



USA WORKING EQUITATION

Gaits of the WE Horse



WALK:

- Clarity of the walk can be evaluated by observing the “V” formed by the two limbs on the same side of the horse, with even and determined steps and the hind feet touching the ground on or in front of the hoof prints of the forefeet.
- Judged by the regularity of the four-beat rhythm, activity and variety of the lengths of steps, movement that flows through the whole body with swing in the back, looseness, and suppleness.
- Positive indicators are shoulders with freedom and reach, ground covering strides, and oscillation of the neck.

Free Walk: A pace of relaxation in which the horse is allowed complete freedom to lower and stretch out his head and neck. The degree of ground cover and length of stride, with hind feet stepping clearly in front of the footprints of the front feet, are essential to the quality of the Free walk.

Medium Walk: A clear, regular, and unconstrained walk of moderate lengthening. The horse, remaining on the bit, walks energetically but relaxed with even and determined steps and showing natural longitudinal oscillation of the neck.

Extended Walk: A pace with maximum length of stride and frame and showing the natural longitudinal oscillation of the neck while still remaining on contact. The hind feet touch the ground in front of the prints of the forefeet.

Collected Walk: A pace with shorter steps and a more uphill balance than the Medium walk, with no sacrifice of activity. The neck oscillates less than in the Medium and Extended walk and the frame is shorter, with the neck stretched and arched upward. The tempo remains the same as in the Medium or Extended walk.



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TROT:

- Judged by the regularity of the two-beat rhythm with a moment of suspension, elastic with well-engaged hindquarters and a supple back, and active and varying lengths of steps in the different trots.
- Positive indicators are purity of the two-beat rhythm, reaching leg appears to strike the ground before reaching the vertical, balance between fore and hind limb movement, and scope, reach, and range of motion.
- Over-track is increased in the amount of airtime through the impulsion of the hind legs covering more ground per stride.

Working Trot: Horse is staying on the bit. Horse goes forward with even, elastic steps in a pace between the Collected and Medium trot. Characterized by a reasonable degree of balance.

Medium Trot: A pace of moderate lengthening with a longer stride than in the Collected or Working trot, but shorter than the Lengthened trot. The uphill balance is greater than in the Working or Lengthened trot. The tempo should remain nearly the same as in the Collected trot.

Lengthened Trot: A pace in which the stride, frame, and phase of suspension are longer than in the Working trot, but the degree of uphill balance required in the Medium trot is not expected. The tempo remains the same as in the Working trot.

Collected Trot: A pace with shorter steps and a more uphill balance than in the Working trot, with no sacrifice of activity. The horse's frame is shorter, with the neck outstretched and arched upward. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the Medium or Lengthened trot.



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INTERMEDIATE GAIT:

There are many breeds of gaited horses, each with a unique way of going and name for its medium-speed gait (between walk and canter). The Rulebook (section 1.5b) refers to these gait variations collectively as an “intermediate” gait. Gaited horses may use an intermediate gait instead of the trot in Dressage and EOH trials.

The intermediate gait should be a smooth, clear four-beat gait. Important characteristics are regularity of rhythm and tempo, relaxation, and bend and suppleness in the back. The gait must be consistent throughout. Depending on the level, it must be ridden in a working, lengthened, or collected manner.

The gaited horse is judged the same as a non-gaited horse: on regularity, rhythm, bend, consistency, lightness, relaxation, and impulsion appropriate to the level ridden, as well as the transitions into and out of the gait.

- Working Gait:** With an energetic, regular rhythm, the horse must go forward with consistent and elastic steps. The back must be relaxed and the shoulders free, while there is an obvious push from the hindquarters. The hind legs actively glide under the horse. The horse must show proper balance and maintain light contact with the bit. The horse’s nose must be on or slightly in front of the vertical.
- Lengthened Gait:** A variation of the working gait. The horse covers more ground while maintaining the same tempo and consistent rhythm as in the working gait. Speeding up is a fault.
- Collected Gait:** The horse, remaining “on the bit”, moves forward with the neck raised and arched and showing clear self-carriage. The head approaches the vertical position, and a light contact is maintained with the mouth. The hocks are well engaged and must maintain an energetic gliding impulsion, enabling the shoulders to move more freely. Although the steps are shorter, elasticity and cadence are not lessened.



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CANTER:

- Working Canter:** Pace between Collected and Medium canter in which the horse remains on the bit, goes forward with an even, light, three-beat pace with good hock action. Maintains balance and tempo.
- Medium Canter:** A three-beat pace of moderate lengthening with a longer stride than in the Collected or Working canter, but shorter than the Lengthened canter. The uphill balance is greater than in the Working or Lengthened canter. The tempo should remain nearly the same as in the Collected canter.
- Lengthened Canter:** A three-beat pace in which the stride, frame, and phase of suspension are longer than in the Working canter, but the degree of uphill balance required in the Medium canter is not expected. The tempo remains the same as in the Working canter.
- Collected Canter:** A three-beat pace with shorter steps and a more uphill balance than in the Working canter, with no sacrifice of activity. The horse's frame is shorter, with the neck outstretched and arched upward. The tempo remains nearly the same as in the Medium or Lengthened canter.