



UNITED STATES *Dressage* FEDERATION
Glossary of Judging Terms

Effective 12.1.2026 to 11.30.2029

Dear Judges, Competitors, and Dressage Enthusiasts,

The following glossary has been developed to help standardize the terminology used by officials and to improve communication and education among judges, competitors, trainers, and dressage enthusiasts.

The terms in it represent traditional definitions with modifications made where relevant to their application in Dressage.

USDF hopes that all will adopt this glossary to facilitate clear and precise communication among professionals and other participants in the sport.

Thank you to all the Judges, Committees and Officials who have contributed to this resource.

GLOSSARY OF JUDGING TERMS

Abduct

To move a limb away from the horse's midline.

Above the Bit

A head position in which the horse avoids acceptance of the contact by putting the muzzle forward and upward, usually also retracting the poll.

Acceptance

Used to describe the horse's willingness to allow the rider steady and elastic contact that runs between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth, the application of the aids, and/or the placement of the rider's weight. An absence of evasion or resistance.

Activity

Energy, vigor, liveliness, especially with reference to the motion of the hind legs.

Adduct

To move a limb toward or across the horse's midline.

Against the Bit

The horse presses against the bit with a rigid or unyielding neck/poll/jaw.

Alignment

1. Referring to the horse, the lining up of the body parts from tail to poll. One of the four aspects of straightness (the other three are parallelism on line of travel, parallelism to line of reference, and directness of line of travel).
2. Referring to the rider:
 - a. Vertical alignment refers to the side view of the rider in which the ear, shoulder, hip, and heel are in a vertical line.
 - b. Lateral alignment refers to the front or rear view of the rider in which the weight appears to be evenly distributed on the left and right seat bones and the rider's body does not collapse in the waistline/core in either direction.
 - c. Rotational alignment refers to the orientation of the front of the rider's body relative to the horse's line of travel or line of reference.

Amplitude

Magnitude of range of motion of the horse's limbs. Same as *Scope*.

Balance

Relative distribution of the weight of horse and rider upon the fore and hind legs (longitudinal balance) and the left and right legs (lateral balance).

Basics

All the criteria of the Pyramid of Training/Training scale, including rhythm, suppleness, connection, impulsion, straightness, and collection. The basics form a correct foundation for progressive training.

Beat

Footfall of a hoof or diagonal pair of hooves that strike the ground virtually simultaneously. The walk has four beats per stride, the trot has two beats per stride, and the canter has three beats per stride.

See *Beat* in Musical Freestyle Section and *Tempo* (regarding counting beats to determine tempo).

Behind the Bit

An evasion in which the horse retracts or shrinks back from the bit/contact. The head may or may not be behind the vertical.

Behind the Leg (Behind the Aids)

Slow to react to the leg or sluggish or unwilling to move energetically forward, especially while accepting the contact/connection.

Behind the Vertical

With the horse's face viewed in profile, the front of the horse's nose falls behind a vertical line dropped from the top of its forehead. The horse may or may not be behind the bit at the same time.

Bend

The laterally curved position of the horse's body, when viewed from above, *gives the impression* of forming a uniform arc from poll to tail. Components of bending include lateral flexion at the poll, stretching of the outer side of the body, lowering of the inner hip, and adduction of the inner hind and outer fore legs (see Flexion for more in-depth discussion of the elements of bending). Examples of faulty bend are bending only in the neck, bending only at the base of the neck, or bending towards the wrong direction.

Biomechanics

The application of the principles and techniques of mechanics... to the structure, function, and capabilities of living organisms. [Webster]

Blocked

Impaired connection due to sustained muscular contraction, creating rigidity.

BPM

Beats per minute, as may be measured by a metronome.

Braced/Bracing

The horse contracts or holds its muscles defensively against the rider's aids.

Broken Neckline

The position of the neck in which there is excessive longitudinal flexion at the joint between the second and third cervical vertebrae, so that the topline of the neck does not form an even, smooth arc and the poll is not the highest point of the skeleton.

Cadence

The marked accentuation of the rhythm and emphasized beat that is a result of a steady and suitable tempo harmonizing with a springy impulsion and suspension.

Carriage

The posture of the horse which is most easily evaluated when viewing the horse's profile of outline from the side.

Center of Mass (Center of Gravity)

The point at which the mass of the body can be considered concentrated and around which its weight is evenly distributed or balanced. The horse's center of mass is located at the 13th or 14th rib and just below the line from the point of the shoulder to the point of the hip. This puts it below the seat of the saddle.

