

Apparel for Dressage Competition

(for Equine Canada sanctioned competitions)

Helmets



RULES:

All athletes, regardless of age or level of competition must wear ASTM/SEI, BSI/BS EN, EN, or AS/NZS approved protective headgear at all times when mounted at any EC sanctioned Dressage competition at the event location.

A suitable protective hat cover may be worn in the case of inclement weather.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A dark, conservative approved helmet is recommended. Helmets with vents are cooler in the summer and may be particularly important for children who may not be aware that they are becoming overheated.

FITTING:

All helmets, bowlers and top hats should sit with the brim horizontal to the ground and above the eyebrows. They should fit snugly, so that when the brim is gently wiggled, the rider's forehead moves with it. The hat should not move as the rider trots, canters, etc., whether the harness is attached or not. There should not be any pressure points on the rider's head; in that case, it is better to try a different fit (i.e. 'long oval') or a different brand altogether. If need be, the rider can go a size up and use foam padding to fill in the gaps and ensure an secure fit. The harness is designed to keep the helmet in the correct position in the event of a fall; it should always be fastened securely.

If a rider with long, thick hair usually schools with her hair loose or in a pony tail, it may be necessary to have one helmet for schooling and one for showing as the hair is normally tucked into the helmet when competing, which may require a larger size to fit comfortably.

Hair



RULES:

Long hair must be secured in a hairnet or tied back in a braid or a bun.

(No pony tails)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Unless a rider has very thick and long hair (in which case it may need to be in a long braid), the rider's hair should not be noticeable. It should be secured in a small bun at the base of the neck with a 'show bow' bun holder, or hidden within the helmet in a hairnet. Some rider's prefer to use hairspray instead of a hairnet; just be sure to have it along for touch-ups as necessary.

FITTING:

Hairnets – make sure all stray hairs are contained in the hairnet.

Bun holders – a hairnet may also be needed to make sure all of the rider's hair is neat and tidy.

Shirts



RULES:

No rules regarding shirts, except in the case of extreme heat or humidity, in which case the steward may allow riders not to wear jackets, but *solid colour, or pin striped, long or short sleeved riding shirt with a collar. Contrast collars, pinstripes or piping are allowed. Shirt collar may be opened and stock ties must be removed unless pinned to the athlete's shirt. A cooling or tailored dressage vest may be worn over a long or short sleeved riding shirt. The vest colour must conform to the rules for jacket colours. Sleeveless shirts and T-Shirts are not permitted.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A long-sleeved shirt with white cuffs presents the most 'finished' picture, however a short-sleeved shirt with a matching choker or snap collar probably provides the most versatility as it can be worn with the jacket on cooler days and alone with the choker (rather than a stock) when jackets are excused. Choose one of the newer fabrics that are slightly stretchy and breathable if possible.

FITTING:

The shirt must be long enough that it stays tucked into the breeches at all times. It will be most comfortable if it is form-fitting enough not to have too much bulk inside the jacket, but not so tight it will constrict the rider's movements.

Ties, etc.



RULES:

A tie, bow tie, hunting stock, or choker may be worn.

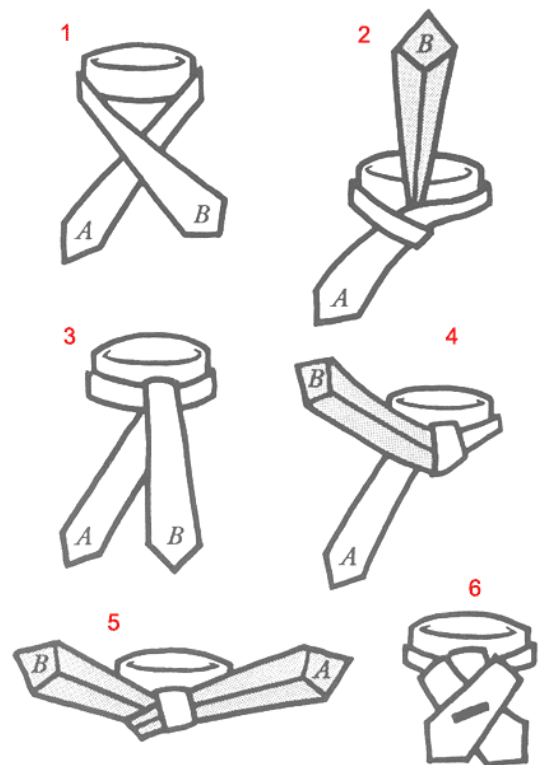
RECOMMENDATIONS:

At the lower levels a choker or snap collar is perfectly acceptable, is simple to put on and remove, and presents a neat and tidy picture. Male riders wear a shirt with a collar and a tie instead of a riding shirt and choker. A stock-tie is the normal neckwear for dressage competition. They come in ‘pre-tied’ or ‘untied’ models, and though the purists might disagree, you can get the right look if you take care fastening either style. It is normally secured with a stock pin; the usual way is to have the pin horizontal.

