **It is important to judge each horse as an individual and base judgment on that particular animal's individual merits regarding gaits and conformation.** Think about form to function and ask, "Is that horse giving all he/she can with its particular type of conformation?" **At no time should a rider feel defeated because of what a judge wrote on the score sheet.**

### Scale of Marks for Cowboy Dressage®

- 10 Excellent**
- 9 Very Good**
- 8 Good**
- 7 Fairly Good**
- 6 Satisfactory**
- 5 Marginal**
- 4 Needs Improvement**
- 3 Multiple Minor Mistakes**
- 2 Significant Mistakes**
- 1 Multiple Significant Mistakes**

To mark each movement, the judge should first establish whether the movement is marginal (5 or below) or higher. **The judge should state the reason for his judgment, at least when giving marks of 6 and below.** It is important to understand the difference between a (marginal 5) score and an (needs improvement 4) score.

**Collective Remarks and Coefficients:** Located at the bottom of score sheet and awarded after the competitor has finished their performance, each will be given a score then multiplied by the corresponding coefficient.

- **Gaits** (Freedom and Regularity) - coefficient of 2
- **Soft Feel** (Please refer to definition of Soft Feel) - coefficient of 3
- **Harmony and Partnership** - coefficient of 2
- **The rider's position and effective use of the aids** - coefficient of 2

**Judging Methodology for Cowboy Dressage®:** In order to place a class in the proper order, a judge must have a system by which they arrive at scores consistently throughout the day. This system is called "methodology". **In determining the score for each movement it must first be established that the correct basics are being demonstrated.**

**Basics include the following:**

**Gaits:** Is the gait of that movement free and regular? Gaits must remain pure in the footfall as pertaining to the definitions of Walk, Jog, and Lopec. (refer to definitions)

**Soft Feel:** Is soft feel being demonstrated within the movement? (refer to definition)

**Harmony and Partnership:** Is harmony and partnership shown within the movement?

**Rider Position:** Are correct rider biomechanics and effective, soft aids being demonstrated?

The judge arrives at a score for a movement by considering the **Basics**, then the **criteria for the movement (the directives on the score sheet)**, and then the **modifiers - positive or negative**. This eventually becomes an almost automatic process. Since the basics have been considered in each movement, the **collective remarks** at the bottom of the score sheet become a reflection of the body of the test.

**Categories of Faults:** (Basic, Main, and Minor) Judges consider these in their scoring. It is important when determining Main and Minor faults, the judge keep in mind the purpose of the level being demonstrated (purpose of each level is stated at top of score sheet).

**Basic Faults:** (Considered faults that demonstrate " **wrong concept of the sport** " and the rider is headed down an incorrect path in training of the horse) Basic faults are the most serious and are weighted most heavily. Some examples of basic faults: impure gaits, over bridling, a rider who is using excessive force, a horse that is so lacking in impulsion that it starts to lose the purity of the gaits - example, 4-beat lopec. This type of ride typically will score lower than a 60%. (Do not confuse this with a ride that has errors and mistakes, thus receiving a low score).

**Main Faults:** Considered not quite as serious but are pervasive throughout the ride. For example: unsteady head position, momentarily behind the vertical, poor transitions, insufficient or incorrect bend, lack of straightness, (This is all relative to the level being demonstrated).

**Minor Faults:** These are treated lightly and can be any of the above main faults that only happen once or momentarily, but are not evident throughout the entire ride.

**Positive and Negative Modifiers:** These are used to determine the final numeric score for a particular movement. E.g.: If all the Basic requirements are “fairly good”, and directives for the movement are “fairly good”, the score would be a 7. If the Basics were demonstrated really well and were “somewhere between Good and Very Good (8.5), and the movement had some minor geometry mistake (not quite following the directives) and was considered somewhere between Fairly Good and Good (7.5), then the score for the movement would be a score of 8 - Good. This takes into account both positive and negative aspects of the movement.

**Matching Comments to Score:** It is important that the judge learn to use terms that match the comment to the score. It would not make sense to see a horse that is over bridled and give it a score of 8, saying: smooth, round circle, horse over bridled. Remember, over bridling is a Basic fault, so it carries a heavier penalty than a main or minor fault. **Judges should try to use the same terminology as used in the body of the score sheet so as not to confuse the rider.** Many western riders are unfamiliar with traditional dressage terminology, so the comment would be hard for the rider to understand, therefore no benefit is derived from the comment. It takes a lot of practice to be able to write relative comments to the score, without trying to give the rider a “riding lesson”. **The judge is supposed to state what they see.** Comments should be equivalent to the score given. It is up to the rider and their trainer (if they have one) to determine how best to prepare the horse for future classes. **Penalties** are circled on the movement in which they occur and are deducted at the bottom of the score sheet under “penalties”.

