



# Competition Development Pathway

**Athlete, Coach and Parent Guide for Dressage**

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This guide is prepared as a component of the Equestrian Canada (EC) Long Term Equestrian Development (LTED) model for Dressage. For further information on LTED please reference the LTED material found on the Equestrian Canada website [www.equestrian.ca](http://www.equestrian.ca)

This Development Pathway Guide is specifically focused on athletes in the LTED stages *Train to Train* through *Train to Win*; the competitive athlete looking to advance in the sport of Dressage.

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# Competition Level - Objectives and Standards



*A description of all paces, movements and figures for Dressage can be found in the Equestrian Canada Rules for Dressage, Section E, Chapters 1 and 2.*

**Equitation:** The purpose of the equitation tests are to promote and reward correct seat, position, and use of aids in preparation for dressage competitions. Athletes interested in dressage competitions should first compete in equitation tests as an introduction to dressage and for correct development for all disciplines.

**Walk/Trot:** Introduces the athlete to the sport of dressage. Athletes must show understanding of riding the horse forward with a steady tempo into an elastic contact with independent, steady hands, correctly balanced seat and proper geometry of figures in the arena with correct bend (circles and corners).

# Competition Level - Objectives and Standards



**Training Level:** Confirms that the horse demonstrates correct basics, is supple and moves freely forward in a clear rhythm with a steady tempo, accepting contact with the bit.

**First Level (FEI 4 and 5 Year Old):** Confirms that the horse demonstrates correct basics, has developed thrust to achieve improved balance and throughness and maintains a more consistent contact with the bit.

**Second Level (FEI Pony, FEI Children):** The horse demonstrates correct basics, and having achieved the thrust required for First Level, now accepts more weight on the hindquarters; moves with an uphill tendency, especially in the medium gaits; and is reliably on the bit. A greater degree of straightness, bending, suppleness, throughness, balance and self-carriage.

# Competition Level - Objectives and Standards



**Third Level (FEI Junior/FEI 6 Year Old):** The horse demonstrates correct basics, and having begun to develop an uphill balance at Second Level, now demonstrates increased engagement, especially in the extended gaits. Transitions between collected, medium and extended gaits should be well defined and performed with engagement. The horse should be reliably on the bit and show a greater degree of straightness, bending, suppleness, throughness, balance and self carriage than at Second Level.

**Fourth Level (FEI Young Rider):** The horse has developed sufficient suppleness, impulsion and throughness to perform the Fourth Level tests which have a medium degree of difficulty. The horse remains reliably on the bit, showing a clear uphill balance and lightness as a result of improved engagement and collection. The movements are performed with greater straightness, energy and cadence than at Third Level.

# Competition Level - Objectives and Standards



**Prix St. Georges (Small Tour):** Test of medium standard. This test represents the medium stage of training. It includes exercises to show the horse's submission to all the demands of the execution of classical equitation and a standard of physical and mental balance and development which will enable it to carry out the exercises with harmony, lightness and ease.

**Intermediate I (Small Tour):** Test of advanced medium standard. The object is to lead horses on, progressively without harm to their mind and body, from the correct execution of Prix St Georges to the more demanding exercises of the Intermediate A,B & II.

**Intermediate A and B (Medium Tour):** Tests to progressively move from the Small Tour to the Big Tour. The object of these tests are to progress from the correct execution of the Small Tour tests and prepare the horse for the Big Tour tests.

# Competition Level - Objectives and Standards



**Intermediate II (Big Tour):** Test of advanced standard. The object of this test is to prepare the horse for the Grand Prix

**Grand Prix (Big Tour):** Test of the highest standard. The Grand Prix is a competition of the highest level, which brings out the horse's perfect lightness, characterised by the total absence of resistance and the complete development of collection and impulsion, which includes all the school paces and all the fundamental movements.

**Grand Prix Special (Big Tour):** This is a competition of the same level as Grand Prix, where the transitions especially are a matter of great importance.



