



## The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY FOR DRESSAGE RATINGS

(Revised January 1, 2009)

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc., establishes Standards of Proficiency within the framework of the international Pony Club movement as the curriculum for a program of instruction and evaluation of its members for ratings.

**D Rating:** The D Ratings are an introduction to the fun and challenge of riding, establishing a foundation of safety habits and knowledge of the daily care of a pony and tack. The D-1 through D-3 Pony Club member learns to ride independently and with control, maintaining a reasonably secure position at the walk, trot and canter and over low fences. All D ratings are awarded at the club level.

**C-1 and C-2 Ratings:** The C-1 and C-2 is a Pony Club member learning to become an active horseman, to care independently for pony and tack and to understand the reasons for what he or she is doing. The C-1 and C-2 show development towards a secure, independent seat and increasing control and confidence in all phases of riding. The C-1 and C-2 ratings are awarded at the club level.

**The H-B, C-3, B, H/H-A and A Ratings** are facilitated on a national basis and require a greater depth of knowledge and proficiency than the earlier ratings. Successful candidates are competent, all-around horsemen, active and contributing members of USPC, who participate in a variety of Pony Club activities. They are also thoughtful leaders who set an example for all levels.

**The H-B Rating** covers Horse Management knowledge that demonstrates increasing knowledge and competence in the care and handling of horses.

**The H/H-A Rating** requires the knowledge, experience and maturity to evaluate and care for a mount's needs efficiently and in a variety of circumstances, and to teach riding and horse care to others.

*Pony Club members may choose to follow one or all of three riding tracks. They are: Traditional, Show Jumping or Dressage.*

**The C-3 Rating** reflects a basis of competence in riding and horse care that will make possible a lifetime of pleasure with horses. If the C-3 riding test is passed before the H-B, the member becomes a C+.

**The B Rating** is for the active horseman and Pony Club member who is interested in acquiring further knowledge and proficiency in riding. The B is able to ride experienced mounts with confidence and control. The B should be able to ride and care for another person's experienced mount, maintaining proper mental and physical condition without undoing any of the mount's education. The B understands and is able to explain the reasons for what he or she is doing and to contribute to the education of younger Pony Club members.

**The A Rating**, the highest rating, is divided into two parts: the H/H-A, which covers horse management, teaching and training and the A, which tests the riding phase. The A is able to ride mounts at various levels of schooling with judgement, tact and effectiveness; to train young mounts; and to retrain spoiled mounts. Like the B, the A understands and is able to explain the reasons for what he or she is doing and to contribute to the education of younger Pony Club members.

**NOTE:** In addition to its instructional programs, USPC offers a variety of activities at club, regional, inter-regional and national levels for team and individual participation. These activities include Eventing, Dressage, Foxhunting, Quiz, Mounted Games, Show Jumping, Tetrathlon, and Polocrosse. **Achieving a rating does not necessarily qualify the Pony Club member for competition in any horse sport.** Further study and preparation for a particular activity, including working as a team member, may be necessary.

### Dimensions of Fences D to A\* for Traditional Levels:

Rating	Height	Width at Top		Width at Base	
		CC	SJ	CC	SJ
D-2	18"	1'	1'	1'6"	1'6"
D-3	2'6"	2'6"	2'6"	4'3"	4'3"
C-1	2'9"	2'9"	2'9"	4'3"	4'3"
C-2	3'0"	3'3"	3'3"	4'7"	4'11"
C-3	3'3"	3'11"	3'9"	5'3"	5'7"
B	3'7"	4'7"	4'3"	6'7"	6'3"
A	3'9"	5'3"	4'9"	7'10"	6'11"

\*Based on USPC Eventing Rules and US Equestrian Eventing Rules. When a second height is required at any one level, use appropriate dimensions shown on the chart above.

