

Directives for Assessing the Degree of Difficulty in a Freestyle Test

1. Initial Comments

The assessment of the degree of difficulty in a Freestyle test cannot be made separately from the other technical and artistic scores. There is a close connection between the degree of difficulty and the technical execution. Lack of quality in the execution of the movement is considered a deficit in the performance ability of rider and/or horse. These must be taken into consideration as deductions in the degree of difficulty scoring.

The **basic requirements** of the Freestyle are achieved when the rider shows all compulsory movements listed in the test sheets for each level. The rider can increase the degree of difficulty and raise the score for his performance (when executed with technical correctness) by:

- Appropriate repetition of single exercises, especially the exercises with a coefficient.
- Exceeding the minimum requirements of the exercises, such as number of simple and flying tempi changes or piaffe steps, but without exaggeration.
- Showing a steeper angle than requested in half passes possibly combined with changes of direction
- Executing the movements on lines without the support of arena rails, such as on the inner track, the quarter or centre line, or on angled or curved lines, (e.g. circle or serpentine).
- Well-chosen placing of movements in positions that make their execution more difficult: for example directly in front of the arena rails, as well as pirouettes directed outwards, possibly towards the spectators.
- Well-presented clearly defined combinations of movements (e.g. half-passes in trot followed by half-passes in passage, flying changes every second stride immediately followed by changes every stride and vice versa).
- Showing demanding and difficult transitions (e.g. piaffe or passage derived from the halt without prior development of impulsion; transition from walk or halt directly into a series of flying changes; significant but still harmonious transitions out of an extended pace to a highly collected exercise: e.g. extended trot to piaffe or extended canter to (half) canter pirouette or piaffe.
- Performing movements or transitions with the reins in one hand but without exaggeration.

A **well-calculated** risk is demonstrated when the Degree of Difficulty corresponds to the potential and the level of training of rider and horse. A challenging, technically correct performance is a significant testimony of a high standard of riding ability and the training of the horse. On the other hand, obvious mistakes in the execution of the movements may reflect an over-asking by the rider of the horse, which means a badly calculated risk, and the score for the Degree of Difficulty has to be reduced.

If the classical dressage cannot be presented as stated in the rules, it is absolutely necessary to react by reducing the mark for the Degree of Difficulty.

2. Guidelines for Scoring

With special attention to the initial comments and the clarifications in the Guidelines for Judges, the recommended directives for points awarded for degree of difficulty are as follows:

- When only the minimum requirements for the basis level are fulfilled, approximately 6.0.
- When there is a rise in the degree of difficulty according to the level of the respective standard tests minimum of 7.0.
- For each movement with increased degree of difficulty (calculated risk) the score should rise accordingly.