



USA WORKING EQUITATION

The Language of Judging



SUBJECT	COMMENT	INTERPRETATION
Activity	Needs more active strides	When the movement is clearly average or ordinary, this comment can use words such as more thrust power, drive needed to achieve expression.
	Needs expression	Refers to the need to see an athletic stride in trot and canter with clear suspension. Willingness of the horse to perform the movement.
Aids	On the aids	The horse is monitoring the rider's aids successfully.
	Aids misunderstood; strides should lengthen not accelerate	Driving aids should give the stepping under not speeding up of the horse.
	Behind the leg	Horse is not going forward from his rider's leg. Slow to react to the leg; sluggish or unwilling to move energetically forward.
	Uneven contact	Horse avoids the communication of energy between himself and the rider.
Bit	Above the bit/hollow	Horse avoids acceptance of the contact by putting the muzzle forward and upward, usually retracting the poll. Horse is not working over his back into a round frame and elastic contact. Horse will carry his head too high, allowing his topline to hollow and his hocks to trail.
	Against the bit/hand	Pushes against, unyielding. Will often show the following resistances: mouth open, head tilting, unsteady head/snatching at contact, tongue out of the side of the mouth, crossing jaw in downward transitions
	Behind the bit	Shrinks from contact with the bit. The head may or may not be behind the vertical.
	On the bit	Supple and quiet acceptance.



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Back	Needs to swing/relax through back	Horse appears stiff; cannot produce supple and elastic movements.
Crookedness	Crooked; lack of forward thrust	Can apply to reinback, halts, flying changes, and riding down the centerline: bringing the hindquarters either in or out to avoid engagement.
	On two tracks	Forefeet not aligned with hind feet on straight or curved lines.
	Quarters trailing	In half-pass or leg yield horse loses the correct positioning and his quarters are left behind.
	Quarters leading/in advance	Half-pass or leg yield where the horse's hindquarters appear to be moving ahead of his shoulders.
Engagement	Needs to improve engagement	Hind legs not stepping under to cause the relative lowering of the hindquarters for more weight bearing. Indicates lack of strength.
	Not tracking up	Steps are too short in walk and occasionally in trot. Hind feet not stepping into the prints of the forefeet.
	Wide behind	Horse loses engagement into the halt, or in the medium trot or medium canter. In order to evade taking weight back on his hocks, the horse splays his hind legs.
Falling/Leaning	Falling in	Horse drifts inside the track or through corners, dropping the shoulder due to lack of balance.
	Falling out	Horse falls out through the shoulder when executing turns, corners, or circles. This is a serious fault that usually indicates a lack of lateral suppleness or balance.
	Leaning in	Horse tilts withers and inside shoulder around corners and circles due to lack of suppleness, engagement, and balance.



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Forehand	Leaning on the forehand/ could be more uphill	Majority of the horse's weight is on his shoulders, and his balance is therefore downhill.
Frame	Deep	Refers to the horse dropping its poll and tending to be behind the vertical. Describes a slight tendency rather than a significant 'behind the vertical' problem.
	Frame short thru neck	Can refer to acceptance of the bit, also to engagement and the uphill travel of the horse. Rarely is a swinging back shown with a short, tight neck.
	Frame too open; need roundness	Often refers to the acceptance of the bridle and lack of collection and engagement. Seen in horses working slightly above the bit.
	Hollowing	When horse loses his outline or frame.
Geometry	Circle not round	Circle is some shape other than round.
	Circle not centered	Circle not placed correctly.
	Loops not even Loops unequal	Loops of serpentine are not the same size.
Halt	Not square	Horse not standing square, with a 'leg at each corner.'
	Resting off/near hind	Horse rests one hind leg when in halt.
	Immobility not maintained. Unsteady halt.	Horse fidgets or does not stand for a minimum of 3 seconds.



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Head position	Behind the vertical	Horse's nose is no longer on or slightly in front of the vertical. Horse may or may not be behind the bit.
	Head tilting	Horse tips his head to one side, usually around a small circle or any exercise that requires the horse to flex at the poll and bend uniformly throughout his body.
Jump	Canter needs more power. Canter lacks jump.	A canter with jump has spring rather than flattened speed. It will show clear suspension.
Lameness	Irregular	Can be used to describe unlevel-ness or unevenness in the stride or irregularity in the rhythm of the gait.
	Uneven	An irregularity in walk or trot in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically, the right leg making a different <i>length</i> of step than the left leg.
	Unlevel	An irregularity in walk or trot in which the front or hind pair of legs does not move symmetrically, the right leg making a different <i>height</i> of step than the left leg.
Lightness	Improve self-carriage for lightness	Related to liveliness of the pace and acceptance of bit. The opposite is a labored heaviness with weight over the forehead.
Lengthening	Needs more ground cover. Work to improve thrust/ power/ energy/drive.	Steps are too short. Paces should show increased ground cover and drive from the hindquarters. Acceleration is not lengthening.
Reinback	Reinback not in diagonal pairs. Not in diagonals.	A lateral reinback where both legs on one side move at the same time.
	Dragging	Horse drags his feet in reinback.



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Rhythm	Losing rhythm	Horse's rhythm is not consistent. Rhythm can be variable due to tension or a momentary loss of balance through a turn or after a transition. Can also apply to lack of symmetry in reinback.
	Surging	Horse changes rhythm and speed of the movement.
Tempo	Tempo varies	Horse periodically gets quicker or slower. Often seen in lengthenings.
Tension	Braced	Horse defensively setting/holding its muscles contracted against an opposing force such as the rider's disturbing legs, seat, or hands.
	Tense/tight thru back	Spookiness, tightening through the topline, not going forward, shortening of steps, losing correct rhythm, stiff strides.
	Work to increase suppleness	Horse is rigid, tight, or tense in the back, with stiff strides.
Thoroughness	Must be more thru	Refers to trailing hind legs that are not pushing under the body, resulting in short, stiff hind leg action.