

WESTERN DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION

OF AMERICA

Therapeutic Riding Guidelines for WDAA EXCEPTIONAL RIDER TESTS

1. This class is for riders with special needs (not limited to physical disabilities only). Classes may be split between youth and adult if entries warrant.
2. Tack and Apparel: Western tack and attire may be used. Specific equipment needed for adaptive use to assure safety is permitted. A description of the adaptive equipment must be listed on the entry form with rider information.
 - a. No chain lead ropes are permitted. The lead rope may be attached to the noseband of the bridle or a halter or cavesson that is properly fitted and worn underneath or over the bridle. Under NO circumstances may the lead rope be attached directly to the bit. Attaching the lead rope to the bit will result in immediate disqualification.
 - b. An ASTM approved riding helmet must be worn by riders at all times while mounted or on ground accompanying any equine.

3. Rider Assistance:

Leadline Tests:

The rider may have a leader and up to two side-walkers as required for the safety and security of the rider. These assistants must be approved by the instructor/owner of the horse. Assistants will not be provided by the show location and must have signed show grounds waiver.

- LEADER: The leader must safely control the riders mount. They may guide the horse and must maintain safe control of the mount at all times. They are not permitted to pull or tug the horse in any direction unless for safety reasons. Leaders are permitted to help the rider guide the horse, if they are physically incapable of doing so. The leader may not give any coaching towards the rider, their job is to have complete control of the mount.
- SIDEWALKER: Each sidewalker must stay at the seat position of the rider while the rider is mounted. Their job is to ensure the riders balance and safety. They are permitted to keep physical contact with the rider for assistance and safety. The sidewalker is not permitted to physically touch the horse for any “push” or forward movement. One sidewalker is allowed to coach the rider while mounted if there is no COACH present in the arena.
- COACH: A coach is permitted to call the test and help give direction from either letter E or B at the side of the arena.

Coached Tests:

The rider may have a coach but NO leader or sidewalkers in order to ride in the “Coached” level therapeutic western dressage tests. The coach must be an instructor of the rider and must have signed a show grounds liability waiver to participate.

- COACH: A coach is permitted in the arena with the rider and mount to assure safety of the rider and to help guide and focus the rider. The coach must be at least ten feet away from the rider while performing a dressage test. The coach is only permitted to physically help the rider or horse if there are safety concerns or the rider is having physical inability to finish the test. The coach may help the rider with verbal guidance and encouragement.
4. Coaching is allowed by the instructor, coach, or sidewalker ONLY.
 5. Reins may be attached to the bit, bit-less bridle, side rings of the halter, bosal, or sidepull. Reins may or may not be attached to the bit depending the rider's ability. Rider must keep control of the reins to the best of their physical ability.
 6. Rider must make an effort to keep his/her feet in the stirrups at all times unless they do not normally do so by instruction. Adaptive footwear is allowed but must be listed on entry form.
 7. Disqualification: At the judge's discretion, the rider may be disqualified in the event that the judge feels that there is a safety issue. This includes but is not limited to: if the horse has an obvious illness/ lameness issue, unsafe tack or equipment, is unsportsman-like, or any other reason the judge seems fit.
 8. A liability release must be signed at each individual show grounds.
 9. JUDGING: Horse and rider will be judged on
 - a. Connection of rider and mount. How well is the communication between the rider (at the best of their abilities) and how does the mount respond to the connection and communication of the rider.
 - b. Balance/Effort/Equitation of the rider: Rider effort to perform to the best of their abilities in order to successfully execute each maneuver of the test being performed. The rider's equitation and balance in their position on the mount with or without assistance.
 - c. Accuracy of maneuvers: The successful completion and execution of each maneuver given in the test being performed.
 - d. Gaits/Responsiveness of Mount: Quality and regularity, freedom of movement of the horse under the conditions of the test being performed. How well does the horse respond to the maneuvers being asked with the quality expected of a dressage horse BUT ALSO how well the horse can perform this quality while also being responsive to the needs of the rider.