

DVCTA Presents: 2023 USDF Dressage Tests

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General Information

- 2022 Tests are effective from 12/1/2022 to 11/30/2026
- These tests are intended to be building blocks to aid in the progressive development of your horse. Demonstrating your understanding of the intentions of each level is appreciated, some may even say - rewarded.
 - Read the tests, from beginning to end – consider it a book of sorts. Use it as a framework to support your training vs. a pattern to perform at a show. Please do not skip chapters.
- You may purchase the 2023 Booklet from USDF.
- You may view and download tests on usdf.org.
- TestPro US Dressage Federation App is updated and live.
- “On The Levels” is updated and available through USDF.
- The actual tests provide useful information.
- Some miscellaneous changes that impact those showing recognized:
 - If Parents are signing as trainers they may file for a 1 time show pass online, per competition season. This should be done prior to the show.
 - There is an additional fee for paper submissions. This is a trickle down from USEF.

2023 Introductory Level

- Purpose: To introduce the rider and/or horse to the sport of dressage, confirming that they are beginning to develop an understanding of correct dressage basics. The horse should be ridden freely forward in a steady tempo and clear rhythm, accepting contact with the bit. An understanding of test accuracy and geometry should be demonstrated.
- Requirements:
 - Free walk (Intro A+)
 - Medium walk
 - Working trot rising
 - 20m circle
 - Halt through walk
 - Working canter (Intro C+)

2023 Introductory Level

- The test patterns have not changed.
- Collective Marks for the Rider are less exacting than at the higher levels, and include a separate box for geometry.
- The directives for the Medium Walk and Free Walk have been updated, at all levels.
 - Medium Walk directive ideas – regularity, quality, over track
 - Free Walk directive ideas – reach and ground cover with over track

2023 Introductory Level

- Tips from C (the Judge):
 - Understand the purpose of the level.
 - Read the directives provided in each box.
- Tips from Center Line (the Competitor):
 - Ride accurately.
 - Learn what to do when things go wrong.
 - Circles and corners should have bend.

Are you ready for Training Level??

- Can you maintain a steady tempo in the trot and canter?
- Can you canter in balance through a corner and do a transition to trot (when you want to)?
- Can you do a stretchy trot?
- Can you show bend and change of bend and ride a correct line that begins and ends with a corner?
- For instance...

2023 Introductory Level



5 Minute Group Discussion

2023 Training Level

- Purpose: To confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, by showing suppleness both laterally and longitudinally, moving freely forward in a clear rhythm with a steady tempo, and readily accepting contact with the bit. Correct geometry and lines of travel should be shown.
 - The geometry clarification is a significant change.
- Introduce:
 - Working trot (T1+)
 - Working canter
 - Medium walk
 - Free walk
 - 20m circles in trot and canter
 - Stretch circle in trot (T2+)
 - Changing of bend on a shallow loop (T3+)
 - Canter-trot transition on a diagonal

2023 Training Level

- Training Level Test 1 (minor changes)
 - The walk transition is between C-H, instead of at a letter. This provides a zone to allow more opportunity to choose the best moment to transition and hopefully maximize the benefit of the corner.
- Training Level Test 2
 - This test did not change. It requires slightly more fitness and attention span. In general it is a fluid and well received test.
- Training Level Test 3 (moderate changes)
 - The shallow loop serpentine is returning.
 - The transition to walk is less abrupt and placed where the judge can more clearly see the medium walk.
 - The description of the shallow loop serpentine has been modified.
 - A diagram of a shallow loop serpentine is included on the test (with the horse changing bend!).

2023 Training Level

- Tips from C (the Judge):
 - Demonstrate bend equally both directions.
 - Circles should be the same size, BOTH directions.
 - Learn how to ride a corner.
- Tips from Center Line (the Competitor):
 - Study your test, memorize it.
 - Practice transitions at home.

Are you ready for First Level??

- Can you show a lengthening of stride and frame? Does your horse have enough strength and engagement to demonstrate a clear difference within the gait?
- Can you ride accurate figures in both directions?
- Does your horse have enough lateral suppleness to LY with relative ease?
- **Is your horse on the bit?**
- Are you able to ride accurately?
- What are your bending aids?
- What are your LY aids?
- For Instance...

