



UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION™

USDF USEF/USDF Dressage Seat Equitation Guidelines for Competition Managers, Judges and Competitors

Dressage Seat Equitation classes are offered at USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized dressage competitions. If you compete in an eligible Dressage Seat Equitation class and earn a qualifying score, you may qualify to compete in the USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals or in the USDF Regional Adult Amateur Equitation Final presented by Big Dee's Tack and Vet Supply. You may also earn Dressage Seat Equitation Rider awards.

1. The USEF/USDF Dressage Seat Medal (DSM) Program celebrates excellence in equitation and strives to develop a solid foundation for future success in the dressage arena.

The DSM Program is for riders ages 18 and under and is made up of three types of classes: Dressage Seat Equitation classes, the USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals, and the USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals.

- **The USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals** are held at each of the nine Great American Insurance Group/USDF Regional Dressage Championships. There are two age divisions in the USDF DSM Semi-Finals: 13 and under, and 14 through 18. The top two placed riders at the USDF DSM Semi-Finals are invited to compete in the USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals.
 - **The USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals.** are held in conjunction with the US National Dressage Championships, or other designated competition. Riders will compete in the USEF DSM Finals in the same age division in which they rode at the Semi-Finals. The top two riders in each Semi-Finals class will qualify to advance to the annual USEF DSM Finals. In case one of the top two riders in either Semi-Finals class does not compete in the Finals, the third-place rider in the respective class will be allowed to compete.
2. **The USDF Regional Adult Amateur Equitation Program presented by Big Dee's Tack and Vet Supply** culminates with an Adult Amateur Equitation Regional Final class which is held in conjunction with each of the nine Great American Insurance Group/USDF Regional Dressage Championship competitions.

It is our intent to grow participation in Dressage Seat Equitation nationwide, both in the number of competitions offering equitation classes and in the number of riders competing in these classes.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO OFFER A DRESSAGE SEAT EQUITATION CLASS?

(Refer to USEF DR133 for additional information.)

General Rules:

- Dressage Seat Equitation classes may be offered for Juniors, Young Riders, Adult Amateurs and/or Open riders.

- USDF DSM Semi-Finals and the USEF DSM Finals offers two age divisions and are defined as:
 - 13 and under: A rider is eligible for the 13 and under Semi-Final class until the end of the calendar year in which he/she reaches the age of 13 (DR 133.2 (f)).
 - 14 through 18: A rider is eligible for the 14 through 18 Semi-Final class from the beginning of the calendar year in which he/she reaches 14 until the end of the calendar year in which he/she reaches the age of 18 (DR 133.2 (f)).
 - Riders will compete in the USEF DSM Finals in the same age division in which they rode at the Semi-Finals.
- USDF Adult Amateur Equitation Regional Finals classes are for riders age 22 and over, who are designated as an adult amateur, in accordance with GR1306 & GR1307 of the USEF rules. Individuals must also be designated with USEF as an adult amateur when the score is earned, and at the time of the Regional Final class. See additional requirements for eligibility as described in the current “USDF Regional Adult Amateur Equitation Program” guidelines.

Management Information for DSE classes:

- Be sure that the class is listed in the official prize list.
- Although DSE classes can be held as Opportunity classes, Opportunity classes cannot be used for Semi-Finals or AA Equitation program qualifying purposes.
- DSE classes are excluded from a horse’s maximum limit of rides per day. All USEF rules apply. See USEF DR 133.1 for complete specifications of Dressage Seat Equitation.
- Two numbers (min. 3”x5”) must be provided to equitation riders and they must be positioned on each side of the saddle pad to be clearly visible at all times.
- Dress, saddlery, and equipment rules apply as required for First Level. A snaffle bridle is required to warmup and compete in a DSE class.
- Management will not have to collect any qualifying fees; only submit the results of each class in the same manner as the rest of the results.
- Management should contact the judge(s) prior to the competition and inform them that they will be judging DSE classes and inquire if they have any questions regarding carrying out the class, rules, etc. A competition may choose to use one or two judges for the DSE class(es). However, two Federation Registered (R) or Senior (S) judges are required to officiate for the USDF DSM Semi-Finals and Regional AA Finals, with one of the judges having the USEF Dressage Seat Equitation Judge certification.
- DSE classes should be held in an enclosed ring that is larger than a standard dressage arena, if available. If such a space is not available, an open schooling area is permitted. If classes must be held in a dressage arena, it must be at least 20m x 60m, and no more than six horses shall be asked to canter at the same time.
- For DSE classes with more than six riders, a dressage arena can be set up inside a larger ring so that group work can be done in the arena or in the larger ring and smaller canter groups and workout patterns (if used) can be done in the dressage arena. The positioning of non-cantering horses should be done with attention to safety.

