
Notes for Dressage Competitors

At some stage every rider has had to compete for the first time. This is a step-by-step document that follows the order of preparation for both you and your horse. The majority of the information is procedure rather than rules. You should have a rule book handy at all times whilst competing.

There are various rules and sections from the EFA Dressage Rules referred to in this document. This document **MUST** be read in conjunction with the Rules and is not intended to replace the Rules.

1 Setting Goals

A lot of riders go to trainers with the expectation of becoming an Olympian or at least being able to ride like one. There is nothing wrong with being ambitious. However, with the help of your trainer you should set **achievable** short-term goals.

In this case, an achievable goal is that you are going to prepare for your first competition and ride at least one but hopefully two tests.

- set a time-frame of about two/three months in order to work towards that goal
- find a local competition where you feel within your comfort zone
- enter a test that suits your level of training and competency
- try to time your competition to coincide with training or practice days at the venue where you will be competing

2 Welfare of the Horse

Be aware of the EFA's requirement for the welfare of the horse. (refer to Section 1)

3 Membership/Registration Requirements

- rules/requirements for Official and Associate competitions are outlined in Section 1
- obtain an entry form for the competition you feel is appropriate
- the entry form will point out the conditions of entry which are fairly standard but sometimes may have some local rules

4 Entries

- for information about entries refer to Section 1
- keep a copy of your entry form in order that you can refer back to it if necessary

5 Verifying which Preparatory and Freestyle Tests Apply

There are different versions of Preparatory tests and Freestyles used throughout Australia. Therefore, you should obtain from the organisers of the event a copy of the test you have entered, including time allowed.

6 Learning the Test

Refer to the EFA Rule book for the diagram of the arenas. If a caller is used, you must still know the test. Refer to the EFA Rules for information.

7 Pre-Competition Requirements

Important paperwork required includes:

- EFA Dressage Rules and Test sheet which you should read. It is your responsibility to know the rules
- horse registration papers, if applicable
- the time draw from the event organiser
- conditions of entry for the local event and
- copy of entries

8 Transport Requirements

- do not leave it until the day of competition to see if your horse will load
- do you need to borrow a horse trailer? If so, try and arrange to have a practice run to the event venue
- is your vehicle legally able to tow the trailer?

9 Competition Day

- leave yourself plenty of time at the venue before you ride
- on arrival report to the event office and obtain your identification number if applicable
- check scratchings/withdrawals
- if arenas are already going, are they running to time?
- check location of gear steward
- check that your dress and the horse's equipment comply with the rules (Section 2) as the legality and use of some equipment is restricted to specific areas as mentioned below refer to Section 3 for definition of both
- check location of your competition area and your warm-up and exercise areas
- locate the area set aside for lungeing, if required
- Keep hydrated at all times

10 Warm-Up

10.1 Preparation and Mounting

- no person other than the nominated rider can ride a horse at an event except a groom mounted in the saddle riding the horse on a comfortable rein at the walk only
- all riders must be neatly dressed at all times when mounted. It is best that once you mount the horse you are correctly attired (see Section 2) with the exception perhaps of your jacket
- once you have finished your final warm up go straight to the competition area via the gear steward

10.2 Etiquette for Warm-Up Arena

As there are many horses warming up in a restricted area it is important that all riders have knowledge of the etiquette required in group riding. This ensures safe riding and achieves harmony in busy areas

- safety is paramount and a collision should be avoided at all times
- before entering the warm-up area make sure the gateway and immediate track are clear
- riders should pass left shoulder to left shoulder when on the track
- when not on the outside track, eg on a diagonal line, riders should give way to horses on their left
- the more progressive gait has priority on the track
- halt should not be on the track
- walk should not be on the track and does not have right of way
- trot has priority over walk
- canter has priority over trot
- lateral work has priority over **all** paces
- when circling, anticipate your return to the track so as to not stop the flow of other riders
- mounting, dismounting and gear adjustment should be done off the track
- consideration should be given to behaviour of other horses in the arena that may upset your horse
- it may be necessary if your horse is upsetting others to leave the area
- if a horse is upsetting the majority, an Official should be sought with a view to requesting that horse's removal for safety's sake

10.3 Gear Check

Section 2 refers to the areas in which certain gear is allowable. Be familiar with these rules. Report to the Gear Steward 10 to 15 minutes before your test. Gear check is required before each test.

11 Entering Competition Area (as defined in Section 3)

Care must be taken to get no closer than 15m, if possible, to the arena whilst there is a competitor in that arena.

12 Reporting to Judge and Riding the Test

The time draw allocates you a time for riding. You cannot be forced to ride before this time. However, if the horse prior to you is scratched and you are ready to ride, consideration should be given to approaching the judge.

By presenting to the judge, even if you are early, you are indicating that you are ready to ride. Therefore, if you are not ready to enter the arena immediately, wait away from the competition area until such time as you are ready or your start time arrives. The reason for this is to allow all competitors equal warm up time around the arena, therefore, not benefiting any particular combination.

12.1 Reporting

- if bridle numbers have been issued there is no need to stop and talk to the judge, simply ride past each judge ensuring that your bridle number/identification number can be clearly seen
- if you have a medical problem that restricts your hearing let the judge know so that the judge can make a clear indication when to start the test
- if identification numbers are not issued, once the horse you follow leaves the arena progress to the centre line judge and await their instructions
- a judge's instruction may be 'I have a bell' or 'I will ring the bell and hold my hand out the window'
- if you do not have a bridle number make sure all judges know your name and the name of your horse
- once you have given this, recommence warming up around the arena
- once the judge rings the bell you have 45 seconds to enter the arena. The penalty is elimination if this exceeded. If you are not sure if you heard the bell, circle again and re-present to the Chief Judge
- entering the arena before the bell entails elimination

12.2 Riding the Test

- at the salute competitors must take the reins in one hand. Gentlemen should, whenever possible, remove their hats when saluting
- a whip may be held in either hand at the salute
- the requirement is to only salute the centreline judge
- salute, then pick up the reins and continue when ready
- only at the salute at the beginning and end of a test and when exiting the arena may the reins be held in one hand (except for Freestyles as part of the degree of difficulty)
- in Preliminary tests a rider has the option of doing sitting or rising trot
- in all higher tests, trot work is executed sitting unless otherwise stated
- Section 9 covers rules of how to perform a movement

13 Elimination and Penalties

- Refer to Section 3 for information on riding the test and the various penalties for errors of course and other types of penalties including elimination

14 Callers and Video

- callers should stand with their back to the wind
- have a predetermined subtle signal if you need the movement to be re-called
- you must not speak to your caller but the rules permit the repeating once only of the calling of a movement
- calling with too loud a voice should be avoided
- video from the centre line at A gives you the reverse of the judge's point of view
- ensure any videoing is carried out at least 10 metres back from the arena

15 After the Competition

Once the placings are posted for the test you rode you can pick up your test sheets.

- check that there is a point in each box and perhaps check the adding up
- if a protest is to be lodged it must be within 30 minutes of the posting of the placings
- if you are unable to stay at the event venue to collect your test the organisers will send the test to you if you provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope
- remember to thank the organisers before you leave the ground, it may encourage them to run another competition for you