2023 Training Level



5 Minute Group Discussion

2023 First Level

- Purpose: To confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, and in addition to the requirements of Training Level, has developed improved balance, lateral suppleness and thoroughness, as well as the thrust to perform lengthening of strides. The horse should be on the bit.
 - The clarification that the horse should be on the bit clearly highlights the expected standard regarding connection (and correlation to contact).
- Introduce:
 - 10m ½ circle at trot (1-1+)
 - 15m circle in canter
 - Lengthening of stride in trot
 - Leg Yield (1-2+)
 - Lengthening of stride in canter
 - 10m circle at trot (1-3+)
 - Change of lead through trot
 - Shallow loops at canter

2023 First Level

- First Level Test 1 (minor changes)
 - The lengthened canter has been removed.
- First Level Test 2 (minor changes)
 - The bracketing has changed slightly to include the turn onto CL and the LY in the same box.
 - The turn is onto CL instead of a 10m half circle.
- First Level Test 3 (major changes)
 - The canter work includes all of the same elements but is split up and partnered with the trot work.
 - Trot work is more balanced, incorporating both sides of the arena.
 - LY towards the judge in both directions.
 - The description of the shallow loop counter canter serpentine has been modified.
 - A diagram of a shallow loop serpentine is included on the test (with the horse NOT changing bend!).

2023 First Level

- Tips from C (the Judge):
 - Be aware of the directives, not just where you are going.
 - The directives specifically list what the judge is looking for, correct geometry is expected.
 - A movement does not end until the first letter of the next movement.
- Tips from Center Line (the Competitor):
 - You want to show what you are good at, not what you are learning. Most horses show at least a level below where they are training.
 - Show your horse on the bit. Know how to ride from back to front.
 - Every corner is an opportunity to improve the next movement – good corners are an opportunity to add +0.5.

Are you ready for Second Level??

- How much collection is needed? (Collection comes from engagement, people need to coordinate their aids for this to be effective.)
- Horse and Rider need to be more engaged and collected.
- Do you and your horse understand the half-halt?
- For instance...

2023 First Level



5 Minute Group Discussion

2023 Second Level

- Purpose: To confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, and now begins to accept more weight on the hindquarters as the collected and medium gaits develop. A greater degree of straightness, suppleness, thoroughness, and balance are required to perform the movements with ease and self-carriage.
- Introduce:
 - Walk-canter transitions (2-1+)
 - Collected and medium trot and canter
 - 10m circle at canter
 - Shoulder-in
 - Rein back
 - Travers (2-2+)
 - Half turn on haunches
 - Simple changes
 - Counter canter in serpentine (2-3+)

2023 Second Level

- Second Level Test 1 (minor changes)
 - The end of the test was shortened, by removing the last canter transition.
- Second Level Test 2 (moderate changes)
 - The trot lateral work has been modified to include medium trot within the trot pattern in an effort to re-fresh before more lateral work.
 - TOH wording to be evaluated to describes steps instead of strides.
 - Transition from Medium Walk to Collected Canter no longer calls for shortening the strides in the walk prior to the depart.
- Second Level Test 3
 - The pattern stands, slight wording changes.

2023 Second Level

- Tips from C (the Judge):
 - The collection required at this level is progressive, and defining. The working gaits at First Level need to become more engaged to enable active collection in an uphill balance.
 - The quality of the bend affects the quality of the lateral work.
 - The quality of the collected canter determines the ability to perform simple changes.
 - Own the CC – especially on the serpentines, correct geometry is essential.
 - In Shoulder in the hind legs should be on the track and the shoulders inside the track, not the outside hind going too close to the rail (note, it is hard to not notice your inside leg well behind the girth pushing the HQs out).
- Tips from Center Line (the Competitor):
 - Work on your seat, to create coordinating collecting aids. This level tests the riders as much as the horses.
 - The patterns include many transitions which require a clear plan and much preparation from a forward thinking rider.

Are you ready for Third Level??

- Are your flying changes correct?
- Do you have the collection and balance required to perform movements in harmony with your horse.
- Can you show a clear difference between medium and extended paces? (Are you fit enough?)
- Is the collection enhancing the gaits?
- For instance...