Chewing the Bit

The movements of the horse's mouth – gently and softly mouthing the bit – showing mobility and relaxation of the jaw and causing secretion of saliva for a "wet mouth." Not to be confused with snapping, clacking or grinding of the teeth.

Clarity/Clear

The correct rhythm (sequence and timing of the footfalls and phases of a gait). Often used in relation to maintenance of the correct rhythm of the gaits before and after a transition.

Clean

Specifically with reference to a flying change; A change of lead is from one lead to another. A clean flying change takes place during the suspension phase, without trot steps or disunited strides. Changes that are either 'late' in front or behind, or with the hind feet together are referred to as "not clean" or "faulty" changes. (See definitions below)

Closed Halt

A posture at the halt in which the horse is secure in balance with a shortened base of support achieved by positioning the hind legs forward underneath the body with the weight of the horse and rider evenly distributed over all four legs.

Collection (Balance and Lightness of the Forehand from Increased Engagement)

The lowering and engaging of the hindquarters, combined with the shortening and narrowing of the base of support, resulting in lightness and mobility of the forehand. The strides become shorter but maintain energy and activity.

See Pyramid of Training

Confidence

The boldness and self-assurance with which the horse performs, demonstrating trust in his partnership with the rider.

Connected

State in which there is no blockage, break, or slack in the circuit that joins the horse and rider into a single, harmonious, elastic unit. A prerequisite for throughness.

Connection

The energy of the rider's driving aids flows through the whole horse, received by the rider's hands as a consistent, elastic contact.

Constrained

The horse's forward or sideways movement, bend, and/or execution of the required exercise appears to be restricted by the rider.

Constricted

Limited by constraint, restraint, or sustained muscular contraction. Held together, forcefully shortened, or physically tight.

Contact (Connection and Acceptance of the Bit through Acceptance of the Aids)

The link between the horse's mouth (bit) and the rider's hand through the reins.

See Pyramid of Training

Correctness

The straightness of the action of the limbs (e.g., faults would be winging, paddling, twisting hocks). Not the same as Purity. Dressage judges deal with correctness only indirectly, that is, to the degree that it affects the purity or quality of the gait. Correctness is addressed directly in breeding classes.

Crookedness

Aspects of crookedness:

1. Misalignment of the horse's body parts from tail to poll (e.g., popped shoulder or twisted neck).
2. On straight or curved lines, lack of parallelism of the horse's longitudinal axis to the line of travel (e.g., haunches left or right of centerline or circle line).
3. In two track/lateral work, lack of parallelism of the horse's longitudinal axis to the line of reference (e.g., haunches leading or trailing in leg yield).
4. Lack of directness of the line of travel – the horse deviating or wandering left and/or right of the desired line of travel (e.g., as in weaving).

Cross-Canter

The fore and hind legs are on different leads. Same as *Disunited*.

Definition/Defined

Used in reference to transitions between the gaits or within gaits to indicate clear demarcation.

Disobedience

Willful determination to avoid doing what is asked, or determination to do what is not asked.

Diagonal Dissociation (Also Diagonal Advance Placement or DAP)

The hooves of a diagonal pair of limbs (in trot or canter) do not contact the ground at the same moment. The dissociation may be hind-first, which is also called positive DAP, or front-first, which is also called negative DAP. In the trot, the hind-first dissociation is usually associated with the horse being uphill. In canter, hind-first dissociation occurs, for instance, in the bounding canter of a young horse and in the pirouette canter.

Disunited (Canter)

The fore and hind legs are on different leads. Same as *Cross-Canter*.

Downhill

Poor longitudinal balance where the center of gravity is displaced towards the forelegs. Same as *On the Forehand*.

Dragging

Refers to dragging of the hind feet, inactivity of the hind legs, or failure to lift the hooves clear of the ground.

Elasticity

The ability or tendency to stretch and contract the musculature smoothly to produce suppleness of the back and springiness of the step.

Elevation

Raised positioning of the forehand (head, neck and ribcage) or height of steps.

Engagement

Increased flexion in joints of the hind legs during the weight-bearing (stance) phase of the stride, lowering the croup relative to the forehand, enabling the back to assist in elevating the forehand, and providing a springboard for upward thrust/impulsion. Engagement is carrying power, rather than pushing power.

