



## **Adaptive Riding Guidelines for DSO EXCEPTIONAL RIDER TESTS**

DSO tests for exceptional riders are for riders with special needs (physical and/or cognitive challenges).

### **Tack and Apparel:**

English schooling attire is acceptable. Riders are not restricted to Dressage saddles only; any English tack is acceptable. Riders may ride in a traditional bridle or bitless. Specific equipment needed for adaptive use to assure safety is permitted and should be noted on the rider's entry form.

- 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. Reins may be attached to the bit, bit-less bridle or side rings of the halter. Reins may or may not be attached to the bit depending on the rider's ability. Rider must keep control of the reins to the best of their physical ability.
- c. An ASTM approved riding helmet must be worn by riders at all times.
- d. Adaptive footwear is allowed but must be listed on entry form.

### **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.

- **LEADER:** The leader must safely control the rider's 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. 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 rider's 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 DSO dressage tests. The coach must be an instructor of the rider.

- **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.

### **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.

### **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.