

Rule Change Type	Effective Date	Draft Received	Board Action
Standard	12/1/2025	1/30/2025	

Rule Change Intent

The current Western Dressage Freestyle rule is not well organized, and doesn't clarify all freestyle classes competitions can offer. This rewrite of the WD-9 Freestyle Subchapter offers more clear guidance of the rules that dictate all Musical Freestyle classes, including clarifying that costumes may only be permitted during specifically designated Costume Freestyle classes, and adds a Pairs Freestyle class that competition management can offer.

Proponent Details	Contact Information
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Linked Rules	Comments
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SUBCHAPTER WD-9 FREESTYLE

WD131 Western *Dressage* Musical Freestyle

1. A Western Dressage Freestyle is a performance utilizing the gaits and movements of the discipline ridden to music. Each test includes the required movements, gaits and paces of the standard Western Dressage Tests for that level. The competitor is absolutely free in the form and manner of the presentation they choose within a fixed time provided. The performance should clearly show the unity between rider and horse as well as harmony in all the movements and transitions. The horse and rider should appear as one; lightness of contact is the hallmark of Western Dressage Freestyle.
 - a. The competitor must declare to the management (and consequently the judge) at what level they will be riding. ***Horse/rider combinations competing in walk jog events are not eligible to compete at levels that include the lope and horses competing in lope classes are not eligible to compete in Intro Freestyle at the same competition.***
 - b. Music: The competitor must provide two (2) recordings of the music to which the Freestyle will be performed. Management must provide time for a sound check. ***In case of rider's music failing before or during a test and in cases where there is no backup system, the riders can, with permission of the judge at "C", leave the arena or start at a later time. There should be minimum interference with the starting times of the other riders and the affected riders should return to complete or restart their test during a scheduled break in the competition or at the end of the competition. The riders may decide whether to restart the test from the beginning or to commence from the point where the music failed. Judging must restart at the point of interruption, not changing marks already given. It is the rider's responsibility to notify the judge if there is an issue with the music once the test starts. This includes the wrong music or music that cuts out or is corrupted in some way. The riders should stop riding the test and let the judge at C know about the issue with the music.***
 - c. The Freestyle ride must not exceed the time limit listed on the test. Time begins when the horse moves forward out of the initial halt and ends with the final halt and salute. Both halts are mandatory. ***Movements performed after the time limit has elapsed will not be scored.***
 - d. The judge will provide two (2) sets of scores; one for the technical correctness of the movements performed and one for the artistic merit. ***Technical Execution Marks may be given in half or full points. Artistic Impression Marks may be given in one tenth (.1) points (recommended to decrease frequency of ties). In case of a tie, the higher total for "Artistic Impression" will break the tie.***
 - 1) The artistic score is comprised of several elements:
 - (a) Harmony between horse and rider.
 - (b) Choreography: use of arena, design and creativity. Not "test-like".
 - (c) Degree of difficulty: points are only awarded when the attempts are performed well.
 - (d) Music: suitability to the horse ***and cohesiveness***. Edits in music are smooth/flowing.
 - (e) Interpretation: music must express gaits and paces, ***with use of lyrics and dynamics to enhance performance.***
 - (f) ***Freestyles are to be ridden in the large (20 X 60 meter) ring unless otherwise specified in the prize list.***
 - 2) Technical correctness:
 - (a) Judged on the execution of required technical movements in the test i.e. figures, gaits/paces and transitions.
 - (b) Certain movements (leg yield, half-pass etc.) must be performed in both directions.
 - (c) Riders are permitted to switch from one hand to two hands or vice versa during their test.
2. Penalties:
 - a. Within 45 seconds of the entry bell the rider must either enter the arena, signal the sound engineer, or be eliminated. The rider must enter the arena within 20 seconds of the start of the music, or may be eliminated, at the discretion of the judge.
 - b. Time Limit Deductions: One (1) point is deducted from the total for artistic merit for exceeding the time limit. There is no minimum time, or specified deduction.
 - c. ***All Compulsory Elements for the level must be incorporated into the freestyle program. These are listed on the scoresheet under Technical Execution. Performing a dressage movement (including figures and transitions) only found in a higher-level test than the one being declared is strictly forbidden.*** Four (4) points will be deducted for forbidden movements and above the level movements. They are not cumulative and will not result in elimination. ***Any figures, pattern, combinations, or transitions composed of elements permitted in the declared level are permitted.***
 - d. ***The first and final halt and salute must be near the centerline facing C.***
3. ***Costumed Freestyle:***
Costumes are allowed only in specially designated costume classes and only if permitted in the prize

list. Costumes should be designed to enhance the theme of the ride and interpretation of the music. All tack rules in WD121 and WD122 apply to Costumed freestyle. Officials may request removal of any accessories they consider unsafe for other horses and/or riders in the warm up ring. Colorful leg wraps, ribbons, flowers etc. may be used as part of the costume. Riders are encouraged to wear a costume or themed attire, but specific style is left up to their discretion. Headgear is optional. Boots or shoes with a discernable heel must be worn.

4. *Pairs Freestyle:*

Pairs Freestyle is an artistic program created to present two horses and riders performing together. Pairs Freestyle must include movements and figures choreographed to meet the technical requirements of the particular level with music chosen to highlight the pair. It is judged according to the "Technical Execution" (performance as a pair, required elements, impulsion and submission), and the "Artistic Impression" (Harmony, Choreography, Music and Interpretation). It is performed in a standard dress age arena (20x60 m) unless otherwise specified in the prize list. A copy of the program is not required to be submitted in advance. Current WDAA scoresheets must be used. Pairs Freestyle may be offered at any level.

- a. *Competitors must declare the level they are riding at. Horses competing in walk jog events are not eligible to compete at levels that include the lope.*
- b. *Time: There is no minimum time requirement. There is a maximum time limit of five minutes for Intro, Basic, and Level 1 and six minutes for Level Two and higher. Movements performed after the time limit has elapsed will not be scored. One point will be deducted from the total points for "Artistic Impression" for exceeding the time limit. The first rider must enter the arena or signal the sound engineer within 45 seconds of the entry bell or the team may be eliminated. The first rider must enter the arena within 20 seconds of the start of the music or the team may be eliminated at the discretion of the Judge. Pairs must salute the judge at C at the beginning and end of the test. The program is timed and judged from the move off the initial halt and salute. Timing and judging will cease at the final salute.*
- c. *Music: Music is mandatory. Refer to WD131.1(b).*
- d. *Equipment and turnout: Attire and equipment must conform with Federation rules, with the following exceptions: Colorful leg wraps may be used. Costumes are allowed only in designated costume classes and only if permitted in the prize list. Similarity of equipment and turnout will be considered in the scoring. Riding with one hand is permitted. Riders in a Pairs Freestyle are permitted to hold hands for the duration of one movement when safe to do so, during each test*