

Tour Guide

FEI small-tour, medium-tour, U25 tour, and big-tour test combinations explained. Also: What's the difference between the Intermediate A and B tests?

By Lilo Fore

The *Fédération Equestre Internationale* (FEI) groups dressage tests into four combinations, or “tours,” of increasing difficulty: small, medium, Under 25, and big.

With the increasing numbers of FEI tests, it can be confusing for competitors and show management to figure out which tests are used in, or combined, for which tours. In this article, I'll sort them out for you.

Medium tour. These are tests of “advanced standard.” The object of these tests is to prepare the horse for the Grand Prix, which is a test of the “highest standard.”

There is no freestyle in the medium tour. Permitted tests and combinations:

- Intermediate A
- Intermediate B
- Int. A + Int. B

GP 16-25 + Grand Prix Freestyle.

Big tour. This refers to tests of the “highest standard.” Permitted tests and combinations:

- I-II
- I-II + GP
- I-II + Grand Prix + GP Freestyle or Grand Prix Special
- GP + GP Special or GP Freestyle
- GP + GP Special
- GP + GP Freestyle
- GP + GP Special + GP Freestyle
- Nations Cup formula at a CDIO: GP + GP Special or GP Freestyle
- Championship formula at a CDIO or FEI championship: GP + GP Special + GP Freestyle.

Intermediate A and B Tests Explained

Now we can discuss the reasoning behind the creation of the Intermediate A and B tests.

The FEI and many dressage judges felt that there was too big of a jump from the small tour (PSG and I-I) to the big tour (I-II, GP, and GP Special). Intermediate II was not being used very much, as it was in many opinions not a very rider- or horse-friendly test. The I-II was changed and is now more rider-friendly and easier to judge. However, the revised I-II test did not solve the problem that there still was a big jump from the small tour of “medium and medium/advanced standard” to the big tour of the “highest standard.”

The biggest challenges, of course, were the piaffe and passage tour and the one-tempi changes. The level of collection in the PSG and I-I horse is not as confirmed as that of the Grand Prix horse, which in many instances created problems for the green FEI horse not yet strong enough to carry itself in the required GP level of collection.

The FEI and judges realized that young GP horses should not be asked to piaffe too much on the spot at first, or to perform the difficult piaffe-passage transitions that require the highest level of thoroughness, engagement, and collection. To encourage horses



SIZING IT UP: The FEI has developed four “tours” to help horses and riders progress successfully from Prix St. Georges to Grand Prix

Small tour. This classification refers to the Prix St. Georges test of “medium standard” and the Intermediate I tests of “advanced medium standard.” The permitted tests and test combinations are:

- Prix St. Georges
- PSG + Intermediate I
- PSG + I-I Freestyle
- PSG + I-I or I-I Freestyle
- PSG + I-I + I-I Freestyle
- I-I
- I-I + I-I Freestyle.

Int. A + Intermediate II
Int. B + I-II
Int. A + Int. B + I-II.
Under 25. The U25 tour is for riders between the ages of 16 and 25. Permitted tests and combinations:

- Int. A + Grand Prix 16-25
- Int. B + GP 16-25
- Int. A + GP 16-25 + Grand Prix Freestyle
- Int. B + GP 16-25 + GP Freestyle
- I-II + GP 16-25
- I-II + GP 16-25 + GP Freestyle

to maintain the desire to go forward in these movements, the FEI decided to create Intermediate-level tests that allow the horse to travel up to two meters in the piaffe. The A and B tests call for seven to 10 steps of piaffe, but when traveling forward two meters, the steps are really what we call “half-steps.”

Although the horse is allowed to advance two meters in the piaffe, the tests do not require it to do so. If the rider is capable of showing a true piaffe of excellent quality performed more or less “on the spot,” we have to reward this with the maximum score. What riders do have to ensure is that the piaffe starts out of the walk, as stated in the test.

In the Intermediate A and B tests, the transition to passage occurs out of a collected trot. In the A test, the passage is performed on a curved line to help the horse to stay supple and more controlled on the rider’s aids, and to keep the horse from pushing through the aids. In the B test, the passage occurs on a straight line and

through the corners of the short side. Passage therefore is slightly more difficult in the B test.


In the Intermediate A and B tests, as in the Intermediate II test, the rider is given the opportunity to develop the passage between two letters instead of having to start at a specific marker, as in the Grand Prix.

There is one controversy about the placement of the piaffe on the short side at C in the Intermediate A and B tests. Riders feel that horses become confused

having to walk into the piaffe at C, when in the big tour they must walk in collection through the short side and could potentially anticipate the piaffe at C. I understand the concern and admit that it could potentially become confusing to the horse, with anticipation disturbing the quality of the collected walk in the Grand Prix test.

What is horse-friendly in the A and B tests, however, is the transition to extended walk coming from the collected trot, not the passage,

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as in the big-tour tests. The A and B tests also offer a friendly introduction to the one- and two-tempi changes: seven two-tempis and seven one-tempis—a lower number than that required in the big-tour tests.

In the A test, canter pirouettes are placed on the short diagonal as in the I-I test: pirouette on the center line with a flying change. In the B test, the pirouettes are performed on the long diagonal MXK with a flying change at X between the pirouettes. This progression prepares the horse for the later required pirouettes with a flying change in between as required in the Grand Prix—of course more difficult in GP because they are ridden on the center line. I think the canter movements in the Intermediate A and B tests are well chosen to help rider and

horse progress to the higher standard of tests.

Building a Progression

The Intermediate A and B are not easy tests, but they contain many well-thought-out exercises. Some horses and riders may find them easier than others, but the FEI and its judges were striving to give riders the opportunity to gradually introduce their horses to the big-tour tests and to let both become comfortable with the greater requirements as they prepare to step up to Grand Prix. All in all, I think it is a definite step in the right direction. ▲

Lilo Fore, of Santa Rosa, CA, is an FEI 5 judge and an examiner in the USDF Instructor/Trainer Program. She was a*

member of the ground jury at the 2014 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, and she was president of the ground jury at the 2015 Reem Acra FEI World Cup Dressage Final.

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