# Long Term Equestrian Development Model



LTED describes specific outcomes and development skills that are desired at each competitive level. Dressage tests are progressive; athletes and coaches can gauge improvement prior to advancing to the next level. Below the tests are categorized and aligned with the appropriate stage of development.

<b>Dressage Test</b>	<b>Objective of Competition</b>	<b>LTED Stage</b>
Non-specialized riding. In-house fun days.	Fun, varied and positive experience with others.	Learn to Train
Walk Trot, Training and First Levels, Equitation	Low key, fun and experience. Skill acquisition.	Train to Train
Second, Third, Fourth Levels, FEI Child FEI Pony	Develop competition skills in a well-balanced competition environment.	Learn to Compete
Introduce FEI Junior and Young Rider Competitive FEI Junior, FEI Young Rider, Small Tour	Learning to compete. Competitively well balanced competition environment. Variety of Competitions	Train to Compete
Small, Medium and Big Tour and Developing Grand Prix and Under 25	Optimizing performance, winning, selection. Consolidating and preparing for Grand Prix.	Learn to Win
FEI Small, Medium and Big Tour	Winning, world ranking points, prize money, team selections.	Train to Win
Any Level	Competing for self-improvement and progression as a rider.	Competitive for Life

# Travel Guidelines



The purpose of travel guidelines is to create an awareness of how far an athlete should have to travel to attend developmentally appropriate competition for each LTED stage. This may not currently be possible in populations with low participation numbers.

These guidelines are also an effort to reduce costs where it is not appropriate for development.

<b>Learn to Train</b>	<b>Train to Train</b>	<b>Learn to Compete</b>	<b>Train to Compete</b>	<b>Learn to Win</b>	<b>Train to Win</b>
Local/In-House - Ideally none or very limited travel	One day of travel to competition	One day of travel to competition	Inter- Provincial/Territorial- at high-end FEI and North American	North America or Europe if living there	International

# Meaningful Competition



- Matches an appropriate competition level with the skill development of the athlete
- Is purposeful and fun
- Provides a logical skill progression for the athlete
- Provides an opportunity for learning and advancement in a safe atmosphere
- Rewards success and proficiency
- Results should not be predictable

# Competition Score Guidelines

- Reinforce proficiencies at the level
- Indicate readiness for the next level
- Encourage meaningful competition
- Set reachable goals for the athlete
- Identify excellence pathway athletes early in their development
- Allows athletes to reach their full potential



# National Competition Score Guidelines



## **COMPETING TO WIN**

Scores above 68%

## **COMPETING TO PLACE**

Scores between 64-68%

## **MEANINGFUL COMPETITION EXPERIENCE**

Scores of 60% and above

# National Competition Score Guidelines

- **Meaningful Competition Experience**
  - If the athlete is consistently scoring below 60% then the level of competition should be reevaluated
- **Competing to Place**
  - If the athlete is consistently scoring between 64-68% they could possibly advance to the next level, but only if the new technical requirements are confirmed in training
- **Competing to Win**
  - If the athlete is consistently scoring above 68% then they are ready to advance to the next level, but only if the new technical requirements are met in training



# International Competition Score Guidelines



## **COMPETING TO WIN**

Scores above 72%

## **COMPETING TO PLACE**

Scores between 68-72%

## **MEANINGFUL COMPETITION EXPERIENCE**

Scores of 64% and above

# International Competition Score Guidelines

- **Meaningful Competition Experience**
  - If athlete is consistently scoring below 64% then the level of competition should be reevaluated
- **Competing to Place**
  - If athlete is consistently scoring between 68-72% they could possibly advance to the next level, but only if the new technical requirements are confirmed in training
- **Competing to Win**
  - If athlete is consistently scoring above 72% then they are ready to advance to the next level, but only if the new technical requirements are met in training





## Questions Contact

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