FITTING:

The choker normally has a small buttonhole which fastens on the lower of the two buttons on the collar of the shirt, and fastens in the back with buttons, snaps or Velcro. Make sure the shirt collar is covered and the choker is straight. A loose choker looks sloppy and a tight one is uncomfortable, so sometimes it is necessary to make slight adjustments to the choker that comes with the shirt.

Some practice will be required to be able to tie a stock perfectly. It should ‘fill’ the space between the lapels of the riding coat with no shirt or collar showing. You will likely need an extra safety pin or



two to keep the stock in place once it is fastened.

Jackets



RULES:

A dark-coloured jacket or tailored dressage vest with a long or short sleeved shirt. Contrasting collars, pin stripes and piping are allowed. No tailcoats permitted through 4th level.

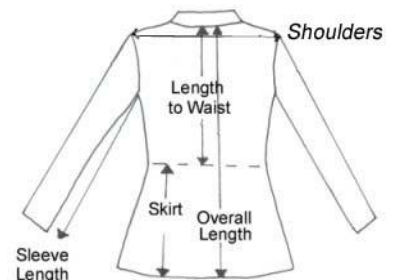
In inclement weather, a warm or waterproof overcoat that is transparent or conservative in colour may be worn.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Navy or black are most often seen, however grey or brown may also be appropriate, either in the 3-button hunter style or 4-button dressage style. The short ‘cutaway’ jackets are also acceptable. Lightweight technical fabrics with some stretch are very comfortable and becoming more popular.

FITTING:

There are four key areas to focus on when selecting a jacket. First of all, the jacket should be roomy enough in the shoulders, arms and body to allow the rider to move freely, but still present a streamlined, fitted look. Some of the fabrics with stretch make this much easier to achieve. The overall length of the jacket has two components – from the neck to the waist (‘short’, ‘regular’, and ‘tall’ or ‘long’), and from the waist to the hem of the coat. It is most important to get the length to the waist correct – if the waist (narrowest) part of the jacket doesn’t correspond with the rider’s narrowest part, the jacket will not hang correctly. The



JACKET FITTING MEASUREMENTS

length of the 'skirt' (waist to hem) is less critical; some riders prefer a slightly longer or shorter coat and it does not necessarily detract from the overall picture, but the hem usually lies about even with the 'bottom of the bottom'. Dressage jackets are definitely expected to be longer than those seen in the hunter/jumper ring.

Body Protective Vests



RULES:

A body protective vest may be worn in colours permitted for jackets.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

An SEI/ASTM or BETA-approved vest will provide a tested degree of protection for the ribcage, chest and spine against bruising in case of a fall. Choose the vest which is most comfortable and provides freedom of movement.

FITTING:

Protective vests should cover the collar bone down to just below the ribs in front, and from the base of the neck to just above the tailbone in back. The arm holes need to be big enough for freedom of movement; the back should not be so long that it interferes with the saddle when the rider sits down or jumps; and the vest should feel form-fitting without being constricting. They are adjusted on the sides and front with Velcro, zippers, and/or lacing, so once the correct length is found, the width is usually easy to fit.

Breeches



RULES:

White or light-coloured breeches.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Full-seat breeches are the norm in the dressage ring, enabling the rider to stick to the saddle when sitting at the trot and canter, but full seat or knee-patch are allowed. White is most often seen, but beige or light grey are also common. Test the breeches with the type of underwear you like to wear when riding as sometimes the light-coloured breeches reveal more than we would like! You should wear a (usually black) belt with your show breeches as it presents a much more ‘finished’ look when riding without a jacket, and also may save the day should your button or zipper malfunction!

FITTING:

The two things to consider for fitting breeches are the leg length and the rise to the waist. There are no standard leg lengths for ‘regular’ or ‘long’, so you may need to try on breeches from different manufacturers to find the ones that suit you. Not all breeches come in more than one leg length. Regular rise breeches work best with taller riders and longer upper bodies. They are also a better choice once you reach the upper levels and are riding in a shadbelly, or tailcoat, as there should not be much of a gap between your breeches and the coat’s vest points. Mid-rise or low-rise are a matter of personal preference, but take care with low-rise breeches that they are high enough in the back so that your shirt will stay neatly tucked in when you are riding without a jacket on.

Boots



RULES:

Tall dark coloured boots, either Dress, Field, with or without zippers.

Juniors are permitted to wear jodhpurs and jodhpur boots.

At Bronze Level Shows only dark coloured zipped half-chaps and paddock boots are allowed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Black Dress (no laces) boots are the ‘most correct’ footwear for showing in dressage, but as the rules state, there is quite a bit of leeway in this area and, depending on your budget and particular challenges presented by some rider’s legs and feet, you can certainly be properly turned out in one of the alternatives. It should be noted that while you can wear half-chaps and paddock boots at bronze-level shows, should you qualify for championships which may be held at a higher level, you will have to find tall one-piece boots to compete there.

Zippers make tall boots much easier to get into and take off, but they are also the weakest point on a boot and it is not abnormal to have to replace the zippers every couple of years under normal use.

Always store boots standing up with boot trees inserted; this is probably the biggest single thing you can do to prolong the life of your boots. Waterproofing the feet is also a good idea, and make sure the zippers are kept clean and free of grease or soap. When you clean your boots, giving the zippers a quick once-over with a dampened nail brush and a spritz of WD-40 will help make them last.

