

## **WESTERN DRESSAGE**

**APPOINTMENTS:** See the Appointments for the Western Division (pg. 21) for the basis of allowable Western tack and attire, and the General Rules for Western bits (pg. 11). Additions/exceptions are:

**PERSONAL:** Spurs are optional and may be of Western style, with or without blunt tines, or English Dressage style. Other optional attire includes chaps, gloves, necktie or similar tie/pin, vest, jacket, coat, or sweater.

**TACK:** The following exceptions and/or additions are allowed in Western Dressage:

1. Western cavesson on the bridle (braided or plain) with space for two fingers between the cavesson and horse's jowl. No metal, studs, or rigid material may be part of the cavesson. No flash, figure-8, or dropped nose bands.
2. Bits/bridles that may be used on horses of any age:
  - A. Snaffle bit (as defined in Western Bits).
  - B. Hackamore (Bosal, as defined in Western Bits).
  - C. Bitless bridle. Must be Western style made of leather or leather-like material.
3. Breastplate and/or crupper.
4. One whip no longer than 47.2 inches (120cm) including lash.
5. Standard stock saddle is customary, but a working saddle, Aussie, and Western side saddle are also acceptable. A horn is optional but Western style fenders are required. Padding on the saddle's seat and tapaderos are permitted.
6. Reins:
  - A. With snaffle bit: loop/connected reins, split reins, buckled reins, mecate reins, or Romal reins without a popper; two hands must be used with any of these combinations.
  - B. With bosal: Horsehair, rope reins and mecate reins; two hands must be used. The mecate can be tied to the saddle horn or held by the rider.
  - C. With curb: Romal reins or Split reins. When using a curb with Romal reins, only one hand is allowed; when using split reins, one or two hands are allowed.
7. Hand position on reins:
  - A. Romal reins: the Romal is held in one hand with no fingers between the individual reins. The end of the Romal may be held in the hand not used for reining to keep the Romal from swinging and to adjust the position of the rein. The reins must be held so that there is at least 16" of rein between the hands.
  - B. Split reins: When split reins are held in one or two hands, the rider may not switch back and forth during a test. When the split reins are held in one hand, there are two ways that the rider may use them:
    - (1) with one finger between the split reins; the ends of the reins fall on the side of the reining hand.

- (2) without a finger between the reins; the hand must be around the reins. The ends of the Split reins may be held in the hand not used for reining to keep them from swinging and to adjust the position of the reins. The reins must be held so that there is at least 16" of rein between the hands.
- C. At the end of the Free Walk or Free Jog, riders using split reins held in one hand may use the free or offhand to pull the reins back to the desired length. Riders using Romal reins may use the hand using the Romal to alter the tension or length of the reins from the bridle to the reining hand.

In addition to what is described in Appointments for the Western Division, the following are not allowed in Western Dressage:

1. Full cheeks, half cheeks, kimberwicks, roping bits with both reins attached to a single ring, or any type of rein or attachment which increases the effective length of the bit's shank or creates additional leverage.
2. Round, rolled, braided, or rawhide curb straps.
3. Martingales, bit guards, any kind of gadgets (such as bearing, side, running, balancing reins, nasal strips, tongue tied down, etc.), any kind of boots (including "easy-boots," splint/hock/bell boots, etc.), tail bandages, any form of blinkers, ear muffs or plugs, and nose covers.

#### EXECUTION AND JUDGING OF TESTS:

1. Western Dressage integrates the historically validated principles of dressage with the best of western stock horse tradition, with the purpose of enjoying a safe, pleasurable, versatile, and useful working horse. The hallmarks of the Western Dressage Horse are usefulness, rideability, willingness, safety, pure gaits, lightness, calmness, and steadiness. A Western Dressage Rider should use clear, effective, subtle aids coupled with a confident seat and light, responsive hands in communication with the horse.

A Western Dressage Partnership should exhibit impulsion originating from deeply engaged hindquarters transmitted without resistance through a supple topline to a light, soft contact with the rider's hand(s). The horse should move freely forward via a willingness to work off the hindquarters which enables the western horse to be a useful working partner.

2. Gaited horse will perform a saddle gait in place of the jog. The saddle gait selected should be the gait in which the gaited horse is balanced and athletically comfortable performing. The saddle gait is a 4-beat lateral or diagonal gait, timely and evenly performed. The tempo, rhythm, and foot falls of the gait they choose to show must not change throughout the test. The true four beat gait the horse performs should be able to be ridden in a working, lengthened, free and collected manner as called for in the Western Dressage test.
3. See the USEF Rulebook ([www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org)) for further explanations of the general principles of Western Dressage competition and the correct gaits (including for gaited horses) and movements.
4. The dressage test used will be selected annually. See class list for current test.
5. Arena size may be either 20m X 40m or 20m X 60m (see pg. 80 for layouts).

6. Approximately 6-8 minutes will be allowed for each test. The specific time limit will be based on the test selected. Show management reserves the right to adjust individual ride times under extenuating circumstances.
7. A competitor who does not enter the arena within 45 seconds after the entry bell or whistle has sounded shall be eliminated.
8. Tests may be called during the competition. If tests are announced, it is the responsibility of the competitor to arrange for a person to announce the test. Lateness and errors in announcing the ride will not relieve the rider from "error penalties." Announcing the test is limited to reading the movement as it is written once only. However, the repetition of reading of a movement is acceptable if there is reason to doubt that the rider heard the original call.
9. Voice: The quiet use of the voice or clicking the tongue once or repeatedly is permitted.  
Touch: Petting the horse is allowed during the test as a gentle reward.
10. When a competitor makes an "error of the course" (takes the wrong turn, omits a movement, etc.) the judge warns him by sounding the bell or whistle. The judge shows him, if necessary, the point at which he must take up the test again and the next movement to be executed then leaves him to continue by himself.
11. The score for each movement should first establish the fact of whether the movement is performed insufficiently (4 or below) or sufficiently (5 or above). The scoring scale is:
 

10 - Excellent	6 - Satisfactory	2 - Bad
9 - Very Good	5 - Marginal	1 - Very Bad
8 - Good	4 - Insufficient	0 - Not executed
7 - Fairly Good	3 - Fairly Bad	
12. In the case of a fall of horse and/or rider the competitor will be eliminated.
13. If during the test (between the time of entry and the time of exit at A) the horse leaves the arena (all four feet outside the fence or line marking the arena perimeter) the competitor is eliminated.
14. Resistance of the horse which prevents continuation of the test for longer than 20 seconds results in elimination.
15. In the case of equality of percentage, the competitor with the highest sum of the Collective Marks shall be declared the winner of the tie. Errors on a test may not be used to break ties. If this procedure does not break the tie, then the tie is broken by the judge.
16. A competitor may enter and ride in the perimeter area surrounding the dressage arena, or within the dressage arena if space is not sufficient around the perimeter, immediately prior to his/her ride and after the final salute of the previous competitor.