

# RIDING TO MUSIC



## Introduction

The opportunity to ride to music and use it as a tool to increase the overall enjoyment of riding is becoming more and more popular with both able bodied and disabled riders and also their coaches and trainers.

## Why use music?

Riding to music is great fun and can be done by riders of all abilities, at any stage of their riding education, using any type of horse and/or pony. Riding to music doesn't only have to be for competitive purposes. It can be a way of schooling, learning to ride better without the rider or their horse realising it!

The right choice of music can:

- Relax rider and/or horse,
- Motivate and give enjoyment,
- Help riders' understand and maintain consistent rhythm and tempo in all three paces (walk, trot and canter),
- Entertain spectators,
- Encourage rider development and progression.

Trainers and coaches can use music:

- With a group of riders or with an individual rider as part of a normal lesson
- To enable riders to create a musical drill ride or quadrille. This could lead to a performance for parents etc. and/or a competition. For example, the National RDA Musical Ride/Carriage Ride DVD Competition.
- To encourage individual riders to progress their riding enough to ride a freestyle dressage to music test (kur).

## How Can We Proceed?

There are a number of steps to take if you are planning to use music with your riders:

- Step 1 Calculate the horse/horses' walk, trot and canter tempos
- Step 2 Find some suitable music to use
- Step 3 Identify how to use music as part of normal lessons and what opportunities there are to compete within the RDA organisation and beyond
- Step 4 How to create a freestyle dressage to music test or musical drill ride
- Step 5 Understand the legal implications of playing music in a public place
- Step 6 Know where to find additional resource material.

## STEP 1 – Calculate each horse/pony's paces

You need to know the tempo (speed) of each of the horse/pony's paces.

Tempo is measured in Beats Per Minute (bpms):

- Walk is typically between 92 and 104 bpms
- Trot is typically between 144 and 168 bpms
- Canter is typically between 92 and 104 bpms

Some horse's/pony's' bpms may be faster or slower than the ranges shown above

In a group situation it may be necessary to use the 'average' tempo of each pace when selecting music. Usually a pony's paces are faster than a horse but not always. Also, the more schooled and balanced the horse or pony is then their paces would also be slightly slower.

### Method

#### **Medium Walk & Working Trot**

Using a stopwatch get someone to count **both** the horse or pony's foreleg footfalls for 15 seconds and multiply the result by four. Do this for two or three times to calculate average walk and trot bpms.

#### **Working Canter**

Using a stopwatch get someone to count the footfalls of only **one** of the horse or pony's forelegs for 15 seconds and multiply the result by four. Do this for two or three times to calculate an average.

#### **Quick Tip**

It can sometimes help to put a different colour bandage or boot on each foreleg to help counting.

## STEP 2 – Finding Suitable Music

Different types of music suit different horses and ponies and, if chosen carefully, can enhance their paces. If a rider finds it hard to maintain a good rhythm you might choose to use music with a strong beat. However, if you are working with a horse or pony who is a little weak and/or more difficult to ride in any of its paces, for example, it does not always show a clear four-time walk then you would choose walk music with a 'softer' (fuzzy) beat. This particularly important if you are choosing music to compete with.

Some riders prefer to ride to recognisable tunes because it helps them stay on the beat of the music thereby maintaining a more consistent rhythm and/or tempo. Rhythm refers to the correct footfalls for each pace and tempo refers to the speed within the pace. Some horses and ponies can show a lateral walk when tense and a canter can lose its clear three beat rhythm if there is a lack of energy/impulsion within the pace.

If you choose to use classical music then it may be better to have classical music for all three paces. You can also use vocals but be careful because they can distract and be too dominating. For competitions it is probably better to be discreet with vocals and perhaps only use them for one pace. Although, more riders are now choosing to use vocal tracks when competing in dressage to music competitions.

### Method

Start listening to as many instrumental tracks as possible and identifying whether they are suitable walk, trot or canter tracks. Time the bpm's by counting the music beats for 15 seconds and multiply the result by 4. Try to find tracks which have bpm's within the ranges quoted earlier or are very similar to the particular horse or pony's paces which you wish to use music with. You will recognise whether the tracks you have chosen are suitable when you see them being ridden to.

Borrow instrumental cds from friends and relatives, search charity shops, supermarkets and large DIY stores. Equimusic produce a selection of 'Music for Dressage' instrumental cds which have the bpm's for each track listed on the cd sleeve. They include lots of well-known tracks, are easy to use and work very well in group situations. A search through Google will identify retailers.

It is now very easy and popular to download tracks from the internet. Two of the main internet retailers are Amazon UK and iTunes. You can search by artist, genre and track names if you have a certain song in mind. You can usually listen to a sample of the track before you decide to purchase it. Most tracks cost less than £1 per track. It is best not to select karaoke tracks as very often they do not have an instrumental melody line so they can sound repetitive and lacking energy.

