

Rule Change Type	Effective Date	Draft Received	Board Action
Standard	12/1/2025	5/5/2025	Approved 6/17/2025

Rule Change Intent

The purpose of the rule change to DR125, DR126 and the Levels Chart is to identify current needs and trends in the sport and the development of new best practices for competition management and officials.

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Linked Rules	Comments
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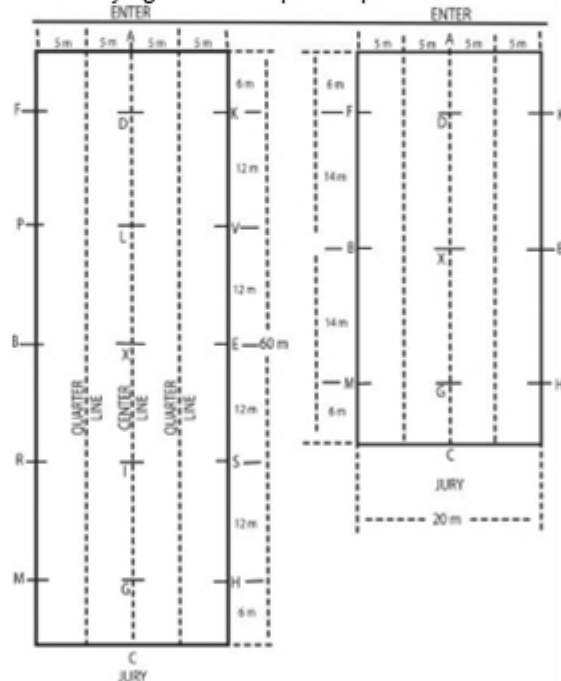
DR126 Requirements for Dressage Competition Management

1. Designated competition grounds, exercise, and training areas. Horses may only be exercised and ridden in management-designated areas on the competition grounds. Management must post a map in the show office outlining the "designated competition grounds" where horses may be ridden and exercised. Any restricted areas must also be noted. Under no circumstance is it allowed to school horses in the stables.
2. The following requirements apply to all Levels 1-5 of Dressage Competitions, except where noted. Specific requirements for specific levels of competitions are listed under .2, below.
 - a. Competition Levels, Divisions and Classes.
 1. The competition Level and all classes must be listed in the prize list.
 2. When permitted by the rules or special criteria, classes may be divided into separate divisions or sections based on qualifications, age or other eligibility of horses or riders.
 3. Divisions or sections of a class are considered to be a separate "class" only if listed as such in the prize list. Divisions or sections of a class may be held in different rings and judged by different judges. When divisions or sections are held under different conditions (i.e, different ring or judges), separate awards must be given.
 4. Where more than 25 entries are accepted for a particular class the class must be divided into separate divisions for awards purposes. USEF/USDF and other regional or local championship classes and USEF High Performance Championships, qualifying and selection trials cannot be split.
 5. When entries warrant competitions are encouraged to split classes into separate divisions, and to provide separate awards, for Open riders, Adult Amateurs, and Junior/Young Riders **or other divisions**, Horses may be ridden only once in any class, including separate divisions or sections of the same class. See DR119.1.
 - b. Competition Schedule.
 1. A tentative class schedule must be included in the prize list.
 2. Organizers must prepare a time schedule including all rides. If possible, competitors should be notified of their riding times prior to arrival at the competition.
 3. The time schedule must be posted in electronic format and/or in an area where social distancing can be adhered to by noon the day before the competition. The method to be utilized for posting the time schedule must be printed in the prize list. Ride times may not be changed after noon the day before the start of the entire competition, except in compliance with GR830.5. Competitions may reserve the right to fill a competitor's subsequent ride times if that competitor fails to notify the competition secretary of their intention to scratch (i.e. is a "no show").
 4. Dressage classes must be run in their entirety and rides may only be scheduled out of sequence to allow a reasonable interval between two or more horses entered by the same rider in the same class or in different classes. Also, when preparing a time schedule consideration must be given to riders entered in more than one class or riding more than one horse. At least 50 minutes must be scheduled between start times for a rider's tests on different horses **and at least 25 minutes scheduled between start times for a rider on the same horse** unless they have agreed, in writing, to a shorter interval between tests. Time intervals should be allowed between rides for judge's breaks and awards presentations.
 5. If Grand Prix Freestyle and/or Grand Prix Special classes are offered at a competition, at least one Grand Prix class must be offered and scheduled prior to the Freestyle and the