Evasion

Avoidance of the difficulty, correctness, or purpose of the movement, or of the influence of the rider, often without active resistance or disobedience (e.g., tilting the head, open mouth, broken neckline, etc.).

Exercise

A designated task that may include movement(s), transitions(s), figure(s), and/or pattern(s) to be performed at designated gaits and variations of gaits, and sometimes at specific places in the arena (e.g., 20-meter circle at working trot, half-pass at collected canter, simple change of lead).

Expression

Increased impulsion, with harmony, balance, lightness, and cadence, giving artistic or dramatic effect.

Extended (Walk, Trot or Canter)

At trot and canter: A variation that shows maximum length of stride, frame, and phase of suspension. The tempo remains nearly the same as the collected gait.

At the walk: A variation with maximum length of stride and frame and showing the natural oscillation of the neck while maintaining contact. The hind feet clearly touch the ground in front of the hoofprints of the forefeet.

Falling In, Falling on Inside Shoulder, Falling Out, Falling Over Outside Shoulder, Popped Shoulder

Lateral deviation of the forehand/forelegs associated with a loss of balance.

Figure

Geometrical component, such as a circle, change of rein, or serpentine. A figure is not the same as a movement. See *Movement*.

Flexibility

Range of motion of the joints and the ability to move the joints freely. Also described as *Suppleness*.

Flexion

In the limbs: articulation of a joint or joints so that the angle between the bones becomes smaller.

At the poll there are three directions of movement, the first two of which are described as flexions and involve motion of the atlanto-occipital joint:

1. Direct or longitudinal flexion brings the chin toward the underside of the neck.
2. Lateral flexion closes the angle between the cheek and the side of the neck.
3. Rotation (twisting) occurs at the atlanto-occipital joint and causes tilting of the head.

In the rest of the spine, movement occurs in the same three directions as the poll; flexion-extension (rounding-hollowing), lateral (left-right) bending, and twisting. The combination of these movements creates carriage, bend, displacement of the ribcage, etc.

Fluid/Fluent

Flowing or moving smoothly and easily in a consistent manner.

Footfall

A hoof landing on the ground.

Forward

Moving or having the intention of moving forward toward the direction in which the horse is facing (in contrast to sideways, backward, or standing still). It does not indicate the speed at which the horse gets there. References to specifics can more accurately express *how* the horse should proceed in a forward direction (e.g., impulsion, energy, freedom, reach, length of stride, reach into the contact, responsiveness to the leg, and tempo).

Frame

The outline of the horse, which can be shorter and more uphill or longer and more level depending on the degree of collection or extension, and level of training.

Freedom

The reach, scope, and lack of constriction in the horse's movement.

Free Walk

A variation of walk in which the horse is allowed complete freedom to stretch over the back towards the bit, lowering its head and neck, showing the natural oscillation of the neck. The hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the prints of the forefeet, with strides longer than in the medium walk. Can be performed on a long rein (maintaining contact) or loose rein (with a loop in the rein – no contact).

From Behind

Shorthand for “energy/activity/thrust from the hind legs” (as in “needs more ‘from behind’”).

Gait

Characteristic limb coordination pattern recognized by the sequence and timing of the footfalls. Gaits used in dressage are walk, trot and canter.

Half-Halt

A momentary effect of the aids that increases the attention and improves the balance of the horse.

Harmony

Used in reference to the relationship between horse and rider, emphasizing positive physical as well as mental/emotional connection between the pair showing rapport, trust, and confidence in one another and resulting in a sense of synchrony, contentment and unity.

Hasty

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

Hollow Back

Sagging or depressed back caused by slackness of the abdominal muscles or by sustained contraction of the back muscles, impeding swing and elasticity.

Horizontal Balance

A longitudinal balance between downhill and uphill.

Hovering Trot

See *Passage-Like Trot*.

Hurried

Refers to tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

Hyperflexion (Rollkur)

Exaggerated flexion of the horse's neck with a low poll and the face far behind the vertical.

Impulsion (Engagement and the Desire to Go Forward)

Used to describe the transmission of an eager and energetic, yet controlled, propulsive thrust generated from the hindquarters into the athletic movement of the horse. Impulsion only exists in gaits with suspension.

See Pyramid of Training

Inside, Inner, Inwards

1. The direction towards which the horse should be positioned (laterally) or bent.
2. The side of the horse that is toward the center of the arena.

The former takes precedence if the two are not the same (as in counter-canter or renvers).

