

## Is Pas de Deux for You?

*Want to double your dressage fun? Read on!*

By Anne Moss

**P**as de deux (a musical dressage ride done with a pair of horses and riders) is the most fun to be had at a dressage show—but don't tell the quadrille riders! Dressage is fun; adding music for a freestyle makes it super fun; and riding to tunes with a pal is the best thing going down the center line.

Have you ever gone to a dressage show and things just didn't go well? I have a clear memory of feeling per-

fectly dismal after getting a crummy Second Level score at the end of a long and expensive weekend. Granted, the ride (and, more to the point, my riding) matched the score pretty well that day, but the long and the short of it was that I was not having fun with my horse.

This has never happened to me showing pas de deux. I always have fun, and there are some great reasons for that that I want to share with you.

### You've Got a Friend

Training and showing with a friend completely changes the competitive experience. I know I'll have a good time and that I'll come out of the arena smiling.

Many horses gain confidence in company, too. My experienced horse, Helium, was a great training and showing buddy for my PDD partner Deb's green horse, Oz. Later, after Oz had himself become a schoolmaster, he acted as leader to show my new, green mare the ropes. PDD teams often consist of horses showing at different levels, and they can show as a PDD at one level below the one at which the greenest horse is competing.

### Creating the Pas de Deux

The creative collaboration in designing and preparing the PDD ride is a treat. Here's your chance to show off what you and your horses do well as a pair.

It takes a minimum of eight weeks of weekly or twice-weekly practice to get a ride ready to show; before that, of course, comes planning the pattern and coordinating the music. Pattern design is a great artistic challenge, and it is always fun to see what your horses think of the track you have drawn for them. I tend to be more creative than realistic (or so says my horse), so my original pattern is never the improved and more rideable version that ends up in the show ring. Be flexible as you choreograph, and make it fun and easy for your horse. Many crowd- and judge-pleasing movements and figures are easy to ride.

Before you get started, though, it's a good idea to read the fine print. Read the PDD test rules ([usdf.org/docs/ed-](http://usdf.org/docs/ed-)



HAPPINESS IS: Pas de deux buddies Sierra Cullen on Painted Lily (left) and Kameryn Stockar on Annie chose a "Happy" theme for their test at Straight Forward Dressage's (PA) July schooling show

#### Digital Edition Bonus Content



Watch the memorable 1980s pas de deux by the legendary Dr. Reiner Klimke on Ahlerich and Anne-Grethe Jensen on Marzog.

#### Podcast Alert



Check out our podcast about Pas de Deux at [usdf.podbean.com](http://usdf.podbean.com).

## Pas de Deux Tips and Tricks

**H**ere are my top hints for creating, practicing, and performing your best possible pas de deux.

- Put your practice schedule on your calendar and stick to it.
- Plan for two more sessions than you think you need to put the finishing touches on the ride.
- Take the pattern and a pen to each practice session, and record any changes. If you don't write them down as they happen, you may forget them.
- Recruit a ground person to help with the music and pattern when you practice. Having a helper is a tremendous time saver.
- Save your horses some arena miles by walking the pattern on foot together before you ride. Then walk the pattern astride as a pair before you warm up.
- Ride your trot and canter warm-up side by side to get your horses and yourselves into the PDD groove.
- Practice trot and canter sections of the ride separately at first, with breaks to walk and recap.
- Recap often during practice. Ask your partner how you can do a better job riding with her. Solicit suggestions of how the pattern could be made easier for her horse.
- Name each movement or figure; it may be easier to memorize words than the entire pattern.
- Make the choreography interesting by including all of the following: side-by-side work, in-line work ("follow the leader"), mirror-image patterns, staggered alignment, and head-to-head movements. Strive to remain close to each other; otherwise, the beauty of the ride may be lost.
- Know a musician? Ask him or her to record music for your ride.
- Don't worry about having your horses match. The riders' attire can pull the pair together visually, and you will be amazed at how two very different types or sizes of horses will start to work as one.
- You may need to compromise on the music's matching the footfalls, as it is unlikely that both horses will have exactly the same tempos.
- Give at least two copies of your music to the show announcer. Label each copy with your show number, names, class number, phone number, and address.
- Make sure you know who's bringing the music to the practice session, to avoid "I thought you had it!"
- Finding a show that offers pas de deux can be a challenge, but many show managers will add the class if you tell them that you want to compete. Offer to put up prize money for the PDD class, and watch the pairs come out of the woodwork.
- Your PDD pair needs a separate number and entry. Check with the show secretary.
- Sound systems at shows vary greatly. Make no assumptions. Bring a portable stereo that can be miked into the show's sound system if needed.
- Hold a dress rehearsal at home or at a schooling show before the real deal.
- Allow 30 more minutes of primping time than you'd give yourself if you were riding solo. If possible, recruit a groom or horse-holder to help out.