- Special (i.e., only one Grand Prix is required to be offered and scheduled prior to the Freestyle and Special in a multi-day competition).
6. If a competitor cannot show due to a change in the day a competitor must ride, their entry fees must be refunded.
- c. Arena Specifications.
1. The arena should be on as flat and as level ground as possible. It is recommended that the difference in elevation across the diagonal or along the length of the arena shall not exceed 0.60 meters. It is recommended that the difference in elevation along the short side of the arena shall not exceed 0.20 meters.
 2. The Standard Arena is 60 meters long and 20 meters wide. The Small Arena is 40 meters long and 20 meters wide. Arena measurements are for the interior of the enclosure.
 3. The enclosure itself must consist of a low fence about 0.3 meters high and must be completely enclosed, except for the entrance at "A". The width of the entrance must be at least two meters **and no greater than four meters**.
 4. The fence should be such to prevent the horse's hooves from becoming entangled and arena stakes, if used, must be covered with a ball or similar object so as to prevent injury. Rope, concrete or unbreakable chain fencing is not allowed.
 5. The part of the fence at A should be easy to remove to let the competitors in and out of the arena in a suitable way. The part of the fence at A can remain open except each Federation/USDF Regional Championship may elect to close the gate for championship classes. Decisions to either close the gate or leave it open must be consistent for all championship classes in that competition. Each Federation/USDF Regional Championship competition management must publish in its official prize list if the gate will be closed in championship classes. The gate must be closed for Federation/USDF National Championship and Federation National Championship classes.
 6. Except for the letter "A", the letters outside the enclosure should be placed about 0.5 meters from the fence and clearly marked. So that the judges can note the exact point on the track opposite each letter, it is compulsory to place a marker on the fence itself, level with and in addition to the letter concerned. It is not permitted to place the letters on the arena fence, however, one-sided (flat) letters may be placed on the wall of an indoor arena when such an arena is permitted under (7) through (9) below. The letter A should be placed at least five meters away from the arena.
 7. No publicity is permitted anywhere on the **dressage** arena fence **except in Level 5 classes at Level 5 competitions**. It is permissible to decorate the letters with flowers or greenery to enhance the appearance of the arena, however, letters must be visible from all sides at Level 3-5 competitions.
 8. It is recommended that arenas be separated from the public (people, horses and other activities) by a distance of not less than 15 meters, with a minimum allowed distance at any point around the arena of 3 meters. For indoor competitions, the recommended minimum distance from the public is 3 meters, with a minimum allowed distance at any point around the arena of 1.5 meters. For Level 1 and Level 2 competitions, where tall solid walls preclude public access or visibility, arenas are exempt from this requirement. Indoor and outdoor arenas must be separated by a minimum of 5 meters at Level 3-5 competitions and 2 meters at Level 1-2 competitions.
 9. Where severe inclement weather threatens to disrupt participation in the competition due to concerns for footing or safety, Level 3-5 competitions are permitted to follow the same arena specifications as **for Level 1-2 competitions** as in #8, above.
 10. A modified arena is one that is not exactly 20x60 meters or 20x40 meters, as required for

the particular level and test. Use of a modified arena is permitted only for Level 1-2 competitions and only when the dimensions of the arena to be used are clearly specified in the prize list. When a modified arena is used, it must not be shortened more than five meters in length or more than two meters in width. **Arenas must never be shortened between M, F, H and K, and their respective corners.** However, for all competition levels, Qualifying, Championship, USEF High Performance Championships, qualifying and selection trials and Freestyle classes must be held in an unmodified standard size arena.

11. Entry and exit must be at "A" for Level 3, 4 and 5 competitions. For Level 1-3 2 competitions: If competitors enter and exit at any location other than "A", the arena fence must be completely closed for the duration of the ride.
12. For all classes or tests, **excluding Materiale and Equitation**, where the arena size is optional or may be modified, the size must be stated in the prize list.
13. The following tests and classes must be held in a Standard Arena:
 - a. First Level Dressage tests and above, FEI Dressage tests; and musical freestyles, except those tests written for a small arena.
 - b. USEF/USDF Qualifying and Championship Classes at all levels.



