

IEA Dressage Judging Guidelines

This document serves as a supplement to the information provided in the IEA GENERAL and IEA DRESSAGE rules & regulations 2026-2027

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Please make a special note of the following and contact show management with any questions.

As an Interscholastic Equestrian Association judge, we ask that you take into consideration the uniqueness of interscholastic horse shows.

- *The key to judging IEA competition is to look for the rider who is the most effective and the most capable, regardless of their mount. For example, a rider who draws a difficult horse, but is an outstanding rider and shows remarkable ability, should place higher than a mediocre rider who does very little on an extremely nice horse.*
- *All tack and artificial aids presented in the ring have been deemed acceptable by the show steward and have been checked for safety.*
- *All horse assignments (draws) are RANDOM. Riders have no control over which mount they are given. Please talk with the stewards and/or show management if you think a horse is inappropriate.*
- *Riders should not be penalized due to horse height issues (i.e. small rider on big horse or tall rider on short horse)*
- *Results as shown by performance of the horse are NOT necessarily to be considered more important than the method used by the rider in obtaining them.*
- *Riders should be judged on seat, hands, ability to control and show horse.*
- *Only the rider is being judged, therefore, no penalty should be assessed because of the horse's conformation, color or way of going.*
- *The show steward may stop a class and remove a horse that is acting inappropriate or unsound, or a rider who is using inappropriate artificial aids. The show steward will provide next steps in these cases.*
- *If a horse performs so poorly that you cannot judge the ability of the rider, the steward may grant a "re-ride". The request for a re-ride may come from the judge or the coach of the rider, but the show steward is the person who ultimately decides if a re-ride will be granted. If a re-ride is granted in a Dressage Test class, then the rider with the new horse will test after the final scheduled horse. If a re-ride is granted in a DSE class, you may pick up where you left off, or you may start the class from the beginning.*

Questions regarding IEA protocol, horse use, and testing should be addressed with the show steward.

General Show Routine

- Classes may have a combination of Upper (grades 9-12) and Future (grades 4-8) riders.
- Riders are placed into the levels they are showing by their coach based on experience and eligibility criteria.
- Riders and Teams are attempting to earn points based on how they place in each class at a limited number of shows to try and qualify for post season competition.
- "Point Riders" are chosen by their coach at the start of each show, and their points count to the overall team placing at the end of the day.
- POST SEASON SHOWS:

At Zone Finals only qualified riders and teams are invited to compete. At this level Individual and Team classes are run totally separate. The top placing riders in the individual classes and the top placing teams overall are invited to National Finals.

Horse of the Show/Sportsmanship Award:

- The Steward may ask the judge to pick a Horse of the Show. There is latitude in this decision, but generally the award goes to a reliable, generous horse.
- The Sportsmanship Award goes to an IEA youth member at the show. If the judge notices particularly exemplary behavior, the judge should mention it to the steward.

Test Classes

- *Tests may be ridden in a small or large arena.*
- *All classes will use the IEA Rider Tests unless otherwise noted.*
- *Riders participating in dressage test classes will be allowed a two (2) minute warm-up prior to the bell, either in the show arena, or in a designated warm-up area.*
- *Once the defined warm-up time has concluded riders must walk (medium or free) until the judge signals readiness by a whistle or bell. The rider then has 45 seconds to begin their test.*
- *Warm-ups are un-judged. Falls and errors in warm-up do not necessitate elimination.*
- *Riders competing in dressage test classes may use readers during regular season shows, but readers are not allowed in post-season shows*

All IEA Dressage test classes will use one of the three IEA Rider tests unless otherwise noted.

Tests can be found on the Dressage page, and the Show Host Hub of the IEA website



Dressage Seat Equitation Classes (DSE)

- *DSE classes may run in a dressage court or in a larger arena.*
- *All DSE classes must be judged at the walk, trot, and canter both directions unless noted as walk/trot only.*
- *During DSE classes, the timing of the class should be taken into consideration. Length of time from start to finish should not exceed 15mins.*
- *Scorecards will not be posted.*
- *Placing the class using a numerical score is suggested but only required at post season shows*
- *Additional testing as a group or alone is not mandatory, but may be requested at the judge's discretion. Riders must be prepared to perform the tests appropriate for the class in which they are participating, and may be asked to perform them collectively or individually.*
- *A dressage judge may choose from the following list, using tests 1 - 5 for the Beginner Walk/ Trot classes, 1 - 6 for the Beginner Walk/Trot/Canter classes, 1 - 7 for the Novice classes, 1 - 9 for the Intermediate classes, and 1 - 12 for the Open classes.*

Tests 1 - 5 (Beginner Walk/Trot)

1. Ask an appropriate horsemanship question that is tailored to the rider's ability level
2. Halt
3. Transitions using the walk, rising trot, and canter
4. 20m circles
5. Change horses

Tests 1 - 6 (Beginner Walk/Trot/Canter)

6. Figure eight or serpentine at the trot demonstrating changes of diagonal

Tests 1 - 7 (Novice)

7. Figure eight at the canter demonstrating changes of lead through the trot

Tests 1 - 9 (Intermediate)

8. Sitting trot
9. Lengthening at the trot

Tests 1 - 12 (Open)

10. Lengthening at the canter
11. 10m circles at the trot
12. 15m circles at the canter



SUGGESTIONS FOR NUMERICAL SCORING:

85-89; VERY GOOD, No major position flaws. Very good basics
80-84; No major position flaws and very good basics
75-79; GOOD, The rider may have minor flaws.
70-74; Average rider with no major design flaws or mistakes.
65-69; SATISFACTORY, rider has several minor flaws, but no major.
60-64; Most of the good points, but one major flaw
50-59; SUFFICIENT, This rider has several minor position flaws
40-49; INSUFFICIENT, This rider has major position faults
Below 40; This rider is abusive or unsafe