



# UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION™

## USDF Assessing Degree of Difficulty in USDF Freestyles

### Training to Fourth Levels

*For Tests Effective December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2026*

Degree of Difficulty must be assessed not only in terms of configurations that go beyond the minimum for the level (e.g., a steeper angle in half pass or a more difficult line in counter canter), but also for demanding transitions and combinations. The choice of configurations should be within the capabilities of the horse to perform correctly and harmoniously. High difficulty should not be rewarded when the configuration or demand goes beyond the horse's ability, and indeed may have a negative influence. When all the criteria for the level have been met correctly, then the degree of difficulty is at least a 7. If the attempted configurations and transitions go beyond the horse's ability, then the degree of difficulty will be reduced accordingly.

***From the USDF Freestyle Rules and Guidelines: Degree of difficulty (coefficient ranges from 1 to 4 depending on the level)***

*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.*

In USDF Freestyles, riders can ride with reins in one hand. This can be used to raise the degree of difficulty if movements are performed well.

Often the combination of movements, transitions, and appropriate repetition of single exercises are used to increase the Degree of Difficulty. However, excessive repetitions could cause an imbalance in the choreography. Below are some but not all of the possible movements and transitions that could raise the degree of difficulty. Please note that if these are not performed well, they could lower the total score.

Any movement or transition found only in tests above the chosen level are forbidden unless listed under Additionally Allowed.

## TRAINING LEVEL

### **REQUIRED MOVEMENTS:**

- Free walk-20 meters continuous
- Medium walk- 20 meters continuous
- 20-meter circle in working trot and canter (right and left)
- Serpentine in trot with loops no smaller than 15 meters
- Stretch forward & downward on a 20-meter circle (in trot)
- Halts with salute on centerline, beginning and end of tests

### **ADDITIONALLY ALLOWED MOVEMENTS:**

- Trot-halt-trot
- Trot-walk-trot
- Canter trot canter (12m minimum of trot)

### **SOME POSSIBLE MOVEMENTS THAT IF PERFORMED WELL COULD INCREASE THE SCORE FOR DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:**

- Serpentine loops smaller than 20 meters (smaller than 15 meters are forbidden)
- Figures and transitions performed on center and quarter lines
- Combinations of figures and transitions, for instance, a 20-meter circle at canter followed by a transition of 20 meters of trot immediately followed by a 20-meter canter circle in the other direction

## FIRST LEVEL

### REQUIRED MOVEMENTS:

- Free walk-20 meters continuous
- Medium walk-20 meters continuous
- 10-meter circle at trot (right and left)
- Leg-yield in trot (right and left)
- Lengthen stride in trot on a straight line
- 15-meter circle in canter (right and left)
- Change lead through trot (right and left)
- Lengthen stride in canter on a straight line
- Halt with salutes on centerline, beginning and end of test

### ADDITIONALLY ALLOWED MOVEMENTS:

- Lengthen trot and/or canter on curved line
- Canter serpentine
- Counter-canter

### SOME POSSIBLE MOVEMENTS THAT IF PERFORMED WELL COULD INCREASE THE SCORE FOR DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

- Zig-zag leg-yield
- Movements performed on center and quarter lines
- Combinations of circles, leg-yield, and changes of directions
- Counter-canter patterns
- Unusual placement of transition between trot and canter

## SECOND LEVEL

### REQUIRED MOVEMENTS:

- Free walk-20 meters continuous
- Medium walk-20 meters continuous
- Shoulder-in in collected trot (12 meters minimum)
- Travers in collected trot (12 meters minimum)
- Medium trot on a straight line
- Simple change of lead (right and left)
- Counter-canter in collected canter (right and left)
- Medium canter on a straight line
- Halts with salutes on centerline, beginning and end of test

### ADDITIONALLY ALLOWED MOVEMENTS:

- Half-turn on haunches (no more than 180 degrees)
- Renvers
- Medium canter and trot on a curved line

### SOME POSSIBLE MOVEMENTS THAT IF PERFORMED WELL COULD INCREASE THE SCORE FOR DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

- Combinations of lateral movements (shoulder-in, travers, renvers)
- Combinations of lateral movements to medium trot and medium trot to lateral movements
- Lateral movements on center and quarter lines
- Medium paces to counter-canter and counter-canter to medium paces
- More than the required number of simple changes
- Simple changes from counter-canter to counter-canter

## THIRD LEVEL

### REQUIRED MOVEMENTS:

- Medium walk-20 meters continuous
- Extended walk-20 meters continuous
- Shoulder-in - collected trot -12 meters minimum (right and left)
- Trot half-pass in collected trot (right and left)
- Extended trot on a straight line
- Canter half-pass in collected canter (right and left)
- Flying change of lead (right and left)
- Extended canter on a straight line
- Halts with salute on centerline, beginning and end of tests

### ADDITIONALLY ALLOWED MOVEMENTS:

- Walk half- pirouette (no more than 180 degrees)
- Half-pass zig-zag in trot
- Canter to halt
- Counter-change of hand in canter (only one change of direction)
- Medium trot and/or canter on a curved line
- Flying changes shown in sequence of every five strides or more

### SOME POSSIBLE MOVEMENTS IF PREFORMED WELL THAT COULD INCREASE THE SCORE FOR DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

- Combinations of lateral movements on center or quarter lines
- Half-pass zig-zag in trot
- Half-pass counter change of hand to shoulder-in
- More flying changes than required
- Flying changes shown in a sequence of five strides or more
- Flying changes in combination with other movements and or transitions
- Counter- canter to flying change to the opposite counter canter
- Canter to halt

## FOURTH LEVEL

### REQUIRED MOVEMENTS:

- Collected and extended walk-20 meters continuous
- Extended walk-20 meters continuous
- Shoulder-in in collected trot-12 meters minimum (right and left)
- Trot half-pass in collected trot (right and left)
- Extended trot on a straight line
- Canter half-pass in collected canter (right and left)
- Flying change of lead every fourth stride
- Flying change of lead every third stride
- Canter working half-pirouette
- Extended canter on a straight line
- Halts with salutes on centerline, beginning and end of tests

### ADDITIONALLY ALLOWED MOVEMENTS:

- Half-pirouette in canter
- Zig-zag in trot
- Counter change of hand in canter
- Halt to canter
- Medium trot and canter on a curved line

### SOME POSSIBLE MOVEMENTS THAT IF PERFORMED WELL COULD INCREASE THE SCORE FOR DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

- Half-pass zig-zag (THREE or more half-passes combined by changes of hand) in trot or canter
- Shoulder in, renvers and travers preformed off the track
- Extended trot on short diagonal to half-pass
- More than three flying changes in a sequence of either three or four tempi
- Flying changes on a curved line
- Combining extended canter with a transition to collected canter to a canter half-pirouette
- Using counter-canter in combination with other movements