Irregular

Impure, unlevel, or uneven. Can be momentary or pervasive and may or may not be due to unsoundness. Should not be used to mean unsteadiness of tempo.

Late

Execution after the aids or after the prescribed place or letter. Can be applied to flying changes and transitions.

Late Behind

In flying changes, the hind legs change after the forelegs change.

Late in Front

In flying changes, the fore legs change leads a full stride after the hind legs change.

Lateral

1. To the side, as in flexion, bend, suppleness, or direction of movement.
2. Impurity of the gait in which the lateral pairs of legs swing forward somewhat simultaneously. If the lateral pairs of legs move in sync at the walk, this is called pacing. Lateral impurity can appear at both the walk and canter and is very rarely seen at the trot.

Leaning In

The horse tilts to the inside of a turn or circle, like a motorcycle.

Lengthening of Stride

A variation of trot and canter in which the stride, frame, and phases of suspension are longer than in the working gait, but the degree of uphill balance required of the medium is not expected. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the working gaits.

Level Balance

A longitudinal balance between downhill and uphill. Same as *Horizontal Balance*.

Lift

Applied in piaffe and passage to address the height to which the forelegs are raised. Can also be applied to the forehand when referring to balance.

Lightness

Refers to one of the following:

1. Horse's lightness on its feet.
2. Lightness of the rider's aids/horse's responsiveness to light aids.
3. Lightness/lift of the forehand.

Long and Low

An exercise in which the horse lowers its head and neck, reaching forward and downward into contact on a longer rein.

Longitudinal

In the lengthwise, as opposed to lateral, dimension, that is from front to back or back to front.

Loosening

Freedom from negative physical and mental/emotional tension; relaxation.

Marching

Taking purposeful steps in the walk.

Medium (Walk, Trot, or Canter)

At trot and canter, a variation of moderate lengthening with a longer stride than in the collected or working gaits but shorter than in extension. The uphill balance is greater than in the working gait or lengthenings, and the length of frame and suspension is between that of suspension and extension. The movement produced is rounder than that of extension. The tempo should remain nearly the same as in the collected gait.

At the walk, a variation of moderate lengthening with a length of stride and frame between that of the collected and extended walks and showing the natural longitudinal oscillation of the neck.

Methodology

The system that a judge uses to give scores in a consistent and standardized fashion.

Mobility

Easy maneuverability/nimbleness of the shoulders/forehand/forelegs made possible by narrowing and shortening the horse's base of support.

Movement

1. Way of moving: the manner in which the horse moves over the ground.
2. Test movement: a section of a dressage test to be evaluated with one score on a score sheet.
3. Dressage movements: these are the leg-yield, rein back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on the haunches, half-pass (trot or canter), flying change(s), pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe, and passage.

For the purpose of the current freestyle tests, *forbidden movement(s)* refers to #2.

MPM or MPH

Meters per minute or miles per hour – measures of speed.

Nodding/Bobbing

A rhythmic up-and-down or backward and forward action of the horse's head and neck which is not part of the normal mechanic of the gait. It may be caused by lack of impulsion, constraint, or lameness.

Obedience

A willingness in the horse to accept the aids of the rider and perform the exercises asked of them.

On the Aids

The horse reacts to the rider's aids willingly, confidently, immediately, and correctly.

On the Bit

Acceptance of the contact without resistance or evasion with a stretched topline and lateral and longitudinal flexion as required. The horse's face is, as a rule, slightly in front of the vertical.

On the Forehand

Poor longitudinal balance where the center of gravity is displaced towards the forelegs. Same as *Downhill*.

Out Behind

Hind legs operating too far behind the horse.

Outline

The profile or silhouette of the horse, showing the horse's carriage or posture.

Outside, Outer, Outwards

1. The direction away from which the horse should be positioned or bent.
2. The side that is away from the center of the arena.

The former takes precedence if the two are not the same (as in counter-canter or renvers).

Overbent/Overbending

Excessive lateral displacement of the neck relative to the horse's body, occurring in the neck itself or at the base of the neck, causing lack of apparent uniformity of the lateral curve of the bent horse.

Note: In the U.S., the term overbent is based on the amount of lateral bending, and the term over flexed is based on the amount of longitudinal flexion (rounding). In other countries, overbent is often used to indicate excessive longitudinal flexion at the poll and/or upper joints of the neck.

Overflexed

Behind the vertical due to excessive longitudinal flexion at the poll and/or upper joints of the neck.