**Further Remarks:** Comments at the bottom of the score sheet should reflect the major “theme” of the ride. It is always a good idea to say something positive, as rider’s can easily feel discouraged if their ride had mistakes or didn’t go as well as planned. It is helpful to riders that are demonstrating basic faults to know what the judge is seeing, so that these can be corrected as they directly affect the training of the horse.

**Cowboy Dressage® Remarks For Judges:** These are common terms that most Western Riders will understand as remarks on their score sheet. Please refer to these terms as much as possible. Riders will be using their score sheets to improve their skills. The more clear and concise the terms, the more helpful the score sheet will be. Please also keep in mind that

everyone deserves a **“pat on the back.”** Try to give constructive comments along with what needs improvement. The judge’s job is to be helpful and to point out what he/she sees - both positive and negative. When discussing **balance**, a judge must be clear whether it is lateral or longitudinal. Appropriate terminology: falling on inside/outside shoulder, haunches falling in/out, on forehand, etc.

**When referring to straight lines, appropriate comments are:**

- Drifting to right/left
- Missed letters
- Not at letter
- Not straight
- Horse crooked (head, shoulder, hip) left or right
- Line crooked
- Stop crooked
- Back crooked
- Straight, but not on c-line
- Wandering

**When referring to bending lines and circles, appropriate comments are:**

- Circle not round
- Too big/Too small
- Turned before/after letter
- More bend/Less bend
- Started before/after letter
- Unsteady rhythm
- Corner too deep/Corner too shallow
- Horse bent to outside (counter bent),
- Haunches/shoulders falling in/ falling out.

**When referring to other aspects of the ride:**

- Pushing on bit
- Throwing head
- Broke gait
- Unsteady rhythm
- Irregular (if horse is considered to be lame, the competitor should be eliminated)
- Mouth open
- No self-carriage
- Too fast
- Too slow
- Frame needs to be longer/shorter
- Needs more “giddy up” (more power from hindquarters)
- Tension in poll/neck/back
- Hollow back
- Above bridle
- More release in \_\_\_\_ (leg, hands, reins, etc.)
- Over bridled
- Not centered on entry

- Transition abrupt/slow/hesitant
- Not level behind/in front
- Leaning in/out on shoulder/haunches
- Horse late to rider's aids
- Horse anticipating

## GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

### Cowboy Dressage® Gaits

**Walk:** Four-beat gait with regular forward reaching steps. Each foot leaves and strikes the ground independently. The footfall sequence is left hind, left front, right hind, right front. To create the proper timing, a hind foot is always one-half stride ahead of the front foot. The head and neck should swing naturally as a result of a relaxed, but active, back and free shoulders.

**Working Walk:** Four-beat gait with regular forward reaching steps. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of the vertical, in a balanced poll high frame.

**Free Walk:** Four-beat gait with forward lengthening of steps. The horse is calm and allowed by the lengthening of the reins to lower his head and neck and to stretch forward, down and out, lengthening the frame, while maintaining quality of walk, rhythm, energy, balance, and connection.

**Intermediate Gait:** Four-beat gait possessed by each Gaited Breed individually. The intermediate gait should show free, active, and regular steps. The quality of the intermediate gait is judged by freedom and steadiness. The intermediate gait should originate in a supple back and well-engaged hindquarters, combined with the ability to maintain a steady rhythm and balance.

**Intermediate Working Gait:** Four beat gait with regular footfall and consistent frame and stride. The horse maintains light contact with the bit and performs with balance. Working gaits are performed in a poll high frame with the horse's nose slightly in front of vertical.

**Intermediate Free Gait:** Four-beat gait with lengthened strides within a lengthened frame. The lengthened stride should not quicken or change in rhythm from the intermediate working gait. The horse is allowed to reach forward and slightly down from the working

frame, while maintaining balance, contact, and nose slightly in front of vertical.

