

Glossary of Dressage Terms

Balance

The horse is carrying the rider's and its own weight in the most efficient way. The weight is on the hind legs (the quarters) not on the front legs (the forehead).

Bend of neck - Neck bend

The horse's neck is bent but the body is straight. A common fault when first attempting to shoulder-in.

Cadence

The measured beat of movement; Balanced/rhythmic flow

Canter

The canter consists of a series of bounds. In the correct canter three hoof beats should be heard. It is known as the right or left canter according to which foreleg is leading.

In the right canter, the left hind leg is placed on the ground (first hoof beat), then the right hind leg and left foreleg together at the same time (second hoof beat), followed by the right foreleg (third hoof beat). The left hind leg should leave the ground before the right foreleg is put down, then comes the left diagonal; finally the right foreleg, followed by its suspension.

In a correct canter the entire weight is carried in the following sequence: one hind leg, two hind legs and one foreleg, one hind leg and the diagonal foreleg, one hind leg and two forelegs, one foreleg, all four legs in the air (the moment of suspension).

This sequence of steps must be maintained at all tempos. The canter is incorrect if four hoof beats can be heard, which happens when the hind leg is put down before the corresponding diagonal foreleg.

Flying change

Changing the lead leg in canter in the air (during an unbroken canter stride) at the rider's instructions.

Full-pass

The horse as in half-pass is bent into the direction of movement, but does not move forward at all, it moves sideways only.

Free Walk

The horse is moving freely (having a large stride) on a long rein with the head being low

Half-pass

The horse is proceeding equally forwards and sideways. The horse length is bent in the direction of movement. Can be ridden in walk, trot or canter.

Lateral movements

The horse is going to some degree sideways at the instructions of the rider.

Length Bend

The horse is uniformly bent round your inside leg. The inside surface area of the horse is the same shape as the circumference of the corner or circle.

On the bit

When the horse has rounded his back, has accepted your weight, has engaged his hindquarters, has accepted the contact in the mouth and has arched his neck. He has given himself up to the rider's aids. A nearly vertical line can be drawn down the front of the horse's face.

On the forehand

The horse is carrying itself and the rider with its balance and weight over the two front legs.

Off the forehand

The horse is carrying itself and the rider with its balance and weight over the two hind legs

Passage

A movement in trot with an extended moment of suspension. The horse's quarters carry more weight and propel him forward.

Piaffe

A movement in trot (alternate diagonals). A proud and rhythmic movement performed nearly on the spot.

Rein - Feel the rein

To take a contact that is soft and giving.

Rein - Giving the rein

Pushing your hand towards the horse's mouth or the bit, to allow the rein to drop, dangle or loop.

Rein - Pull the rein

To take the rein backwards towards the rider's body. In classical dressage this must never be used.

Rein - Soft rein

To take a contact that is soft and with feel.

Rein - Take the rein

To momentarily close the fingers on the rein to 'block' or to 'not give' or 'not to be light'.

Rein - To Ask with the rein

Give and take the rein to create bend or flexion. Never a pull, always an invitation. If your horse is being disobedient or hard in the mouth, a persistent invitation.

Rein back

The horse moving backwards on the rider's command.

Relative Straightness

In dressage terms this means a horse is going straight when the inside hind leg follows the track of the inside foreleg.

Rhythm

Regular sequence, regular intervals

Self carriage

When the horse is able to carry itself in balance through the various school movements without any support from the rein.

Shoulder-in

Work on three tracks. The horse's forehand is brought in off the track so that the outside hind leg creates one track, the outside foreleg and inside hind leg (diagonal pair) create the second track and the inside foreleg creates the third track.

Straightness

This is when the spine is parallel to the straight line or long side of the mÈnage.

Tempo

Beats per minute

Trot

In the trot, the diagonal legs must be raised from the ground simultaneously and be replaced on the ground together, making two hoof beats. A jump from one diagonal pair of legs to the other. A two beat tempo.

For instance, after the left diagonal (right fore and left hind) leaves the ground, the right diagonal (right fore and left hind) is raised before the left diagonal has touched the ground again, so that the horse is suspended with all four legs in the air for a moment. This moment is called suspension.

Walk

In the walk the horse moves his legs one after the other so that four hoof beats may be heard. For example: (1st) left forefoot, (2nd) right hind foot, (3rd) right forefoot and (4th) left hind foot.

Two or three feet are always on the ground at the same time; the horse steps from one leg to the other and there is no moment of suspension.