

Dressage Tips At-A-Glance

Thirteen pointers to improve your dressage test.

By Sharon Biggs

Develop a correct, classical seat and aids—longe lessons are great for this. Take a lesson with a judge (even if it's not your regular instructor) to practice tests and glean some show pointers. School in a regulation-size dressage arena so you know where the letters are and how to make accurate figures. Don't overschool the tests. Break each test down into sections and individual movements. Focus on being precise in your practice. Show at an appropriate level—don't attempt more than you and your horse are capable of. Memorize your test. If working with a reader, practice together so you'll be in sync. The walk is responsible for many points, so don't neglect it. School it properly at home and stay focused during tests. Hone your skills at schooling shows before heading to recognized competitions. Pay special attention to the co-efficient movements. Understand each test's purpose and requirements so that you can demonstrate these to the judge. For the bigger picture, focus on the collective marks scoring the horse's gaits, submission and impulsion, and the correctness and effectiveness of your riding. And although it's not a beauty contest, a nice turnout makes a good impression. Looking your best also boosts your confidence to ride your best.

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