**Jog:** Two-beat gait with regular forward reaching steps. Each foot leaves and strikes the ground in diagonal pairs. The footfall sequence is left hind with right front, and right hind with left front. To create the proper timing, each pair is one-half stride ahead of the other.

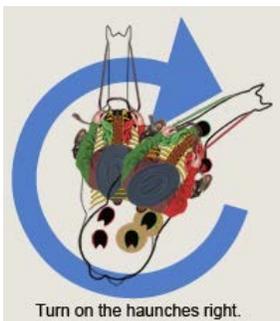
**Working Jog:** Two-beat gait, forward with even and elastic steps. The back is supple and the shoulders are free. The hind legs should step forward under the horse. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit and his nose slightly in front of the vertical. Working gaits are performed in a poll high frame. *Rider must sit the Working Jog.*

**Free Jog:** Two-beat gait with forward movement and lengthened, even, and elastic steps. The horse is calm and allowed by the lengthening of reins to stretch forward, lengthening the frame and stride while maintaining quality of jog, rhythm, balance, and connection. The horse maintains light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of the vertical. *Posting is an option.*

**Lope:** Three-beat gait with forward reaching steps. Right lead = left hind, right hind and left front, then right front leading leg. Left lead = right hind, left hind and right front, then left front leading leg. The horse should maintain balance (laterally and longitudinally) and rhythm. On a straight line, the horse maintains his natural flexion at the poll toward the leading leg, the inside hind leg (to the lead) stays underneath the horse, with haunches neither falling to the inside or the outside of the front legs.

**Working Lope:** Three-beat gait with forward reaching and balanced steps. The back is supple and the shoulders free with the hind legs stepping forward under the horse. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit, his nose slightly in front of the vertical in a balanced poll high frame.

**Free Lope:** Three-beat gait with forward movement and lengthened, even, and elastic steps. The horse is calm and allowed by the lengthening of reins to stretch forward, lengthening the frame and stride while maintaining quality of lope, rhythm, balance, and connection. The horse maintains light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of vertical.

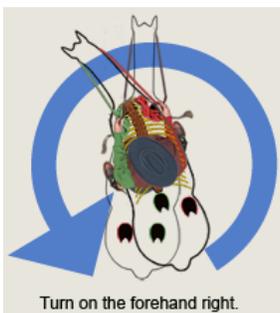


## Cowboy Dressage® Maneuvers and Movements

**Back (or Rein-back):** The horse moves backwards, with balance and straightness, by moving his legs in diagonal pairs. The horse is backed using light aids and maintains a round, soft outline.

**Cowboy Dressage® Turn on the Haunches:** The horse bends slightly in the direction of the

movement and moves his front legs (the outside front leg crosses over the inside front leg)



and the outside hind leg around the inside hind leg which forms the pivotal point of the turn. The pivot leg can be picked up and set down in the same place. A steady walk rhythm is encouraged. The horse's front legs move around the haunches, which remain in the same location by balancing his weight between the inside and outside hind leg.

**Cowboy Dressage® Turn on the Forehand:** The horse bends slightly in the direction opposite from the movement of the hindquarters, or away from the direction of travel. The inside front leg is the pivotal point (Can be picked up and set down in the same place). The inside hind leg crosses in front of the outside hind leg moving the hind legs around the front legs.

**Change of Lead Through Jog:** The horse transitions from a clear, balanced 3 beat lope, with straightness, down to the jog while maintaining balance, straightness and a clear 2 beat gait for a few strides, then calmly, willingly transitions up to the opposite lead in lope. The entire change should be calm, willing, balanced, and smooth with straightness and completed within 5M.

**Simple Change (Change of lead through walk):** The horse transitions from a clear, balanced 3 beat lope, with straightness, down to the walk while maintaining balance, straightness and a clear 4 beat walk rhythm for a few steps, then calmly, willingly, transitions up to the opposite lead in lope (no jog steps). The entire change should be calm, willing, balanced, and smooth with straightness and completed within 5M.

**Shoulder-in:** The horse is slightly bent around the inside leg of the rider. The horse's inside foreleg passes and crosses in front of the outside foreleg; the inside hind leg is placed in the same track as the outside foreleg. The horse is looking away from the direction in which he is moving, with ears level. The horse must move his inside hind leg underneath his body, while lowering his inside hip. Caution should be taken that the outside hind leg does not step away from the original track. The horse will travel on 3 tracks; 1<sup>st</sup>: inside foreleg, 2<sup>nd</sup>: inside hind leg with outside foreleg, 3<sup>rd</sup>: outside hind leg (maintaining original track and not stepping out-away from the line of travel).

