

# HOW TO GET STARTED

## DRESSAGE TO MUSIC AND RIDING TO MUSIC

### Introduction

The opportunity to ride to music and use it as a tool to increase the overall enjoyment of riding is becoming more and more popular. There are also now more dressage to music (DTM) competitions/championships run by British Dressage, British Riding Clubs, The Pony Club and RDA. Also, many competition centres regularly run unaffiliated DTM classes.

### Why use music?

Riding to music is great fun and can be done by riders of all abilities, at any stage of their riding education, using any type of horse and/or pony. Riding to music doesn't only have to be for competitive purposes. It can be a way of schooling, learning to ride better without the rider or their horse realising it!

The right choice of music can:

- Relax rider and/or horse,
- Motivate and give enjoyment,
- Help riders' understand and maintain consistent rhythm and tempo in all three paces (walk, trot and canter),
- Entertain spectators,
- Encourage rider development and progression.

### How to get started?

There are a number of steps to take if you want to try dressage to music

- Step 1 Calculate the horse/horses' walk, trot and canter tempos
- Step 2 Find some suitable music to use
- Step 3 Find out what opportunities there are to compete locally
- Step 4 How to create a freestyle dressage to music test (individual, pairs or quadrille)
- Step 5 Understand the legal implications of doing dressage to music
- Step 6 Know where to find additional resource material.

## STEP 1 – Calculate each horse/pony's paces

You need to know the tempo (speed) of each of the horse/pony's paces.

Tempo is measured in Beats Per Minute (bpms):

- Walk is typically between 92 and 108 bpms
- Trot is typically between 140 and 168 bpms
- Canter is typically between 92 and 108 bpms

Some horse's/pony's' bpms may be faster or slower than the ranges shown above

In a pairs or quadrille situation it may be necessary to use the 'average' tempo of each pace when selecting music. Usually a pony's paces are faster than a horse but not always. Also, the more schooled and balanced the horse or pony is then their paces would also be slightly slower.

### Method

#### **Medium Walk & Working Trot**

Using a stopwatch get someone to count **both** the horse or pony's foreleg footfalls for 15 seconds and multiply the result by four. Do this for two or three times to calculate average walk and trot bpms.

#### **Working Canter**

Using a stopwatch get someone to count the footfalls of only **one** of the horse or pony's forelegs for 15 seconds and multiply the result by four. Do this for two or three times to calculate an average.

#### **Quick Tip**

It can sometimes help to put a different colour bandage or boot on each foreleg to help counting.

## STEP 2 – Finding Suitable Music

Different types of music suit different horses and ponies and, if chosen carefully, can enhance their paces. If a rider finds it hard to maintain a good rhythm you might choose to use music with a strong beat. However, if you have a horse or pony who is a little weak and/or more difficult to ride in any of its paces, for example, it does not always show a clear four-time walk then you would choose walk music with a 'softer' (fuzzy) beat. This particularly important if you are choosing music to compete with.

Some riders prefer to ride to recognisable tunes because it helps them stay on the beat of the music thereby maintaining a more consistent rhythm and/or tempo. Rhythm refers to the correct footfalls for each pace and tempo refers to the speed within the pace. Some horses and ponies can show a lateral walk when tense and a canter can lose its clear three beat rhythm if there is a lack of energy/impulsion within the pace.

If you choose to use classical music then it may be better to have classical music for all three paces. You can also use vocals but be careful because they can distract and be too dominating. For competitions it is probably better to be discreet with vocals and perhaps only use them for one pace. Although, more riders are now choosing to use vocal tracks when competing in dressage to music competitions.

### Method

Start listening to as many instrumental tracks as possible and identifying whether they are suitable walk, trot or canter tracks. Time the bps by counting the music beats for 15 seconds and multiply the result by 4. Try to find tracks which have bps within the ranges quoted earlier or are very similar to the particular horse or pony's paces which you wish to use music with. You will recognise whether the tracks you have chosen are suitable when you see them being ridden to.

Borrow instrumental cds from friends and relatives, search charity shops, supermarkets and large DIY stores. Equimusic produce a selection of 'Music for Dressage' instrumental cds which have the bps for each track listed on the cd sleeve. They include lots of well-known tracks and are easy to use

It is now very easy and popular to download tracks from the internet. Two of the main internet retailers are Amazon UK and iTunes. You can search by artist, genre and track names if you have a certain song in mind. You can usually listen to a sample of the track before you decide to purchase it. Most tracks cost less than £1 per track. It is best not to select karaoke tracks as very often they do not have an instrumental melody line so they can sound repetitive and lacking energy.

Try listening to tracks while watching a video of your horse.

There are also many specialist companies and individuals who produce DTM cds and can also do floor patterns. Most of them have websites and some advertise in various Horse/Rider Magazines. See Step 6 of this document.