Overstep, Overstride, Overtrack

Placement of the hind foot in front of the print of the forefoot.

Over the Back or Topline

The horse stretching and rounding the back or topline.

Over-Turned (Over-Rotated)

Rotated more than 180 degrees in a half-pirouette or more than 360 degrees in a full pirouette.

Passage-Like or "Passagey" Trot

A trot in which there is hesitation in the forward swing of the diagonal pairs of legs so that they appear to hover momentarily. Not to be confused with a correctly cadenced trot in which the rhythm is accentuated by a more expressive action of the limbs but without a pause in their forward swing.

Phase(s)

Limb:

- Stance Phase – when the hoof is grounded
- Swing Phase – when the hoof is in the air

Support: Periods of the stride when one or more limbs are in contact with the ground. The supporting limbs change each time a hoof contacts or leaves the ground. Each gait has a typical sequence of support phases during a stride.

Suspension: A phase of the stride when all limbs are in the swing phase, i.e. no hooves are in contact with the ground.

Pivoting

Failure to pick up a foot in the rhythm of the gait, such that the horse swivels around the grounded (or “stuck”) foot. Used in reference to pirouettes or turns on the haunches or forehand.

Poll

The highest point of the horse’s skull (the occipital crest). In common dressage usage, however, “flexion at the poll” refers to the longitudinal or lateral flexion at the joint between the skull and the first cervical vertebra, the atlanto-occipital joint. See *Flexion*.

Position

1. Lateral flexion at the poll so that the horse “looks” to the side, e.g., “positioned right” or “positioned left.”
2. Posture of the rider.

Purity

The correctness of the rhythm and timing of the footfalls and phases of the gait.

Pushing Out (Out Behind)

Hind legs are operating too far behind the horse, which favors pushing at the expense of carrying.

Pyramid of Training

The Pyramid of Training (Training Scale) evolved as a means to illustrate the different steps/concepts which are essential ingredients in the correct and progressive training of a horse. It is important to realize that these “steps” are interrelated.

Quadrille

Team riding; choreography traditionally performed by four horses, though groups may have six, eight, ten or even twelve horses. *For special terminology related to this, see Quadrille Rules and Guidelines, available on the USDF website.*

Quality (of Gait)

The quality of a gait refers to its freedom, elasticity, flexibility, looseness, fluency, and amplitude. Not the same as purity or correctness.

Quick

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

Rapid

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

Reach

Refers to forward or lateral reach of the forelimbs, hind limbs, neck/poll, muzzle, or one side of the horse (as in “needs reach into outside rein”). May be used to refer to any of these individually.

Regularity

Purity of the gait. At walk and trot, denotes symmetry in terms of evenness of the length of the steps, levelness of the height of the steps, and equality of the time interval between the steps of the left and right forelimbs or left and right hind limbs.

Relax/Relaxation

1. Referring to the horse’s mental/emotional state: calm, without anxiety or nervousness.
2. Referring to the horse’s physical state: commonly used to indicate the absence of muscular contraction other than that needed for optimal carriage, strength, and range and fluency of movement.

Usually, the physical and mental/emotional states go hand in hand.

Release

As used in tests, the brief release of the contact, where in the rider in one clear motion extends the hand(s) forward along the crest of the horse’s neck, then rides for several strides without contact. Its purpose is to demonstrate that, even with loose reins, the horse maintains its carriage, balance, and tempo. This corresponds with the German expression “*Überstreichen*.”

Resistance

Physical opposition to the contact or to the aids of the rider (e.g., against or above the bit). Can be momentary or pervasive, willful or unintentional.

Restrained/Restraint

Prevention (of the horse by the rider) from moving freely in any direction – usually a function of pulling backward on the reins.

Rhythm (Regularity and Tempo)

The characteristic sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait.

See Pyramid of Training

Rocking/Rocking Horse Canter

A canter in which the neck/forehand goes too much up and down as a result of lack of sufficient ground coverage or engagement, or interference by the rider.

Roundness

1. The convexity of the profile of the horse’s topline, which is accompanied by concavity of the underline of the neck.
2. The circular (as opposed to linear or flat) quality characterizing the movements, action, or trajectory of the horse’s limbs.
3. Shape or figure (such as a circle).

Running

Increased speed (MPM) due to quickening the tempo rather than lengthening the strides with appropriate periods of suspension. Usually used in reference to lengthened, medium, or extended trot or canter, or quickening the trot tempo before a canter depart.