FITTING:

Comfortable feet and the right height and width of calf are the most important things to consider when fitting boots. A dressage rider does not bend the knee or flex at the ankles as much as a jumping rider, so the boots can be less flexible as well.

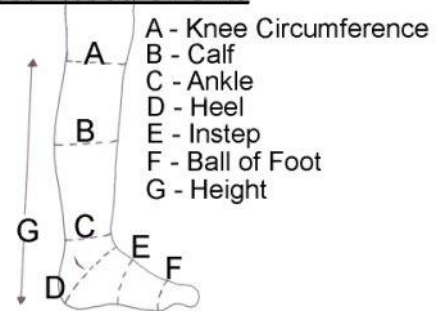
For Dress Boots: The leather used on dressage boots tends to be quite a bit stiffer than that found on field boots, and there is usually a ‘stiffener’ of plastic (originally whalebone) that runs up the rear seam. This contributes to the tall; somewhat ‘stovepipe’ (rather than a tapered shape) look to dressage boots, with only a couple of wrinkles at the ankle. Because of this, dress boots do not drop a great deal as they break in, so the height when new should not be excessive. A boot that is a centimetre or two taller at the back of the knee than is comfortable will usually drop enough over time to allow the rider to bend the knee and yet maintain a very long look to the boot. It is not necessary to have extremely tight boots to keep them up, so the calf width chosen should be snug at most.

Field Boots: Field boots, which have laces (or more recently, elastic lacing) at the ankles are usually much softer than dress boots and are the most correct boot for jumping competitions. When new, they should be quite snug in the leg and anywhere from 1 – 3

centimetres ‘too tall’ at the back of the knee to allow for the drop they undergo during breaking in. It is normal to have several wrinkles at the ankle on a properly-fitting field boot once they have been worn for a while, but it is important that they remain as tall as possible to present the best look. Make sure the laces are tied securely and any loose ends are tucked in.

Paddock Boots and Half-Chaps: If you plan to show in this option it is wise to go with black. It will present the most traditional appearance and you won’t have the worry about matching the brown of the boots with the half-chaps. Essentially, you select a paddock boot (either lace-up or zippered style) that is comfortable, and then choose a leather half chap of the correct height and width for your calf. Half-chaps should fit very snugly so they don’t slip down, and the zippers should be maintained just like on regular boots.

Boot Measurements



Gloves



RULES:

Required

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is best to stick to black gloves at the lower levels. White gloves draw attention to the hands, and are best left to more advanced riders. Look for a cool glove with good grip for the summer. A washable glove is a bonus as they tend to get sweaty and smelly fairly quickly. Make sure you school in gloves at least some of the time, or they will feel quite foreign when you wear them at a show. It's not a bad idea to have two sets of gloves; one you wear most of the time and one for shows. Take your 'schooling' pair to the show as a back-up.

FITTING:

A comfortable glove is a well-fitting glove. Gloves from different manufacturers fit differently, so try several to find the best ones for your hands.

Spurs



RULES:

Optional at all levels

Must be metal and a conservative color, with smooth arms. Both spurs must be the same. Shanks must either curve downward or point straight back from the centre. Maximum length is 5 cm. Spurs must be worn in matching pairs.

Rowels must be smooth/blunt, and free to rotate. They must also point directly back from the centre of the spur.

Protective bands that keep the spurs in place are allowed.

Also allowed: Swan-neck spurs; 'Impulse' spurs, with round plastic knobs; 'Dummy' spurs with no shank; 'Spursuader' spurs. 'Click-on' spurs also allowed; rowels must be positioned vertically.

Juniors on ponies may not use spurs with rowels.

No other spurs than those listed here allowed anywhere on showgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Whether you wear spurs or not is up to you and your coach. If you sometimes ride with them, bring them even if you don't plan to use them – sometimes they are useful in the warm-up or at the end of the day as the horse gets tired.

FITTING:

The arms of the spurs should lie horizontal, at a height on the boots at which they are most effective. Stainless steel spurs can usually be gently bent by hand to make a slightly tighter or looser fit on your boots. The buckle on spur straps should lie at the

center or to the outside of the rider's foot on each side, and should be trimmed to fit neatly, without loose ends flapping about. If leather, straps should be cleaned and polished the same as your riding boots.

Whips



RULES:

A whip may be carried at all levels in Bronze, Silver & Gold competitions.

May not be carried in Championship competitions except Equitation/Medal classes.

Total length, including lash, may not exceed 120 cm (47 ¼")

Whips for ponies may not exceed 100 cm (39 ½")

Telescoping whips are not permitted.

Longeing whips are permitted when longeing an unmounted horse only.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A dark, conservative colour is recommended. Pick one with a comfortable handle for your hand and one that feels balanced. Mark your name on it. As with spurs, bring your whip whether you plan to use it or not.

FITTING:

Generally, smaller horses should require shorter whips, but as long as a whip falls within the rules, personal preference and the coach's recommendation should be your guide.