### STEP 3 – Music as part a normal schooling and opportunities to compete

#### Schooling

Music can be played while riding school shapes (circles and serpentines etc.) to develop the ability to feel the footfalls in each pace and maintain a consistent tempo especially through corners and in and out of shapes. It can help modify 'over-riding' within a pace.

#### Competitions

##### What other opportunities are there to compete?

Dressage to Music Freestyle Classes are run the Pony Club, British Riding Clubs and British Dressage and also at unaffiliated competitions. There are many classes catering for riders of all abilities with some tests requiring only walk and trot movements to music (Introductory Freestyle). Many of them having structures which enable qualification to various Regional/Area and ultimately National Championships.

The Dressage To Music Freestyle Test Sheets which each organisation produces will show:

- The minimum and maximum time allowed for the freestyle test.
- Whether the test is to be ridden in a 20m x 40m arena or a 20m x 60m arena. (Sometimes Qualifiers will be run in a short arena and the Championships will be run in long arena.)
- The compulsory movements to be included within the freestyle test.

All such organisations have excellent web sites which give comprehensive details about their competition structures and the dressage to music test requirements at each level. Web site information is included in throughout this document and summarised in Step 5.

#### Pairs (Pas de Deux)

A pairs or quadrille freestyle can be created and practised – perhaps with the eventual outcome being a performance to fellow Club members or an entry to the British Riding Clubs Quadrille Competition.

#### Quadrille

For this type of freestyle performance it is better for the music to have a theme. Some examples being: Jungle Book, Cops and Robbers, Nursery Rhymes or Strictly come Dancing.

There are endless possibilities of themes – Christmas, Disney, Musicals, Films, Cartoons, Halloween, Children's TV Programmes and many more. The British Riding Clubs website has video showing various clubs performing Quadrilles and there are always many Quadrille, Pairs and Individual Freestyle Programmes to watch on YouTube.

### STEP 3 – Music as part of normal schooling and opportunities to compete (continued)

#### British Dressage

There are British Dressage Freestyle To Music Tests for Introductory, Preliminary, Novice, Elementary, Medium and Advanced Medium levels. It also uses FEI Freestyle Tests for PSG, Inter I, Inter II and Grand Prix

All of the freestyle tests can be purchased online from [www.britishdressage.co.uk](http://www.britishdressage.co.uk) or [www.dressagediagrams.org](http://www.dressagediagrams.org). Alternatively, you can also order by telephone no. 024 76 698830.

#### British Riding Clubs

British Riding Clubs currently use the British Dressage Preliminary, Novice, Elementary, Medium and Advanced Medium Freestyle To Music Tests. There is also a BRC Pairs Freestyle to Music Test. Area Qualifiers are held throughout the UK cumulating in a National BRC Dressage to Music Championship which is normally held in October each year.

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The BR Pairs Freestyle to Music Test is available from [www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook](http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook).

The Quadrille competition is held at the BRC Dressage to Music Championships and the top four Quadrille Teams are invited to perform at Olympia Horse Show in London. Further information can be found online at [www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs](http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs).

#### The Pony Club

During the last few years, the Pony Club has been developing its dressage to music competitions and it now has three Championships for Individual Riders, a Pairs Championship and a Musical Ride Competition which is held at the annual Dressage Championships.

The relevant freestyle tests are:

1. Novice Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012
2. Intermediate Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012
3. Open Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012
4. Pairs Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012

All of the above dressage to music freestyle tests can be found online at [www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests](http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests).

Further information about the musical ride competition can be found online at [www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity\\_musical\\_ride\\_competition](http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical_ride_competition).

## STEP 4 – How To Create A Dressage To Music Freestyle

### Editing Music

The music is edited to the timings of the floor pattern. At the lower levels, sometimes it is easier to edit the music first and then work out a freestyle floor pattern to the music. It is good to try and show some interpretation of the music. For example, at novice level a rider may try to ride medium trot or medium canter to a crescendo in the music to show interpretation.

In tests which include all three paces and normally last around 4 ½ minutes you would expect the initial music timings to be within the following bands:

Intro before first halt 15 – 25 seconds (not included in overall time limit)

Walk 40 seconds – 1 minute 10 seconds

Trot 1 minute 30 seconds – 2 minutes

Canter 1 minute – 1 minute 30 seconds

Ending before final halt 20 – 30 seconds

The paces can be shown in any order within the freestyle test. The intro and ending pace will depend on the rider's ability and the music selected. The walk and canter timings will obviously depend on the quality of the walk and the rider's ability to show more complex canter work e.g. counter canter at novice level.

If you have sourced your music from cds you will need computer software capable of loading your chosen tracks onto your hard drive as MP3 files (e.g. Windows Media Player). Alternatively, you will need a computer with reliable internet access to download your selected tracks if you have chosen tracks on the internet. Please note that iTunes tracks will need to be converted to MP3 files for editing purposes. You will then need some MP3 files editing software such as Audacity, which is available as a free download from the internet. A search on the internet will show many MP3 editing software programmes. However, the editor of this document has used Audacity for several years and it has proved itself to be quite intuitive and very reliable to use.