Rushed

Refers to the tempo (strides per minute) unless otherwise noted.

Scope

Magnitude of range of motion. Same as *Amplitude*.

Seat

The seat is the base of the rider's support.

Self-Carriage

The state in which the horse carries itself in balance without taking support or balancing on the rider's hand.

Slack

1. Used in reference to the reins: without contact.
2. Used in reference to the condition of the musculature (e.g., "slack loin").

Snatching

1. Horse attempting to jerk the reins through the rider's hands.
2. Lifting the leg(s) jerkily and sometimes excessively high.

Speed

Meters per minute or miles per hour, i.e. how much ground is covered per unit of time. The horse's speed can be changed by adjusting the length of stride, tempo, or both. Increased tempo does not necessarily mean increased speed. Not to be confused with impulsion or tempo.

Step

The movement of a limb that transfers weight from one front or hind hoof to the other.

Stiff/Stiffness

The inability (as opposed to unwillingness) to flex the joints or stretch the musculature to the degree and in the way required to perform the task at hand. The opposite of suppleness. Not to be confused with tension, resistance, or bracing.

Straightness (Improved Alignment and Equal Lateral Suppleness on Both Reins)

A horse is said to be straight when the footfalls of the forehand and the hindquarters are appropriately aligned on straight and curved lines and when his longitudinal axis is in line with the straight or curved track on which he is ridden.

See Pyramid of Training

Stride

Cycle of movements that is completed when the horse's legs return to their initial position. Length of stride refers to the amount of ground covered by the entire cycle.

Strung Out

The outline of the horse is too elongated, resulting from a lack of correct connection and balance suitable to the level of training.

Stuck

Instead of being raised in the rhythm of the gait, a foot remains on the ground throughout the entire stride. Usually applied to the walk pirouette and turns on the haunches.

Submission

The horse's willing cooperation and harmony with the rider, demonstrating an attentive and confident attitude. Willingness to perform the required exercise as well as operate with correct basics. See *Basics*.

Suppleness (Elasticity and Freedom from Anxiety)

Suppleness indicates the absence of negative muscular tension, allowing the joints to move with harmonious flexibility.

See Pyramid of Training

Suspension

The moment or phase of the trot, canter or passage in which the horse has no feet on the ground.

Swaying

Related to a horse balancing on the forehand: In a series of flying changes, piaffe, or passage, the alternating lateral displacement of the shoulders and/or haunches.

Swinging Back

A springy motion that occurs when the thrust off the hind leg is transmitted through a stretched topline. The trunk muscles contract and release rhythmically rather than remaining either rigid or slack.

Swinging Head

The horse's muzzle moves left and right or in circles, indicating constraint or incorrect acceptance of contact/connection. Same as *Wagging*.

Tempo

The rate of repetition of the strides as may be measured by a metronome.

Tempo is measured by counting the number of times per minute that one of the hooves touches down (indicating completion of one full stride). Alternatively, at walk and trot, each emphasized beat of the stride may be counted.

Note: Tempo is often confused with rhythm, speed, or cadence.

Tense/Tenseness/Tension

1. Referring to the horse's mental/emotional state: anxious or nervous.
2. Referring to muscular tension: the state in which the muscles are contracted. Too much muscle tension or sustained muscular tension is not desirable. A certain amount of positive tension is needed for postural support and locomotion.

Usually, physical and mental/emotional tension go hand in hand.

Throughness/Through

The supple, elastic, unblocked, connected state of the horse's musculature and a willing mental state that permits an unrestricted flow of energy from back to front and front to back (circle of the aids), which allows the aids/influences to go through all parts of the horse.

See Pyramid of Training

Thrust

Propulsive forward and upward drive that improves throughout the levels from level balance to more uphill balance.

Tilting

Tipping or cocking the head (lowering one ear) – an evasion.

Topline

Profile from the poll to the tail along the top of the crest of the neck and along the spine. The horse lengthens or stretches its topline by rounding its neck and back and lifting its thoracic sling and belly.

Track(s)

1. The line(s) of hoof prints laid down as the foot or feet travel their individual paths(s). There are two different versions:
 - a. To address the line of travel of each leg in determining the number of paths of travel, as viewed by the observer as the horse approaches (e.g., three tracks for shoulder-in, four tracks for travers).
 - b. To address front or hind legs as *pair(s)*, such that lateral movements are considered “on two tracks,” in contrast to when the horse tracks straight.
2. Direction of travel, as in “track right” (when all corners are right turns and the right hand is toward the center of the arena).
3. Path next to the rail in an arena.