### Dressage Specialty Levels:

C-3 = First Level\*\*  
B = Second Level\*\*  
A = Third Level\*\*

### Dimensions of Fences for Show Jumping Specialty Levels:

Rating	Height up to	Width at Top up to	Triple Bar up to
C-3	3'6"	3'9"	4'3"
B	3'9"	4'3"	4'6"
A	4'3"	4'9"	5'3"

C-3=Level II-III\*\*      B=Level III-IV\*\*      A=Level V-VI\*\*

\*\*See USEF Level Descriptions

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# THE DRESSAGE C-3 RIDING STANDARD

**Riding Test Expectations:** *The candidate should maintain a basic balanced position that is appropriate for Dressage, developed through an independent seat, demonstrating coordinated use of the aids on the flat, over ground poles or cavalletti and in the open. The candidate should initiate and maintain free forward movement with smooth, prompt transitions, a clear and consistent rhythm and a steady, light feel of the mount's mouth. The horse should accept the aids. The candidate should be able to discuss and evaluate the aids used. The candidate should show confidence and control at all gaits. The level of riding is at the USEF First Level.*

## **Presentation of Horse and Rider**

Rider to be attired properly formal, able to demonstrate the proper tying of a stock-tie and placement of the stock pin.

Candidate should demonstrate effective presentation and control while standing facing and slightly to the side of, rather than directly in front of, the mount. The candidate will hold the reins, one in each hand, close to the bit. Thumbs should not be hooked into bit rings.

Mount should be well-groomed, reflecting daily care, including ears, nose, eyes, dock, sheath or udder, mane and tail (no dan-druff).

Tack to be safe, clean, metal polished, reflecting consistent daily care.

Discuss the purpose and correct fit of mount's equipment.

## **Riding on the Flat**

- Demonstrate warm-up, including the following figures; be prepared to discuss warm-up including rhythm, balance, engagement, throughness and impulsion.
- Ride Schooling Figures to include
  - shoulder fore
  - 10 meter half circles, 20 meter full circles at working trot sitting
  - straight lines at each gait
  - leg yields at walk and trot
  - lengthen and shorten stride in trot and canter
  - medium walk and free walk
  - 15 and 20 meter canter circles
  - halt with immobility for 5 seconds (from the trot)
  - change of canter leads through trot
- Be prepared to ride a USEF Dressage Test at First Level, Test 3 or above.
- Ride without stirrups at all gaits with a secure and independent seat.
- Trot movements should progress from rising to sitting with the exception of a 20 meter circle which allows the horse to stretch forward and downward.
- Ride a 20 meter circle at the rising trot allowing horse to stretch forward and down.

- Discuss performance with examiner, including rhythm (regularity of gaits), quality of transitions; whether mount maintained forward motion, contact, straightness, balance and correctness of bend.
- Discuss with examiner mount's acceptance of aids, whether impulsion (thrust) in lengthening was shown.
- Discuss knowledge of aids for reinback.
- Discuss how to develop lateral suppleness including bending exercises and lateral movements.
- Demonstrate ability to ride a different mount, initiating free, regular, forward movement at each gait, acceptance of aids, showing confidence and control.
- Discuss performance with Examiner, including ways in which the mount was different from own mount.

## **Riding Over Ground Poles/Cavalletti**

- Discuss purpose of ground poles and cavalletti in the training of the horse and rider.
- Demonstrate ability to ride own mount through a series of 4-6 cavalletti at the walk and trot maintaining a secure, basic balanced position (distances set appropriately for gait and horse stride).
- Discuss exercises used, including placing distances and how performance relates to progression of training in regards to the training scale.

## **Riding in the Open**

- Ride at the walk, trot and canter in the open, maintaining control and demonstrating regularity of paces.
- Discuss ride and reasons for any disobedience.
- Evaluate mount's condition (i.e. vital signs).
- Discuss use of varied terrain in regard to horse's conditioning and training.

## **Longeing**

Supervision is required in the testing of longeing.

Demonstrate proper fit and use of equipment, including bridle or cavesson, saddle or surcingle and side reins are required.

