USA DRESSAGE

DRESSAGE RIDING STANDARDS GUIDELINES

Anatomy of a Successful Experience: Determining If You Are Ready to Move Up a Level

Basic questions to ask yourself as a guideline on whether you're ready to compete at the next level.

- If you practice a movement that is new to the next level, are you able to consistently meet the requirements of the movement directives as stated on the test?
- On average, are you and your horse reasonably confirmed at the current level you are competing with a final score reflecting competency such as a 63% or higher?
- Does your horse willingly cooperate in the performance of the movements required for the level at which you are considering competing?
- Are you familiar with all the new movements asked for at the next level up and the characteristics that define them? Consequently, are you and your horse proficient and confident in performing the movements as they are required in the test?

Strategies for a Successful Experience

- As a general rule, follow the adage of competing at the level below which you are training.
- Read the test directives to ensure you know what factors the judge(s) will be taking into consideration when determining a score for each movement.
- As you move up the Levels, it can feel like the movements come very quickly - one after another. Before competing at a higher level, practice the test at home enough times so that you feel you have time to prepare for each movement.
- Know what core movements "define a level." These may be underlying what is described in the Purpose. For instance, at First Level Test 3, the 10m circles and broken lines test acceptance of the aids used for bending and turning. Second level introduces collection and the movements that help to develop it, such as shoulder-in and turn on the haunches.
- At the end of your show season, first make sure you can answer yes to all of the questions posed above. Then make a thoughtful evaluation of your success. Consider both your strengths and areas in need of improvement. The next level will not only have new test movements, but also a heightened expectation of your horse's balance, engagement and self-carriage which requires time and strength building. Make a training plan that takes advantage of educational and observational opportunities such as ride-a-tests and schooling shows. When you feel your horse is confirmed in the daily work and believe they fulfill the Purposes defined on the next level's dressage test, you can be confident that you are ready to begin competitions at the new level.

Are both you and your horse ready to move up?