



NAMEF - Guide for dressage scribes

Judge and scribe – “a team”

Judges depend upon the scribe to be quickly, accurately, legibly and to quietly record the marks and comments made about each test. Judges are grateful for the volunteer’s help and are usually willing to answer any questions a scribe might have in relation to the role they perform.

Conversations between judge and scribe

It is the Judge’s responsibility to judge the test. It is not appropriate for the scribe to comment on the judge’s decision, nor to question that decision. It is what the judge sees that matters, so if a judge does not see a mistake, do not comment. In addition, any comments (written or verbal) made by the judge while in the judge’s box are strictly between the judge and the rider. Never carry these conversations outside the judge’s box (confidentiality is of utmost importance between judge and scribe)

Never volunteer information about the competitor or the horse, even if asked by the judge.

Wait for the judge to set the tone as to whether conversation will be encouraged between tests or during breaks. Most judges are helpful and friendly and will initiate some small talk, but some need time to review tests or just clear their minds. While it is tempting for the scribe to ask questions about their own riding or a particular horse problem, don’t do it!

Watching the test

Writing takes concentration to accurately record the marks and comments. It is not possible for a scribe to watch the test in its entirety while recording the marks and comments.

The scoring process

The scribe must quickly and legibly record only the comments the judge makes, without adding or deleting anything. All judges have their own style for giving comments and marks on a ride. Some judges give so many comments that the writer may have difficulty keeping up. In this case, the scribe should be sure to record the marks as soon as they are given, and then continue with the comments. In the event that the judge fails to give a mark for a movement, the scribe should be cognisant of the fact, and skip to the next movement. At the first opportunity the scribe should call the omission to the judge’s attention.

The marks

The judge’s marks will range from 0 to 10 with a ten being the maximum (best) mark that can be awarded for any one movement. It is optional for judges to use half marks (5,5) from 1 to 10. If you get only a full mark – record it as 5.0.

To more heavily emphasise a movement, some are ‘weighted’ with a coefficient of two (2), which are pre-printed on the test sheet. The scribe need not worry about the coefficients. All multiplications will be handled later by the scorers.

Collective marks at the end of the test and a few more general comments may be dictated to the scribe or written by the judge. However, most of the judges prefer to complete this part of the test sheet themselves.

Errors

An error occurs when a rider goes off course (rides the wrong pattern) or in some way does not perform the movement as described. The judge will notify the scribe when an error is given. An error is marked in addition to the regular mark. The points given for the movement where the error occurred are put into the ‘points’ box as usual. The word ERROR or EOC (Error of course) is put under remarks. For the first error (-2) are deducted; for the second (-4) and for the third, the competitor is eliminated (although the judge may allow the rider to continue). The total deduction will be entered by the scribe at the bottom of the page. In some cases the judge will also do this, and check that the error has been noted correctly.

Use of the voice (speaking to the horse or clicking of the tongue) is not an error of test, but will be penalised. At the judge’s discretion, simply write “use of voice” in the remarks column for the movement in which it occurs. Not all judges will deduct marks as not all will have heard the use of the voice. If the judge does hear, two marks will be deducted from the mark that would have been given for the movement. So that the competitor can see what would have been given for the movement then cross this out and reduce it by 2 marks. If you are not sure check with the judge at the end of the test.

Before the event

Familiarise yourself with basic dressage terms and how to spell them. Study the commonly used abbreviations listed. Dress in neat comfortable clothes. Turn off your mobile phone or put it on silent.

The competition begins

As each horse warms up by working around the arena before the ride begins, the scribe must check the horse's NF number to ensure it is the same marked on the sheet. The number will usually be on the bridle or the saddle cloth. If the numbers do not match, alert the judge. Make sure you use the correct sheet for the horse entering the arena. If a ride scratches or does not show up, write 'scratch' or 'no show' on the test sheet and hand it to the runner with the other test sheets. This way the scorer will not hold up the posting of competition results due to waiting for another test sheet. After the ride is complete, make sure there is a mark in every box. Make sure each test is signed by the judge before it is sent to the scorer. Any change of mark on the test must be initialed by the judge. If you make a mistake or the judge changes the mark – cancel the mark by putting a line through and re-write the mark. Check off each horse on the start list as it completes the test. Keep an eye on the scheduled time, and if the judge requests it, inform the judge whenever the competition is running behind more than a few minutes. If the runner has not picked up all the tests, the scribe is responsible for delivering the tests to the scorer during a break, at lunch or at the end of the day. Never leave the completed tests in the judge's box unattended.

The scribe should arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the competition they are scribing for and check with the OC (Organising Committee). Ask about the judging materials for that ring; test sheets, pen, updated start list or program. Also a bell if one is needed and you are scribing for the judge at C.

Once in the judge's box, the scribe should organise the work area and check for:

- at least two ink pens (no pencil)
- start list/program to follow the order to go with updated list of scratches and additions
- bell or whistle if seated at C
- test sheets, check to make sure that they are the correct test sheets for the judge and arena assigned. Also check to make sure that there are enough test sheets for the number of horses entered plus a couple of spares.
- make sure that the tests match the competitions scheduled in the program.
- check that there is an extra copy of each different test for the judge to follow as the ride progresses.
- make sure that all loose items are anchored down with a heavy object so that nothing blows in a sudden wind.
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When the judge arrives, introduce yourself, and take the time to ask any questions. Let the judge know that you have checked the items discussed above. Some judges will take this opportunity before the first competition or rider to give the scribe an idea of how comments and marks will be given.

Dressage scribe "quick-ref sheet"

Above bit/bridle	↑ - e.g. H↑bit
Balance	Bal – e.g. Not bal
Behind bit/bridle	← - e.g. ← bit
Centre line	CL – e.g. Good CL to X
Circle	O – e.g. O not round
Collected	Coll – e.g. Not really coll
Corner	∟ - e.g. Fell through ∟ C-H
Diagonal	Diag – e.g. Not st on diag
Disobedient	Disob – e.g. Disob at E
Downward Transition	↓ - e.g. trans
Engaged/Engagement	Eng – e.g. more eng
Expression	Exp – e.g. More exp in FC
Extended	Ext – e.g. More for ext
Flying Change	FC – e.g. More exp in FC
Forward	→ - e.g. Could be more →
Half Circle	½ O – e.g. Not flexed in ½ O
Half Pass	HP – e.g. ¼ trail in HP
Hind	H – e.g. Resting H/leg in halt
Impulsion	Imp – e.g. More imp
Irregular	Irreg – e.g. some irreg strides
Lengthening	Leng – e.g. Some leng shown
Medium	Med – e.g. Need more for Med
Quarters	¼s – e.g. ¼ in M-F
Regular	Reg – e.g. Reg strides
Rein Back	RB – e.g. RB not st
Resisting	Res – e.g. Res into halt
Shoulder-in	SI – e.g. SI not maintained
Simple Change	SC – e.g. No SC shown
Square	□ – e.g. Halt □but not st
Straight	St – e.g. Halt st but not □
Trailing	Trail – e.g. ¼s trail
Transition	Trans – e.g. Good trans to walk at C
Upward Transition	↑ trans
Vertical	Vert – e.g. Horse → vert