Longe own mount, demonstrating safe longeing techniques and proper use of aids ( voice, body position etc.) at the walk, trot and/or canter, while initiating free forward movement and smooth transitions within the gaits (lengthenings and shortenings), making horse appropriate for the C-3 dressage level.

## **Bandaging**

Independently apply a shipping bandage and a stable bandage. Discuss purposes and dangers involved with shipping and bandages.

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# THE DRESSAGE B RIDING STANDARD

**Riding Test Expectations:** *Candidates should maintain a basic balanced position demonstrating independence and a position appropriate for Dressage with effective, tactful use of aids. Candidates should ride each mount forward while establishing and maintaining regularity in the gaits with the mount accepting the aids; be confident in coping with disobedience; be able to explain the application and reason for aids used on both the flat and in the open and to discuss the basic principles of dressage. The horse should be reliably on the aids, show a greater degree of collection appropriate to this level, a greater degree of straightness, suppleness, throughness and self carriage. The level of riding is at the USEF Second Level.*

## **Riding on the Flat**

- Demonstrate warm-up for work on the flat including the following movements, demonstrating accurate and smooth transitions, correct use of aids, regularity of gaits, balance, lengthening and shortening of frame and collection appropriate to level. Trot work should progress from rising to sitting.
  - shoulder fore
  - leg yield
  - serpentine of 3 loops at trot and at canter with simple change of lead when crossing center line
  - medium and free walks
  - collected and medium trots
  - shoulder in, haunches in (travers), and haunches out (renvers)
  - halt with immobility for 5 seconds from the trot
  - reinback three to four steps
  - 10 meter circles at the trot and canter
  - 20 meter circle at canter with giving of the reins while maintaining a light contact.
  - counter canter
  - half-turn on the haunches from the walk
- Discuss reasons for, and results of warm-up of ridden mount
- Be prepared to ride a USEF Dressage Test at Second Level, Test 3 or above.
- Evaluate and discuss performance with examiner, including strong and weak points of the mount being ridden.
- Ride without stirrups at all gaits with a secure and independent seat.
- Demonstrate ability to ride different mount with confidence and tact at all gaits while performing basic schooling figures.
- Discuss performance, including whether or not mount was balanced, supple and moving forward with rhythm and impulsion.
- Optional to use cavaletti during warm-up.

## **Training**

- Discuss how riders position effects the biomechanics of the horses movements.
- Discuss how to put the horse "on the aids" Discuss the terms connection, throughness, engagement and collection.
- Discuss the difference between medium and lengthening within the gaits; lateral and longitudinal suppleness.

## **Riding Over Cavalletti**

- Discuss the training benefits of cavalletti and trotting poles, know how to adjust distances for own mount.
- Discuss 4 exercises for the training of the young /green horse using cavalletti.
- Demonstrate walk and trot exercises using cavalletti/ trotting poles.
- Ride without stirrups demonstrating a secure and independent seat.
- Critique performance in relationship to the training of the mount.
- Demonstrate ability to ride different mount thru cavalletti/trotting pole exercises with tact and confidence.
- Critique performance, evaluate switch mount.

## **Riding in the Open**

- Ride in the open, safely, over a variety of terrain at all three gaits, confidently and in a secure, independent position.
- Critique ride, discuss importance of riding in the open for the dressage horse.

## **Longeing**

Discuss how to teach a mount to longe.

Discuss benefits and dangers of longeing the mount.

Discuss benefits and dangers of longeing the rider.

Discuss and demonstrate proper fit and use of equipment, to include side reins.

Longe own mount, appropriate to mount's ability, at the walk, trot and/or canter, at the discretion of the examiner; to include free forward movement and to establish regular rhythm. Be prepared to use side reins.

## **Bandaging**

Demonstrate shipping, stable, and tail bandages; discuss materials used, reasons for wrapping, potential dangers.