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## Pas de Deux Resources

For more pas de deux information and inspiration, check out the following:

*Creating Musical Freestyles Start to Finish* by Gayle Welsh (USDF, 2000, 34 pp.)

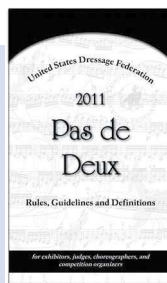
*Dancing with Your Horse* by Libby Anderson and Leigh Ann Hazel-Groux (Half Halt Press, 2003, 194 pp.)

*Riding to Music* by Janet MacDonald (J.A. Allen, 1987, 96 pp.)

*Riding to Music: Music and Choreography for the Individual Kur, Pas de Deux, and the Classical Quadrille* by Werner Storl (Breakthrough, 1987, 156 pp.)

USDF 2011 Pas de Deux Rules, Guidelines and Definitions (USDF, 2011)

And don't overlook the inspiration to be found in watching pas de deux. Do a YouTube search for "dressage pas de deux" and explore your findings.



There is nothing wrong with using a professional designer, but a do-it-yourself PDD can be a rewarding effort. However, you may not have to start from scratch. It may be possible to use one rider's existing freestyle music and tweak the pattern into a PDD. Quadrille riders can sometimes repurpose their quad music and pattern for just two horses. Beginning PDD teams may be able to borrow a pattern and music from another team that no longer uses it. Hundreds of hours go into designing a ride, and it is a pity for a pattern and music to go dormant when a team is finished with it. (On that note, be sure to save your music and pattern together in one file. You will invariably create many updated music and pattern files, so rename the file or update the date when you save the changes.)

### Make Some Magic

With a good pattern, willing horses, synchronized riders, enchanting music, and some spiff and polish, you can create a tremendous performance that is

ucation/other/PDDRGD.pdf) and requirements ([usdf.org/docs/tests/dressage/pasdedeux.pdf](http://usdf.org/docs/tests/dressage/pasdedeux.pdf)) carefully, noting both what's required and what's forbidden at the level you will be showing.

**Music or pattern first?** Some teams start with the music and script the ride to match it; others set the music to the pattern. I find that doing a little of both works really well.

If you and your partner will be creating the ride yourselves, without the help of a professional freestyle designer, there are many music editing programs that do a great job—but be ready to put many hours into the project. Videotape the pattern being ridden a few times and time the walk, trot, and canter sections as a starting point for selecting music that fits.

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not only a ball to ride but (one hopes) will delight the judge, inspire spectators, and bring joy to your heart.


Now that you have an impressive ride put together and have ridden it well a few times at shows, don't be surprised if you get invited to do an exhibition ride at a local venue. This can be the most fun, as the costume closet is wide open for you and your horse, and you will finally have the big audience that you deserve. Exhibitions are one of the few ways to expose the general public to dressage, and they are great way to give your horse a taste of the limelight without the pressure of competition.

So PDD on! There is so much to learn, so much creativity to explore, and double the fun than you and your horse will ever have going it alone. ▲

*Longtime freestyle, pas de deux, and quadrille enthusiast Anne Moss is a member of the USDF Freestyle Committee and the chair of the USDF Historical Recognition Committee. She is also a USEF "r" dressage judge. She lives in Coatesville, PA.*

## Learn to Recognize Saddle Fit Issues

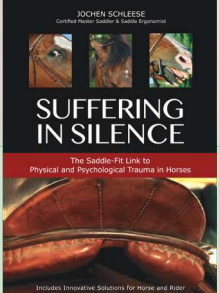
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