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14. At the discretion of competition management, all tests for Para Dressage may be ridden in a Standard arena. (Exception: Grade I - III freestyle tests must be held in a small arena. Grade IV - V freestyle tests must be held in a standard arena.) The arena sizes to be used must be indicated in the prize list. For the USEF National Para Dressage Championships and Para Dressage Selection Trials, all tests for Grades I - III must be ridden in a small arena and Grades IV - V must be ridden in a standard size arena.
- d. Footing Maintenance.
1. Competition management must make every effort to provide the best possible footing in competition and schooling areas.
 2. Provisions should be made (by having on hand proper equipment and scheduling sufficient breaks in the schedule) to maintain throughout the competition the footing in all riding areas by dragging, watering and, if necessary, raking.

e. Location of Judges.

1. If there is only one judge, they are preferably placed a maximum of five meters and minimum of three meters from the end of the arena and must be opposite the letter C. Except in Young Horse Tests, when two judges are used one is placed at C and the other at B or E, preferably a maximum of five meters and minimum of three meters opposite the letter. When three judges are used, one is placed at C, the second at B or E, and the third must be placed at the end of the arena on a line with the judge at C and 2.5 meters in from the edge of the long side of the arena at H or M (If the second judge is at B, the third should be at H and vice versa). If this is not possible, judges should be placed at the end of the arena, one at C, one 2.5 meters in from the long side of the arena at M, and the other 2.5 meters from the long side of the arena at H.
2. At indoor competitions, judges must be placed a minimum of 3 meters from the arena, unless modifications are permitted by application to the Federation Dressage Sport Committee.
3. Except in Young Horse tests a separate enclosure (booth, tent, trailer) or platform for indoor classes must be provided for each judge.
4. Each judges booth or platform must be raised at least 0.5 meters (20 inches), for Freestyle Tests possibly a little higher above the ground to give the Judge(s) a good view of the ring.
5. The booth/hut/platform must be large enough to accommodate three people except that the booth at C must accommodate four people for Young Horse Championship classes.
6. Judges' booths placed at E and B must be equipped with side windows.
7. **Judge booths or platforms must be separated from other arenas by a minimum distance of 3 meters.**
8. The jury for the FEI Dressage Tests for 4, 5, and 6-year-old horses and USEF Dressage Test for 4- year old horses must be seated together at "C" and may comprise a maximum of three judges. (Exception: See Selection Procedures for the USEF National Championships for Young Horses for the number and placement of judges in the Young Horse championship competition.) The number

and placement of judges in classes and championships for FEI 7-year-old horses must be as described in DR122.43 ~~.14-.15~~ or, if applicable, the Selection Procedures for the World Breeding Championships for 7-year-old horses. **See DR122.17 for placement of Judges for the FEI Children Classes.** Judge booths or platforms must be separated from other arenas by a minimum distance of 3 meters.

f. Judges and Technical Delegates.

1. No judge shall be required to officiate longer than 8 hours (**actual judging time**) in one day, unless the judge has agreed in writing, and cannot be required to be on the competition grounds longer than 10 hours.
2. Judges must be given at least a 45-minute lunch break and at least a 10 minute break every 2 hours.
3. Judges and technical delegates are not to be housed in private homes unless the judge or technical delegate has agreed to it prior to the competition.
4. Judges' comments, while judging, may not be audio-recorded without prior written permission of the judge(s), the specific competitor(s) and management.
5. Judges and Technical Delegates are required to provide email addresses to management for communication of officiating agreements, prize lists and other information related to the competition.

g. Ring Stewards and supervision of schooling areas.

1. Tack Inspections. Inspection of saddlery and equipment (except bits) must be done at the direction of the technical delegate. Ring stewards appointed by competition management