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# THE DRESSAGE A RIDING STANDARD

**Riding Test Expectations:** *Candidates must demonstrate that they can competently ride and train at USEF Third Level or above, with tact, confidence and security. In addition, Candidates must be able to ride different mounts at various stages of training, displaying a confident, consistent and effective performance on each. Candidates must demonstrate competence and tact on a schooled, green or spoiled mount, discuss and/or demonstrate schooling techniques required for each mount and display a knowledge and implementation of the proper use of artificial and natural aids. Candidates are expected to assess each mount's level of schooling and to ride with tact and empathy for its capabilities. After each performance, the candidate will evaluate and discuss the stage of schooling, strengths and weaknesses of each mount. The candidate must understand and demonstrate the use of body position (core, seat, back) and the effect on the horse when executing movements.*

## **Riding on the Flat**

- Demonstrate efficient warm-up appropriate for the level. Perform exercises to improve each mount's rhythm, engagement, free forward movement, lightness, elasticity, relaxation, impulsion, connection, and straightness, and ride the mount "on the aids" with correct contact. Warm-up should include the following movements:
  - free, medium and extended walk
  - medium, collected and extended trot
  - collected and extended canter
  - shoulder-in
  - half pass at the trot and canter
  - halt from the collected trot
  - reinback with transition to extended walk
  - half-turn on the haunches
  - 3 loop canter serpentine with simple change (walk) at centerline
  - 8 meter trot circles
  - 10 meter canter circles
  - flying changes
  - counter canter
  - 20 meter canter circle, showing clear release reins
- Be prepared to ride a USEF Dressage Test at Third Level, Test 3 or above.
- Critique ride.

- Demonstrate ability to ride at all gaits without stirrups with a secure and independent seat.
- Optional movements may be demonstrated at the discretion of the candidate:
  - collected walk
  - half pirouette
  - canter circle of 20 meters with 5-6 strides of very collected canter

## **Training**

- Candidate must bring to the test a less experienced horse to be put into the 'switch pool'.
- Ride one or more assigned mounts: critique ride, evaluating level of training of mount.
- Apply training pyramid to evaluation of switch rides.
- Set up and ride effectively over 2-4 cavalletti exercises at trot.
- Demonstrate the correct fit, application and use of the double bridle.

## **Riding in the Open**

- Ride in the open, safely, over a variety of terrain at all three gaits, confidently and in a secure, independent position.
- Critique ride, discuss importance of riding in the open for the dressage horse.

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## TESTING INFORMATION FOR NATIONAL TESTINGS

### Requirements for Candidates

- Be a Pony Club Member in Good Standing, as defined in club policy, having paid local, regional and National dues and fees for at least the current and preceding years.
- Have a record of regular attendance and participation.
- Be at least 13 years of age prior to January 1 of the year of application for the H-B and C-3, 14 for the B, 16 for the H/H-A and A.
- Be recommended by the District Commissioner and Regional Supervisor.
- Candidates may take the H-B or C-3 Riding test in whichever order they choose. If the C-3 Riding test is taken first, the C-3 Certificate is not awarded until completion of the H-B; candidate is recognized as a C+ until that time.
- Fulfill the active participation criteria set by the region.
- Compete in at least one mounted rally on a mounted or unmounted basis.
- Have a thorough knowledge of requirements for the ratings and be able to discuss and/or demonstrate any requirements from all previously attained standards.

### Attire

Safe, working attire, including proper footwear, must be worn in the barn area and when working around mounts. Proper informal attire (boots and breeches) is required for teaching mounted lessons, longeing, and riding phases. Refer to USPC Horse Management Handbook, USPC discipline rules, and USPC Manuals of Horsemanship, Volume I, II and III.

ASTM/SEI approved headgear with full harness and with chin strap in place must be worn.

### Equipment

Saddlery and biting for USPC Testings should comply with the Horse Management General Rule on Saddlery and Biting and with the USPC discipline rules for Saddlery and Biting. Be able to discuss equipment used on own mount. Whips, no longer than 43 inches including lash, will be allowed in the flat section of testings. Any discipline rule change following publication of the current Horse Management Handbook will supersede these rules.