- If possible, an announcer should be used to call the movements for riders in the classes. If an announcer is not used, the judge(s) or a ringmaster can call the movements for the group work and make other required announcements for the workout patterns and awards. All instructions must be publicly announced. (This means that instructions are not made privately to riders but are loud enough for those near the ring to also hear.)
- USEF Dressage Seat Equitation Class Scoresheets must be used for regular DSE classes.
- Whenever possible, in accordance with USEF rules and in consultation with your judge(s), it is desirable to distribute awards for equitation classes while riders are still in the ring. This provides immediate feedback to the riders and encourages spectator interest. Scores must be properly recorded in the show results.
- NOTE: Borrowed horses are permitted in any equitation class, including Semi-Finals and Finals classes. The “one rider” rules for Regional Championship classes do not apply to DSE or DSM classes and horse may be ridden and warmed up by another rider during the competition. Horses that are participating in regional championship classes may not be used with a different rider in the equitation classes, regardless of when the equitation class takes place.

Judge Information:

- Judges are highly encouraged to provide verbal or written feedback to riders after the class but scoresheets must not be posted.
- Judges are required to **give a final percentage score** for all riders competing in any DSE class including walk-trot.
- If using more than one judge for the DSE class, each judge should evaluate the group work from a different position around the ring, and each should have a separate scribe.

Class Format (The applies to any DSE class):

- Gaits shall be performed by the exhibitors simultaneously.
- Medium walk, working trot, and working canter both ways of the ring must be performed. Equitation classes may also be offered that are limited to medium walk and working trot; these walk-trot classes are not qualifying classes for the USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals or Regional AA Finals.
- Riders must be judged at the medium walk, sitting and rising working trot, and working canter in both directions. When rising trot is requested, the rider should change the diagonal when changing directions, except during a lengthening. The correct diagonal is considered to be when the rider is sitting when the outside front foot and inside hind foot are on the ground.
- USEF DR133.4-6 states that, in judging the position, seat and use of aids, judges may include the following movements and exercises as required at Training and First Level and they may be ridden as a group:
 - Free walk
 - Transitions from one gait to the next in both directions
 - Transitions from walk to halt and vice versa
 - Change of direction across the diagonal, down the centerline, across the arena, and/or by making a half-circle at the walk or trot.
- Judges may also choose movements and exercises, as required at Training and First Level, to be ridden in small groups or independently:

- Transitions
- Leg yield
- Changes of lead through trot
- Serpentine at the trot
- Shallow loop serpentine in canter, maintaining lead
- Trot lengthening and/or canter lengthening.
- Individual workout patterns are not recommended for regular DSE classes, but if used, a copy of all workout patterns, selected in advance by the judge(s), should be posted and distributed to all riders entered in the DSE class(es) at least one day prior to the class. All workout patterns require the use of a dressage arena or letters set up within an open ring.

Class Scheduling and Timing (This applies to any DSE class):

- Equitation classes may be scheduled on each show day. However, when a show runs more than two days (excluding weekday only shows), and does not offer equitation classes each day, at least one equitation class should be scheduled on the weekend, when possible.
- It is important to schedule DSE classes when there is flexibility in the schedule for both judges and competitors. The classes should ideally be scheduled just before the lunch break or (preferably) at the end of the afternoon.
 - At least 3-4 minutes per rider must be allowed for the required group work at all three gaits in both directions of the ring. This would mean that, for a class of six riders, between 18-24 minutes should be allowed for group work. If there are more than six riders, and if the class is held only within a dressage arena, the riders must canter in groups of no more than six. This requires that additional time be allotted for the class.
 - Although not required or recommended for non-championship classes, additional small group work or workout patterns, which may be conducted at the judge's discretion, will require an additional two (2) minutes per rider.
 - If using two judges, the judges must consult and agree on scores for each rider. This process adds 5-20 minutes to the class, depending on the total number of riders.
 - **In Summary**, allowing for group work, small group or individual workout patterns, judge score calculations and awards, a class of six riders would take approximately 48 minutes – in other words, approximately 8 minutes per rider. A class for a maximum of six riders may take less or more time, depending on various conditions.
- NOTE: USEF rules allow up to twenty-five (25) horses to work at walk and trot at the same time, and no more than six (6) horses to be required to canter at the same time. However, experience has shown that this format is very time-consuming and tiring for horses and riders. Many complaints have been received about the excessive time it takes to run large DSE classes.
- The class scheduling and format information below is NOT intended for non-championship equitation classes, however, it is recommended to use the class scheduling format listed below for any equitation classes expected to have more than eighteen entries and use two or more judges.