- are required to inspect the saddlery, dress and equipment worn by at least one-third of the horses in a class immediately as the horse leaves the arena using a new disposable protective glove on each hand for each horse. In championship classes, saddlery, dress and equipment inspections are required for each horse. When an inspection is conducted, all equipment including fly hoods, nosebands, curb chains, whips, bits, and spurs on both sides must be inspected. The ring steward must also inspect the horse for evidence of blood.
- 1.a. Exhibitors must present bridles and bits, if and when requested, to the technical delegate for inspection utilizing the methods, timeframe(s) and location(s) identified by competition management with the agreement of the technical delegate. These methods must be communicated to the competitors prior to the start of the competition. The technical delegate must inspect at least 50% of the bits and bridles of horses entered in the competition. Technical Delegates must also conduct random ringside bit checks immediately after rides are completed, some of which can be included in the 50%, using a new disposable protective glove on each hand for each horse.
 - 1.b. Inspection of saddlery and equipment is not required nor advised for group classes such as Dressage Seat Equitation and Materiale. When close inspection of saddlery, bits and equipment is required in order to determine compliance with DR 121 or other equipment provisions, a TD shall accompany the horse to its stall, trailer or other designated area to conduct such equipment inspections.
 - 1.c. In Breed restricted classes at Regular competitions, a ring steward, at the direction of the technical delegate or C2 Steward (if eligible for the classes held), will do a hands-on inspection of saddlery and equipment including bits of at least one-third of the horses in a class immediately as the horse leaves the arena. New disposable protective gloves must be utilized with one on each hand for each horse.
 - 1.d. When non-permitted bits, saddlery, or equipment are identified prior to the horse having worn the non-permitted items, there will be no elimination. Elimination will occur only when the horse is wearing non-permitted items or they are identified immediately after use.
 2. When a competition operates two or more rings or warmup areas, the competition must have a sufficient number of stewards to adequately monitor all schooling and warmup areas, as well as competition rings.
 3. Schooling and warmup areas must be monitored by stewards starting at least 30 minutes before the first scheduled ride.
 4. **Bit Equipment** inspectors must use a new disposable protective glove on each hand for each horse. Gloves must be provided by competition management. The bridle must be checked with the greatest caution, as some horses are very ~~touchy and~~ sensitive about their ~~heads and~~ mouths.
 5. When communicable disease is a concern, any deviations to established saddlery inspection protocol must be approved by the Federation Dressage Department prior to the competition.
 6. In USEF/USDF Championship classes, a steward must be appointed to check the saddlery and bits of each horse immediately after it has completed its test and has left the arena, and any discrepancy to the saddlery rules will entail immediate elimination. (See DR126.2.i.1)
 - h. Scribes.
 1. Scribes should have a knowledge of the tests being ridden.
 2. **At Level 1 and 2 competitions, scribes** (including electronic scribes) **must should** not be an owner, coach, trainer or family member of a competitor/horse in the

- class(es) in which they are scribing. **At Level 3 and above competitions, scribes (including electronic scribes) must not be an owner, coach, trainer or family member of a competitor/horse in the class(es) in which they are scribing.**
3. Scribe changes should not be made more than once per day for each judge.
 4. It is strongly recommended that scribes not compete before judges with whom they have worked at the same competition. Apprentices are prohibited from competing before judges with whom they apprentice at the same competition.
 5. First-time scribes must not be assigned to foreign judges or judges for FEI level classes.
 6. Scribes. Only one scribe to be provided for the judging panel for the FEI Dressage Tests for 4-year old, 5-year old and 6-year old horses and the USEF Dressage Test for 4-year old horses.
- i. Schooling and Lungeing.
1. One or more schooling areas must be provided far enough away from the arena(s) so as not to disturb the competitors during their tests. Schooling areas must be of sufficient size for several competitors to prepare their horses at the same time. For competition Levels 3-5, the sum of the warmup space, excluding the perimeter around competition arenas, must be at least 80% of the sum of the areas of all competition arenas (20x60 and/or 20x40 m). Lungeing areas are included in the calculation of the warmup space.
 2. If possible, at least one practice arena with perimeters and letters should be provided.
 3. It is strongly recommended that a lungeing area be provided separate from and in addition to *mounted schooling areas and that it be available throughout the competition. If the fence between lungeing and mounted horses is not a minimum of 3' feet high, then lungeing horses must be separated by a minimum distance of 10 meters from mounted horses.*
 4. If a separate lungeing area is not provided, lungeing is not permitted at any time within the same area at the same time as mounted schooling. See Dressage Levels chart for requirements for specific competition levels.
 5. **Daily schooling and lungeing hours must be provided to competitors and posted at the show office by noon prior to the first day of competition.**
 6. Competitors will not be allowed in or around the arena while a class is in progress or inside the arena at other times except under the following conditions:
 - a. Management must post and announce, in advance, designated times that competitors may school inside the arena(s);
 - b. Competitors should be permitted by management or the Ground Jury to enter the arena prior to their ride if arena conditions do not permit riding around the perimeter of the arena prior to entry. Such permission must be announced prior to the start of the class.
 7. Competitions are not permitted to charge warm-up or schooling fees prior to or during a competition for horses entered in the competition.
 8. When visually impaired or blind riders are to compete, it is recommended that a separate warm up area be provided.
- j. Miscellaneous.
1. Management must provide judges, technical delegates, and ring stewards with copies of Federation Presidential Modification letters or Federation Dispensation/Classification Certificates they have received, prior to the classes where those riders compete under those judges. Competitors will not be allowed to compete with modifications unless a copy of their Presidential Modification letter or Federation Dispensation/Classification Certificate is provided to the competition secretary by the beginning of the competition.