### General

There are no waiting periods between the H-B/C-3 through A ratings, as long as all applications are submitted by the Application Deadline (see below). However, candidates must successfully pass all sections of the H-B before obtaining the C-3 (if they pass the riding test first, they are called C+ members until they pass the H-B) and all sections of the H-A before taking the A.

Test dates are established by the National Testing Committee in response to Regional\* requests. Candidate applications must be made through the District Commissioner and Regional Supervisor. Candidates may apply for the date of their choice, but those living within the host Region will be given priority. Information on testing dates, sites and equipment needed may be obtained from the District Commissioner, Regional Supervisor, the USPC Web site, or the National Office.

Testing applications, USPC medical release, and club check for the test fee, must be mailed by the DC to the RS. The RS must forward all completed application materials (with required signa-

tures) to USPC National Office postmarked by the Application Deadline (see below). Applications for the H/H-A must include proof of compliance with the First Aid requirement.

### Application Deadlines

Applications for testings must be postmarked by the following deadlines: tests held between February 26th and May 31st must be postmarked by January 15th; tests held between June 1st and August 31st must be postmarked by April 15th; tests held between September 1st and November 25th must be postmarked by July 15th; tests held between November 26th and December 31st must be postmarked by October 15th. Any testing held before February 26th will have a six week prior deadline, as indicated on the Testing Schedule. Late applications will be handled by the National Office and National Testing Committee and a \$100 late fee will be charged to any late application that is accepted.

H/H-A applicants must provide proof of successful completion of a basic first aid certification course (typically a 4-hour course) with their testing application. Candidates planning to take their H/H-A should make plans early to get their certification done well before the testing application deadline in case their class is canceled or rescheduled. A copy (both sides) of their current First Aid card **MUST** accompany application or it will be considered incomplete and returned to their RS. Proof of enrollment in a course **is not** acceptable; candidate must have completed the course by the application deadline, and include a copy of the First Aid card with the H/H-A application. There are many different organizations offering first aid certification and any basic first aid course is acceptable.

Candidates may bring their own or a borrowed or rented mount to a testing.

Candidates who DNMS on no more than four sections of the H-B or two sections of the H/H-A can retest only those sections not passed. It will be the candidate's choice whether to retest at another scheduled H-B or H/H-A testing or arrange for a retest outside of a testing. If they choose the second option, it is the responsibility of the candidates to check the Examiners List provided by the National Office to find a qualified examiner who can retest them on the necessary section(s). If they wish to retest at another scheduled testing, they must contact the National Office within 4 weeks of their testing to make arrangements. Retests must take place within the calendar year. Any exceptions to that deadline must be approved by the National Office and the National Testing Committee. There is no charge for retesting.

To achieve the C-3, B and A ratings, candidates must pass all phases of the test. No riding phase can be retested.

### Appropriate Horse

It is the responsibility of the candidate and his/her parent(s) or guardian to bring an appropriate horse(s) to the testing. The conditioned mount(s) must be capable of completing all required phases of the test. The mount(s) must also be available for change of riders. Embracing USPC's commitment to safety for all horses and riders is of utmost importance. Failing to follow these guidelines may make it difficult for the candidate to meet the standard on that given day.

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Candidates should do outside reading and independent study in an effort to expand knowledge and understanding of all aspects of horsemastership. For the appropriate testing level, this in-depth study should develop sophistication in riding, maturity in training a mount or rider, and flexibility to adapt to horsemastership techniques that vary according to geographic area.

Candidates should also prepare themselves through practical experience in all requirements and possess a thorough understanding of the level tested. However, it is at the discretion of National Examiners as to what is covered during a test.

No candidate shall be allowed to take the test "just for the experience."

The testing shall be a constructive working session. The candidate shall be required to demonstrate and maintain adequate ability in performance and knowledge for the level tested.

Candidates should discuss with the Examiner any problems with the mount being used, should ask questions, and request permission to repeat any performance if so desired.

The attitude and maturity of the candidate shall be considered throughout the testing. Respect for other people and handling of the mounts shall be considered a direct reflection of the candidate's maturity level.

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