2023 Second Level



5 Minute Group Discussion

2023 Third Level

- Purpose: To confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, while maintaining consistent uphill balance and self-carriage. Increased engagement facilitates clear differences in collected, medium, and extended gaits with well-defined, balanced transitions. Movements should be accomplished with harmony and ease due to the increased balance and collection. The horse must demonstrate a greater degree of thoroughness, suppleness, straightness and bending.
- Introduce:
 - Extended gaits (3-1+)
 - Half pass at trot
 - Single flying change
 - Renvers (3-2+)
 - Release of reins at canter
 - Half pass at canter
 - Rein back to trot (3-3 +)

2023 Third Level

- Third Level Test 1,2,3
 - The patterns stand, slight wording changes.
 - All flying changes carry a coefficient of 2.

2023 Third Level

- Tips from C (the Judge):
 - Demonstrate attention to detail; halt, RB, TOH, straightness on CL.
 - Collection to be more consistent and supple with a degree of ease in the movements.
 - (Just because your horse can do a flying change does not mean you are ready for 3rd Level.)
 - If the changes are not confirmed, stay at second level.
- Tips from Center Line (the Competitor):
 - Almost all flying changes can be fixed if the horse is truly straight.
 - The building blocks from second level are essential to creating a third level horse.

Are you ready for Fourth Level??

- Are your flying changes correct? Can you count and stay straight?
- Do you have the paces within the gaits to show the adjustability required for this level?
- Can you show a “working” 1/2 pirouette?
- Is your horse in front of the leg?
- Is your horse truly supple in both directions?
- Are you straight? Is your position stable enough to support your horse in the degree of collection required for this level?

2023 Third Level



5 Minute Group Discussion

2023 Fourth Level

- Purpose: To confirm that the horse demonstrates correct basics, and has developed sufficient thoroughness, suppleness, balance, and impulsion to perform with ease the exercises at this medium level of difficulty. The horse has established consistent self-carriage and lightness through improved connection, engagement, and collection. The movements and transitions are performed with greater straightness, impulsion, and cadence.
- Introduce:
 - Collected walk (4-1+)
 - Very collected canter
 - Walk pirouettes
 - Multiple flying changes on diagonal
 - Counter change of hand in trot and canter (4-2+)
 - Tempi changes every fourth stride
 - Working partial pirouettes in canter
 - Tempi changes every third stride (4-3+)
 - Working half-pirouettes in canter

2023 Fourth Level

- Fourth Level Test 1 (minor changes)
 - Shoulder-in moved from the CL to the rail.
 - Extended walk moved to the diagonal.
 - Coefficients moved from shoulder-in to trot HP.
- Fourth Level Test 2 (minor changes)
 - Extended canter before the working pirouette.
- Fourth Level Test 3 (significant changes)
 - 10m $\frac{1}{2}$ circle counter canter removed.
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ pirouetted moved to a more open diagonal line.
 - Separate score for the $\frac{1}{2}$ pirouette and the flying change.
 - Canter tour is shorter.
 - Coefficients moved from shoulder-in to RB and transitions to and from extended trot.

2023 Fourth Level

- Tips from C (the Judge):
 - These tests should showcase correct basics. If you are having trouble with any element, review those “basics” before going forward.
 - Show 2-3 steps of very collected canter before the working canter pirouette and at least 1 step after before proceeding.
- Tips from Center Line (the Competitor):
 - The very collected canter is the building block for the canter pirouette, train this well so this movement will be easy.
 - Start preparing for each movement at least a letter ahead of time.
 - Make sure your horse knows you are working together.

Are you ready for FEI?!?!

- Do you have access to both ends and sides of your horse?
- Is your horse adjustable, are you?
- Do you and your horse understand the half-halt?
- Are you straight?
- How are those corners?
- Do you know what to do when things go wrong?
- Is your collection and suppleness improved from 4th Level?
- Watch tests at the level you are moving up to, in consideration of what is expected. Study quality rides, obtain a clear visual understanding of what is expected. (Horse & Country, USEF Network, Clip My Horse)

2023 Fourth Level



5 Minute Group Discussion

2023 Additional USDF Tests

- 4 Year Old Test
 - Longer FW added
 - Canter transitions between letters
 - Terminology changes (Perspective vs. General Impression)
- Developing PSG, Developing GP
 - Collectives updated to more closely align with the FEI
- MFS
 - Artistic Impression adjusted to align more closely with the FEI
 - Music carries a coefficient of 2
 - Slight terminology changes throughout

2023 USDF Dressage Tests



Don't forget to have fun!