2. Background music, of a suitable composition and volume so as not to disturb the competitors and judges, may be played during all classes except when freestyle music is being played. Specific background music may not be requested or supplied by competitors for their rides except for freestyle tests.
 3. It is strongly recommended that organizers avoid running freestyle classes at the same time as non- freestyle classes that are held in close proximity.
 4. A separate number must be issued for each horse/rider combination. Horses or riders are required to display only one number and may not be penalized for displaying only one number. See GR1213.11.
 5. Two numbers (min. 3" x 5") must be provided to and worn by Materiale class entries and they must be positioned on each side of the saddle pad to be clearly visible at all times.
3. Specific requirements for Dressage Competition Levels.
 - a. Categories and Criteria.
 1. Dressage Competitions or Regular or Local Competitions with open dressage classes must be categorized into one of five levels based on classes offered and mandatory criteria for each level:
 - a. Level 5 - required for CDIs/CPEDIs, USEF High Performance Selection Trials (Intermediaire I- Grand Prix, Para Dressage) and USEF National Championships.
 - b. Level 4 - required for USEF/USDF Regional Championships, High Performance qualifying competitions held separately from CDIs, and other competitions as required or as approved by the Federation (and USDF when required), upon application.
 - c. Level 3 - required for USEF Developing Program qualifying competitions and other competitions as required or as approved by the Federation (and USDF when required), upon application.
 - d. Level 2 - required for competitions that do not meet the criteria for Levels 3-5 or exceed Level 1 requirements.
 - e. Level 1 - required for Federation Licensed Competitions that do not meet the criteria for Levels 2- 5.
 - f. Level 1 is primarily intended as an introduction for new competitions wishing to hold a Federation Licensed Competition with fewer mandatory requirements.
 2. ~~If standards will be at a lower level for eligible classes at competition Levels 3-5, the competition prize list must state which classes and which criteria will be at a lower level.~~
Classes offered at Level 4 or 5 competitions that are below Level 4 or 5, respectively, will automatically be considered to be held at Level 3 standards unless otherwise indicated in the prize list.
 3. Holding classes of a lower level is optional at competition Levels 3-5.
 - a. Standards for all non-CDI/CPEDI classes at a Level 5 competition must be Level 3 or higher.
 - b. At a Level 4 competition, Level 4 standards are required for High Performance and Regional Championship classes; standards for all other classes must be at Level 3 or higher.
 - c. At a Level 3 competition, Level 3 standards are required for USEF Developing program qualifying classes; standards for other classes must be at Level 2 or higher.
 - d. At a Level 2 competition, standards for all classes must be at Level 2 or higher.
 - e. At a Level 1 competition, standards for all classes must be at Level 1 or higher.
 4. Specific criteria for each competition level are listed in the Dressage Levels chart (see DR126.4). The chart indicates which criteria may be at a lower level for eligible classes at a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 competition.

- b. Management, Officials and Staff.
 - 1. The manager of a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 Dressage Competition must be eligible according to the criteria listed in DR126 and listed in the Dressage Levels chart (see DR126.4). During competition hours, at least one manager or co-manager of each Level 3, 4 or 5 Dressage Competition must be physically present on the competition grounds throughout each licensed day.
 - 2. The secretary of a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 Dressage Competition must be eligible according to the criteria listed in DR126 and listed in the Dressage Levels chart. Specific duties of Dressage Competition Management are listed in the Dressage Levels chart (see DR126.4). During competition hours, at least one secretary or co-secretary of each Level 3, 4 or 5 Dressage Competition must be physically present on the competition grounds throughout each licensed day.
 - 3. Specific requirements for staff and officials for Dressage Competitions are listed in the Dressage Levels chart (see DR126.3).
- c. Facilities, Equipment, Services and Amenities.
 - 1. Additional requirements for Dressage Competitions regarding facilities, services and amenities are listed in the Dressage Levels chart (see DR126.4).

4. Dressage Levels Chart.

(for Federation Dressage Competitions or Regular or Local Competitions with Open Dressage Classes per Federation GR314.2c)

(DSHB classes can be held with any Level. Shows offering only DSHB can choose Level 1 or Level 2 criteria.) Criteria at competition Levels 3-5 are highlighted in gray below that can be held at a lower level, if competition advertises classes held at a lower level.