When you have edited the music for each part of your freestyle you save them as MP3 files which then need to be joined together as a single MP3 file. There are also free software downloads available to do this. Always produce two competition cds and hand them both to the competition organiser (just in case there is a problem playing a cd). You can use Windows Media player to burn (create) your DTM cds. You need to make sure that your competition cds are formatted as MP3 files not WMA files otherwise they will probably not play in most current sound systems.

## STEP 4 – How To Create A Dressage To Music Freestyle (Continued)

<b>Creating Freestyles</b>	<p>Whichever organisation you chose to compete under will publish Freestyle Test Sheets which detail the compulsory movements required at each level. Some organisations allow you to print the Freestyle Test Sheets from their respective Website (RDA, FEI Para Equestrian and The Pony Club) and others (British Dressage &amp; British Riding Clubs) require you to purchase them from either their online bookshops or other websites such as <a href="http://www.dressagediagrams.org">www.dressagediagrams.org</a></p> <p>The movements can be ridden in any order and the arena letters can be used to help you create a floor pattern. Try and make the floor pattern clear for the judge to understand. Some arena symmetry is helpful if compulsory shapes i.e. circles are to be ridden on both reins. Incorporate the compulsory movements in each pace at the beginning of each track and then ‘fill in’ with circles, loops and serpentine until the music changes for the next pace. Wherever possible plan the floor pattern so that the things the rider finds more difficult are less exposed to the judge e.g. canter transitions at the ‘A’ end of the arena, perhaps on a circle.</p>
<b>Practise Makes Perfect</b>	<p>Any freestyle test should always be practised in a correctly sized arena. The riders and helpers need to learn the music so that they know when each track is coming to the end and can prepare for the transition to the next pace in the floor pattern.</p> <p>Try to practise on different surfaces – they all ride differently. By learning the music the riders and helpers should be able to cope with adjusting the floor pattern ‘on the hoof’. Be prepared to cut across the arena or add extra circles when waiting for the music to change to the next pace. <b>TRY NOT TO CHANGE PACE UNTIL THE MUSIC CHANGES!</b> This can lose valuable marks in a competition.</p>

## STEP 5 - Understand the legal implications of dressage to music

<b>The Legal ‘Stuff’</b>	<p>There are currently two separate independent companies which licence the use of music and collect royalties for the music: PPL collects and distributes money for the use of recorded music on behalf of record companies and performers. PRS for Music collects and distributes money for the use of the musical composition and lyrics on behalf of authors, songwriters, composers and publishers. In most instances a licence is required from both organisations to legally play recorded music in public. This is because they both represent different rights holders and have separate licences, terms and conditions. Buying an audio cd, a music download or using MP3 files which have been created from an audio cd or from music downloads only allows its use for domestic purposes, such as listening to it at home for private enjoyment.</p>
<b>Legally registering your music</b>	<p>If you wish to compete in a competition run by British Dressage, British Riding Clubs or the Pony Club you will need to be a member of British Dressage. It has a range of special membership levels depending on whether you only intend to compete in freestyle classes or not. BD music membership only is not expensive.</p> <p><b>Being a member of BD and registering your music selections means your dressage to music can be played legally in public. It is not a difficult process.</b> Full details can be found at <a href="http://www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle">www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle</a>. Alternatively, you can telephone British Dressage on 024 76 698830.</p>

## Step 6 Where to find additional resources

<b>Online</b>	<p><b>British Dressage</b> <a href="http://www.britishdressage.org">www.britishdressage.org</a> <a href="http://www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle">www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle</a></p> <p><b>British Riding Clubs</b> <a href="http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs">www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs</a> <a href="http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook">www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook</a></p> <p><b>The Pony Club</b> <a href="http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests">www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests</a> <a href="http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical_ride_competition">www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical_ride_competition</a></p> <p><b>Dressage Diagrams online</b> <a href="http://www.dressagediagrams.org">www.dressagediagrams.org</a></p>
<b>Books</b>	<p><b>Dressage to Music – Build a Freestyle from Choreography to Competition</b> <b>Claire Lilley</b></p> <p>This book covers all aspects of riding to music from schooling exercises and how to create individual freestyle tests through to choreography ideas for Musical Drill Rides and Quadrilles.</p>
<b>Professional Suppliers</b>	<p>There are now many professionals producing DTM cds for riders of all levels and abilities. Here are the names of just a few of them: Equivisions Sapphire Sounds Gaynor Colborn GG Jingles</p> <p>An internet search will find others and all of them give information on their websites about what they provide and how much it will cost.</p>