Tracking Up

The hind feet step into the prints of the forefeet.

Trailing

1. In half-pass and leg-yield, refers to a lack of parallelism to the long axis of the arena (as in trailing *haunches*).
2. The hind legs operating too far behind the horse, which favors pushing at the expense of carrying, especially in the lengthened, medium, and extended gaits (as in trailing *hind legs*).

Trajectory

The line of travel of the hoof from its lift-off to landing – the reach, height, and shape of the flight arc of the hoof.

Uneven

An irregularity in walk or trot in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically, the right leg making a different *length* of step than the left leg.

Unlevel

An irregularity in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically, the right leg making a different *height* of step than the left leg.

Uphill

Good longitudinal balance, with elevated forehead and a lowered croup (engaged hindquarters).

Wagging

The horse's muzzle, head and/or neck moves left and right or in circles, indicating constraint or incorrect acceptance of the contact/connection. Same as *Swinging Head*.

Wide Behind

The horse travels with the hind feet further apart than the front feet. This is an evasion of engagement.

Working (Trot or Canter)

A variation of gait in which the horse goes forward energetically but calmly, with a length of stride between that of the collected and medium gaits. A working trot should have at least a level balance (in contrast to the uphill balance of a collected trot).

Glossary of Musical Freestyle Judging Terms

Choreography**Balance (In Design)**

Fairly even use of right and left rein work and of the entirety of the arena, with elements distributed throughout.

Choreography

Arrangement of gaits, variations of gaits, movements, figures, transitions, combinations and patterns that comprise a program.

Combination

Direct connection of any movement or figure with another movement or figure.

Creativity

Elements combined in imaginative ways; interesting or uncommon lines or patterns performed in a manner unlike a current standard test.

Degree of Difficulty

Well-calculated risks; the horse/rider team performs a single element or a combination of elements in a way that exceeds the expectation of the level.

Design Cohesiveness

Logical, coherent, recognizable construction of choreography.

Elements

Basic components that may be included in freestyle choreography, such as movements, figures, and transitions.

Harmony

The willing and uncoerced cooperation and partnership between horse and rider; the ability to accomplish the choreographic patterns with ease.

See Harmony in main glossary

Movement

1. The manner in which the horse moves over the ground; way of moving.
2. Test movement: a section of a dressage test to be evaluated with one score on a score sheet.
3. Dressage movements include leg-yield, rein-back, shoulder-in, travers, renvers, turn on the haunches, half-pass (trot or canter), flying change(s), pirouette (walk or canter), piaffe, and passage.

For the purpose of the current Freestyle tests, forbidden movements refers to item 2 above.

Pattern

Geometric design formed in the arena when movements, figures, and transitions are combined.

Test-Like

Directly repeating a combination or pattern from the current standard test of the same level or below, with no variation in its pattern or location.

Use of Arena

Utilizing the dressage arena space in its entirety; distributing the elements throughout the arena.

Music**Beat**

The underlying pulse of the music.

Cohesiveness

When music is linked by genre, theme or instrumentation.

Dynamics

Variations in the intensity of the music.

Genre

Category of music marked by a distinct style such as jazz, baroque, rock, etc.

Interpretation

The music expresses various gaits, and its phrasing and dynamics correlate with changes in the movements.

Lyrics

Use of words in a song.

Music Expresses Gaits

The tempo and/or rhythm of the music reflects the gaits.

Orchestration

Arrangement of music for performance by an orchestra or smaller groupings of instruments.

Phrasing

The way sequences of notes are grouped together to form units of melody. In dressage, it is when changes in movements are coordinated with changes in the musical phrasing.

Rhythm

The repeated pattern or grouping of musical beats.

See Rhythm in main glossary

Seamlessness

Cuts and transitions are smooth and create an overall flow to the music.

Style

Distinctive and identifiable form used in artistic expression.

Suitability

Appropriateness of the music to the type and character of the horse.

Symphony

Many sounds playing together; a major work for orchestra; large orchestra.

Syncopated

Shift in accent that occurs when a normally weak beat is stressed.

Tempo

Measured by a metronome, the speed of the music's beat.

See Beat and Tempo in main glossary

Theme

Distinct, recurring and unifying quality or idea.

Vocal

Human voice used as an instrument.