

Getting Started

These guidelines are written to provide you with information to assist in organizing high school dressage clubs or teams in your state or area. **Due to the large variety of requirements from state to state you will need to contact your local school district to determine where best to start in order to get approval to start a dressage club in your school or area.**

When contacting your high school administration to determine how to start a new club in your school, you may need the school districts approval or you may need to have your guidelines approved by your state's Education Department. Providing guidelines that have already been approved by another Department of Education may assist you in your efforts for approval. An example of a program that has been approved by another state may be found on the Oregon Dressage Society (ODS) website at www.oregondressage.com. These guidelines will need to be adapted for use in your state.

When ODS started their High School Dressage Club Program, they had an advantage in that the Oregon Department of Education sanctioned all high school club activities and gave approval for outside organizations, such as ODS, to sponsor those activities. After you determine your schools requirements and if outside organizations are allowed to sponsor your high school clubs, you have the option of contacting your local GMO (or the local chapter of a large GMO) to ask if they would consider sponsoring a high school dressage team.

While a local GMO may be willing to sponsor or assist in setting up a high school club, these options may not be available in your area. However, other approaches without GMO support are possible, such as an Intercollegiate/Interscholastic Member Organizations (IMOs) membership.

Remember that when you approach your school you are asking about starting a club sport and receiving an activity letter. Obtaining approval for an activity letter for a club sport is much easier than receiving approval for a major sport, such as basketball or football.

Being a member of a high school dressage club may also require parental involvement, horse ownership/lease, transportation to shows, riding lessons on a regular basis, and membership in USDF, a local GMO, or a similar equine organization. Riders who want to start a club would be encouraged to seek out other riders to give dressage a try.

Club Organization

At the initial meeting, club members should vote for the following positions: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer and an adult Club Advisor. Other possible positions such as Membership Coordinator may be appointed.

The club should designate someone to serve as the liaison officer with the sponsoring organization, if needed. This may be an elected officer, the Club Advisor or another appointed position. Members of a high school club may also be required to be members of a sponsoring organization and should attend their activities and meetings whenever possible. Local school requirements may necessitate modifications to the attendance requirements.

Club Advisor

The Club Advisor will assist in the administrative aspect of the club. These duties will include working closely with the school representative to make sure each student has fulfilled all of the requirements for joining the club, met the requirements for lettering, and deciding on the competitions required by the school. The Club Advisor is also responsible for contacting other high school dressage clubs and coordinating the competition schedules.

Academic and Behavior Standards

Students participating in high school dressage clubs will be required to adhere to the school, and club's code of conduct for student participation.

Meetings

It is recommended that a dressage club schedule a minimum of two unmounted meetings during the school year. The club should consider holding "mounted meetings" during the school year as a team activity. All members should attend these meetings. Members should also be encouraged to attend the meetings of their local sponsoring organization.

Instruction

To be able to better prepare for a competition, each riding club member should be advised of the need for regular instruction. However, it is not necessary for all members to use the same instructor. USDF maintains a list of current instructors and trainers who have been certified through the USDF Instructor Certification Program. If students need to locate an instructor in their local area they may obtain this list from the USDF Office or on the USDF website, www.usdf.org. GMO's or local dressage clubs may also have a list of local instructors.

Each rider will be responsible for obtaining and paying for their own instruction. To share the costs, group lessons or clinics are a possibility. It is recommended that instructors and clinicians be required to carry their own health and liability insurance.

Safety

It is strongly recommended that all members be required to wear ASTM/SEI certified riding helmets, appropriate footwear, and appropriate clothing when engaging in mounted activities. This may also be a school and/or insurance requirement.

Insurance Required by the Club

The school may require insurance for the club. If the school permits a local organization to sponsor the club, they may be able to provide the needed insurance. A sponsoring organization may also require the club members to be members of their organization and sanction all club activities through the organization. Other means of providing insurance may be available through other equine organizations or interscholastic club programs, such as Riders Interscholastic Federation of North America, Inc. (RIFNA). Schools may also be able to provide activity insurance, so check with the school to see what the insurance requirements are.

High School Activity Department Requirements

Following are some possible stipulations that may be required of the club in order to receive an activity letter.

- The dressage club shall honor all valid athletic club requirements of the school.
- If required by the school, the club shall represent their school as a team at least once during the year. The competition scores will be reported to the appropriate athletic club department of the school.

Letter Requirement

Each region, area, or school district is different and may have different requirements to gain approval from their schools. The following are suggested as minimal requirements:

- A score of 60% or higher be achieved at two locally or nationally approved shows at the same level. These two scores must be obtained during the school year, unless the school allows otherwise.
 - To obtain the required two scores, dressage club members may, according to their individual school requirements, participate individually or as a team member at competitions in order to obtain the required scores.
 - When competing as club members, students may not ride a test more than one level **below** the highest level at which they normally compete.
- Be required to volunteer at the competitions or locally sponsored activities.