**Counter Lope:** This is a maneuver where the rider, for instance on a circle to the left, deliberately asks the horse to lope with the right lead (the right legs leading). The horse maintains his natural flexion at the poll toward the leading leg. The horse is slightly bent toward the leading leg. His spine does not bend to the line of the circle. There is no deviation of the hindquarters to the outside of the circle. The horse should be balanced,

with slight bend toward the leading leg, while maintaining the inside hind leg (to the lead, not the line of travel) underneath the horse. On a straight line, the horse maintains his natural flexion at the poll toward the leading leg, the inside hind leg (to the lead) stays underneath the horse, with haunches neither falling to the inside or the outside of the front legs.

**Flying Change of Lead:** The horse changes leads after the 3<sup>rd</sup> beat of the lope stride, with straightness, balance, and consistent rhythm in the lope.

## Cowboy Dressage® Terms

**Collection:** To shorten the frame of the horse. Move weight to the hindquarter and elevate the wither.

**Rhythm:** Is the recurring characteristic sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait.

**Tempo:** Is the rate of repetition of the rhythm, the strides or the beats.

**Cadence:** Is the marked accentuation of the rhythm that is a result of a steady tempo and a springy impulsion.

**Adjustability:** The ability to shorten or lengthen the stride and the topline of the horse within a gait without changing the tempo. An athletic horse shows this capacity naturally, and his ability to do so is further developed by correct training. In other words, the horse must not rush when asked to lengthen, nor slow his tempo when asked to collect. The ability of a rider to show of the gaits while maintaining a steady tempo is a major proof of his/her skill.

**Lack of Regularity:** At walk, jog or lope this is a fault that must be penalized in a Cowboy Dressage® horse. With correct training, however, the gaits can become amplified and more expressive. As the horse develops physically, he gains strength and can carry more weight behind; thus the forehead becomes lighter and the shoulders have more freedom, reach and mobility. Much of a horse's training is devoted to developing relaxation, so as to preserve the purity of the gaits. A rider must always maintain a proper position and alignment in order to connect the horse correctly from back to front and to encourage him to carry more weight behind.

**Balance:** Refers to lateral balance (side to side), or longitudinal balance (back to front). An easy term for lack of longitudinal balance is: on forehead.

**Self-Carriage:** When the horse is able to carry itself in balance through the various maneuvers without any or very little support from the rider's aids.

**Control:** The rider's ability to guide the horse through the various maneuvers.

**Preparation:** Use of the rider's aids; seat, hands (the picking up of reins to adjust and help horse), legs, and/or voice, to communicate a desired action to the horse and make sure he/she is physically and mentally ready and willing before executing it.

**Execution:** To perform a maneuver (the result of preparation).

**Release:** The learning process or thank you for the execution.

**Relaxation:** Partnership, harmony, and lightness should be the goal.

**Soft Feel:** The rider's ability to support and help the horse throughout the test, even if the horse is nervous or spooky. Soft feel comes from the rider and is felt by the rider from the horse, no matter what is going on with the horse. How well does the rider support the horse to develop trust and confidence in any situation?

**Harmony and Partnership:** When the horse and rider are working as a single unit (partnership), with communication going both ways. The horse and rider are communicating with each other and working harmoniously to reach a common goal.

## PLACING, PRIZES, AND DIVISIONS

1. After each performance and after each judge has given his Collective Marks which must be done with due consideration, the judge's sheets pass into the hands of the scorers. Scores and comments must be clearly written in ink. Scores must be full numbers; 6.0, 6.5, 7.0... In case of corrections, the judge having made the correction must initial any corrected score. The marks are multiplied by the corresponding coefficient where applicable and then totaled. Penalty points incurred for errors in the execution of the test are then deducted on each judge's sheet.
2. The total score for the classification is obtained by adding the total points. Total final results must be published in marks as well as in percentages with numbers to three places after the decimal point. Scores must be posted on a public scoreboard as soon as possible after each ride. The public scoreboard may be in either paper or electronic format. The name of the judge must be posted.
3. Individual Classification. In each test the winner is the competitor having the highest total points for that test, the second placed competitor is the one with the next highest total points and so on. In case of **equality of points** the competitor with the highest marks received under Soft Feel shall be declared the winner. When the scores for Soft Feel are equal, the competitor with the highest Harmony and Partnership shall be declared the winner. When the scores for Soft Feel and Harmony and Partnership are equal the competitors must remain tied. Errors on a test may not be used to break ties.
4. Final results for each class must be posted as soon as possible after the class is completed and all results must include total points and percentages with numbers to three places after the decimal point.
5. Video may not be used to dispute a judge's decision.
6. In classes that involve prize money, if a tie cannot be broken, the moneys for that placing, and the one below will be added together and divided by two. Each tied competitor shall receive the same amount of money. There are no monetary prizes for riders, only money to charities at special events.
7. If a mathematical error on the score sheet is discovered, it must be brought to the attention of competition management within 1 hour of the official posting of the scores from the

