

What's Your Passion?



I've learned a few things about people as I meet them every day and they share their stories with me. Probably the biggest revelation is that we all share passion. We may direct it in different areas but we all have events, experiences, or activities that we prefer above all others and we spend a great deal of time, money and energy while pursuing them. I love it when my clients share with me their passions.

Just recently, I've learned from two different customers a little about the sport/art of dressage. A French term that can be translated to mean "training," dressage is a highly skilled form of riding where horse and rider are expected to perform from memory a series of predetermined movements. It is not unusual for the relationship between a dressage horse and rider to span decades. My clients had me transfer videos of them working with their respective horses.

Here, from the United States Dressage Federation is a spectator's guide to watching a dressage performance or competition.

1. Less is More

In dressage, the less you see the rider do, the better, because that means he is communicating with his horse quietly and his horse is attentive – they are working as a team.

2. Good Figures

Circles are round and lines are straight, a precept true in geometry and dressage. A 20-meter circle should go from one side of the arena to the other, a 10-meter circle only half way across. A horse should not weave on a straight-line movement.

3. Tempo and Rhythm

Rhythm is the repetition of footfalls. A sound dressage horse has only three correct rhythms – a four-beat walk, two-beat trot, three-beat canter. Tempo is the speed of repetition of strides. Every horse should have a consistent tempo throughout the test that is controlled by the rider, a tempo so obvious you could sing a song to it.

4. Naughtiness

Horses, like people, have good days and bad days and days when they are just feeling a little too good. Naughtiness in horses can be exhibited in bucking, rearing, tossing of the head, or even jumping out of the dressage ring.

5. Tension

During a test, the horse needs to remain calm, attentive and supple. If the horse gets tense, he gets rigid through his neck and back, which can exhibit itself in stiff movement, ears that are pinned back and a tail that swishes constantly

and doesn't hang arched and quietly swinging.

6. Rider Seat and Position

The rider should sit upright quietly and not be depend on his whip, spurs or voice to have a nice test. Riders who use their voice have points deducted off their test score for that movement.

7. Whipped Cream Lips

When a horse is relaxed in his jaw and poll (the area just behind his ears), he releases saliva, you might see white foam around his lips and mouth. That is a good sign as it means he is attentively chewing on his bit and comfortable in his work. The amount of white foam varies from horse to horse.

8. Horses and Flight

Horses have two main mechanisms for protection from danger: they run and they kick. Remember to always allow plenty of room for the horses at a show and never approach any horse without first alerting the rider that you are doing so.

9. Scary Stuff

Horses have the strangest aversions: plastic grocery bags can remind them of Satan's minions and an opened umbrella can cause bolting to three states over. Again, use caution at horse shows and think before you toss away noisy garbage, open an umbrella or put on and take off plastic rain ponchos or blankets in the stands.

10. SSSSHHHH!

Focus is important during any test, from Training Level to Grand Prix, so remember to be courteous and follow the rules by staying about 15 meters (45 feet) feet back from the competition ring and remaining as quiet as possible during rides. If you have any questions about where you may stand or

sit, check with the ring steward.

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