Class Scheduling and Format for Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals and AA Regional Finals classes:

- [USEF Dressage Seat Medal Class Scoresheets](#) must be used for Semi-Finals or Finals classes.
- In this situation, the judges will evaluate the independent patterns together and assign final scores and placings, using the same scribes and same class scoresheets.
- Judges may ask for independent execution of certain patterns and may choose to use [USEF Dressage Seat Equitation Individual Workouts](#) for these independent patterns. The judge should select all workout patterns in advance so the patterns can be distributed to all riders entered in the DSE class(es) at least one day prior to the class. Patterns can also be selected earlier and distributed to riders before the show or in their show packets.
- The following scheduling format is strongly recommended DSM Semi-Finals and Regional AA Finals classes that have more than six horses in a class:
 - Each randomly-selected group of up to six riders is assigned a start time in 15-minute blocks (for the required group work at all three gaits in both directions of the ring).
 - When eligible riders are allowed to “post enter” in Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals and Regional AA Finals classes after the show is scheduled, it may require that more time blocks be added for the group work segments, and will delay the start time of the individual pattern segment. Shows that allow such post entries must build scheduling flexibility into their schedule.
 - After all groups have completed their group work, judges will consult and determine which riders will be invited to return to ride individual tests. Depending on the overall size of the class (and number of groups), the consultation process can take 15-20 minutes. Judges may NOT select riders for the individual patterns until all riders have been judged/assessed in their group work and all judges have consulted/agreed on the riders to be invited to ride the patterns. There is no way to determine the best riders until after all have ridden!
 - The “individual pattern” segment of the class should be scheduled after the consultation period and riders must be given enough time before the start of this segment to return to the warmup ring and prepare. Management may choose to schedule the start time for the “individual pattern” segment after a break.
 - The starting order of riders must be publicly announced along with their entry numbers.
 - The individual patterns must be publicly announced and riders must be given the opportunity to ask questions prior to the start of the patterns. (Management must assign someone to read the patterns and answer any questions once the call-back riders have returned to the warmup area. The location to enter and exit the arena must be explained before riders start.) NOTE: This does not mean that the pattern is read to each rider individually, rather that the pattern is read so that all riders and others around the arena can hear the instructions.
 - Eight places are awarded in DSM Semi-Finals and Regional AA Finals classes so the eight highest placed riders and two reserves from the initial group work should be invited to ride the patterns. If there are fewer than ten total riders in the class, all should be invited to ride the pattern.
 - After the conclusion of the patterns, the judges will place the class and awards will be announced.

- Tied scores will be broken by requiring riders to perform an additional independent test, which will be scored by both judges together. The higher score on the additional independent test will receive the higher placing.
- If judges have not finished assigning scores and comments for all riders when the class is ready to place, they may do so after the awards presentation.
- One scribe must be assigned to each judge for the entire class.
- Each judge must be provided a clipboard and enough scoresheets for preliminary notes for the group work, as well as one clean set of scoresheets for the final results.
- Competitions are advised not to schedule any part of the semi-finals class (including the individual patterns and awards segments) when they might conflict with awards ceremonies for other classes.
- NOTE: In Semi-Finals and Regional AA Finals classes, it is not required that all riders in a class perform patterns (independent tests). The judges may, at their discretion, choose to require independent tests, and they may select any number of riders in the class to perform one or more independent tests and it is required that up to 10 riders be invited to ride the individual pattern. However, independent tests must be required of each rider in USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals classes.

Additional information can be found on the [USEF website](#). The USDF Dressage Seat Equitation Guidelines for Competitors can be found on the [USDF website](#).

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FOR MANAGERS OF USDF DSM SEMI-FINALS and AA REGIONAL FINALS ONLY

Competition Managers for all Great American Insurance Group/USDF Regional Championships should refer to the competition contract for complete details and specifications.