last class of that competition day. Competition Management must announce said posting, and must make test sheets available to competitors immediately.

8. After the awards for a class have been presented, the judge's score sheet should be given to the competitor. The competitor's privacy should be respected.
9. It is recommended that score tabulator not be a competitor, or an owner, coach, trainer or family member of a competitor/horse in the class(es) in which they are scoring.

### **Breaking a Tie for High Point:**

1. The Highest Scoring Test of the tied riders will be reviewed and the person with the "Highest Scoring Test" will prevail.
2. If there is a tie within the highest scoring tests, their next "Highest Scoring Tests" will break the tie.

### **Example:**

- Rider A on Horse A – rides 8 total classes and achieves potential maximum score of 40 points
- Rider B on Horse B – rides 10 total classes and achieves potential maximum score of 40 points
- The Highest Scoring Test obtained of both riders is selected – (let's say Rider A is 75.023 and Rider B is 79.345) – Rider B would be awarded Champion by virtue of Highest Scoring Test and Rider A is the Reserve
- If the Highest Scoring Test had tied, their "Second-Highest Scoring Tests" are compared and the tie is broken.

### **Divisions**

- Walk, Jog
- Walk, Jog, Lope
- Challenge
- Vaquero
- Gaited
- Partnership
- Freestyle
- Liberty

## ERRORS AND ELIMINATIONS

When a competitor makes an “error of the course” (e.g. takes the wrong turn, omits a movement, etc.) the Judge alerts the rider by sounding the bell. The Judge instructs the rider where he must take up the test again and the next movement to be executed.

**1. Every “error of the course” whether the bell is sounded or not, must be penalized:**

- **first time by 2 points;**
- **second time by 4 points;**
- **the third time results in elimination. At the discretion of the judge, the rider may be allowed to finish the ride, but will still be considered eliminated.**

2. When the competitor makes an “error of the test” (at the salute does not take the reins in one hand, etc.) he must be penalized as for an “error of the course”.

3. If the judge has not noted an error the competitor has the benefit of the doubt.

### **Examples of Possible Errors and Penalties:**

1. If the judge or rider notices an equipment malfunction, either has the option to stop the ride and correct the situation, if possible. However, a penalty will be incurred. The rider has 2 minutes to correct the malfunction. If it cannot be corrected within 2 minutes, the rider is eliminated.
2. Error of the course
3. Attire penalty (-6)
4. Switching rein hold
5. Fingers between Romel Reins
6. Riding Romel Reins, split, two handed (-10)

### **Elimination From Competition or Event:**

1. Misrepresentation of entry or inappropriate entry
2. Horse’s tongue tied down
3. Abuse and/or neglect of the animal

4. Inappropriate conduct
5. Non-payment of fees

### **Elimination From a Class:**

1. **Lameness:** If the judge determines the horse has marked lameness, the competitor is excused/eliminated from the class. There is no appeal against the judge's decision.
2. Use of illegal equipment
3. Unauthorized assistance / Coaching
4. Three errors of the course or test
5. Horse's tongue tied down
6. Abuse and/or neglect of the animal
7. All four feet of the horse leave the arena with or without rider if there is a rail around the court
8. Resistance of longer than 20 seconds
9. Concern for the safety of rider or others
10. Evidence of blood on a horse in the competition arena shall be cause for elimination from the class by the judge at "C".
11. Evidence of blood on a horse outside the competition arena shall be cause for elimination by competition management
12. Any situation where a direct rule violation can be cited
13. Not entering the court within 45 seconds of the bell ringing
14. In the case of a fall of horse and/or rider the competitor will be eliminated.

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