There are also many specialist companies and individuals who can supply suitable tracks to ride to, and will edit your chosen music. Most of them have websites and some advertise in various Horse/Rider Magazines.

### **STEP 3 – Music as part of normal lessons and opportunities to compete**

#### **Lessons**

Music can be played while riders are going large, changing the rein or riding school shapes (circles and serpentines etc.) to develop their ability to feel the footfalls in each pace and maintain a consistent tempo especially through corners and in and out of shapes. It can help modify 'over-riding' within a pace.

Music can also be used to play games such as musical statues, Grandma's Footsteps and Monte Carlo. When playing Monte Carlo rather than using the traditional 4 playing card suites (diamonds, hearts, spades and clubs) you could use animals or colours etc. It can also be used during Horse Care training. When the music stops the rider is asked to touch the pommel, stirrups and pony's ears etc. For the purposes described above no editing of the music is necessary as you can just use the full tracks – stopping and switching them as the riders change pace etc.

A musical drill ride/quadrille can be created and practised – perhaps with the eventual outcome being a performance to family and friends etc. or an entry to the National RDA Musical Ride/Carriage Ride DVD Competition. Depending on the ability of the riders it may or may not include trot and canter work. For this type of freestyle performance it is better for the music to have a theme. Some examples being: Jungle Book, Cops and Robbers, Nursery Rhymes or Strictly come Dancing.

There are endless possibilities of themes – Christmas, Disney, Musicals, Films, Cartoons, Halloween, Children's TV Programmes and many more. The British Riding Clubs website has video showing various clubs performing Quadrilles and there are always many Quadrille, Musical Drill Rides and Individual Freestyle Programmes to watch on YouTube.

To create such a ride would require some simple editing of the selected tracks usually to reflect changes in pace. Some further explanation about editing music for a freestyle performance (Musical Drill Ride, Quadrille, Pairs or Individual Rider) is included in Step 4 of this document.

**STEP 3 – Music as part of normal lessons and opportunities to compete (continued)**

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>Competitions</b></p>        | <p><b>What other opportunities are there to take music beyond the lesson?</b></p> <p>Dressage to Music Freestyle Competitions are run by the RDA, local competition centres, the Pony Club, British Riding Clubs and British Dressage. There are many classes catering for riders of all abilities with some tests requiring walk only movements to music. The classes are affiliated and unaffiliated with many of them having structures which enable qualification to various Regional/Area and ultimately National Championships.</p> <p>The Dressage To Music Freestyle Test Sheets which each organisation produces will show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The minimum and maximum time allowed for the freestyle test.</li> <li>• Whether the test is to be ridden in a 20m x 40m arena or a 20m x 60m arena. (Sometimes Qualifiers will be run in a short arena and the Championships will be run in long arena.)</li> <li>• The compulsory movements to be included within the freestyle test.</li> </ul> <p>All such organisations have excellent web sites which give comprehensive details about their competition structures and the dressage to music test requirements at each level. Web site information is included in throughout this document and summarised in Step 5.</p> |
| <p><b>RDA Freestyle</b></p>       | <p>RDA Dressage has its own freestyle test:<br/>Grade I – V Freestyle (2001) (With or Without Music). See Appendix 1</p> <p>Also, each year there is a National RDA Musical Ride/Carriage Ride DVD Competition. It consists of 2 classes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A drill ride or carriage drive with riders/drivers and helpers smartly dressed.</li> <li>2. A drill ride with a theme. For example, dressed as soldiers to reflect marching music.</li> </ol> <p>Further information about this competition can be found on the RDA web site</p>   |
| <p><b>FEI Para Equestrian</b></p> | <p>There are FEI Para Equestrian Freestyle To Music Tests for all Grades (1A, 1B,II,III and IV). The current tests are all available on the RDA and FEI web sites.</p>   |

### **STEP 3 – Music as part of normal lessons and opportunities to compete (continued)**

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>British Dressage</b>     | <p>There are British Dressage Freestyle To Music Tests for Introductory, Preliminary, Novice, Elementary, Medium and Advanced Medium levels. It also uses FEI Freestyle Tests for PSG, Inter I, Inter II and Grand Prix</p> <p>All of the freestyle tests can be purchased online from <a href="http://www.britishdressage.co.uk">www.britishdressage.co.uk</a> or <a href="http://www.dressagediagrams.org">www.dressagediagrams.org</a>. Alternatively, you can also order by telephone no. 024 76 698830.</p>  |
| <b>British Riding Clubs</b> | <p>British Riding Clubs currently use the British Dressage Preliminary, Novice and Elementary Freestyle To Music Tests. There is also a BRC Pairs Freestyle to Music Test. Area Qualifiers are held throughout the UK cumulating in a National BRC Dressage to Music Championship which is normally held in October each year.</p> <p>The British Dressage freestyle test sheets tests can be purchased online from <a href="http://www.britishdressage.co.uk">www.britishdressage.co.uk</a> or <a href="http://www.dressagediagrams.org">www.dressagediagrams.org</a>. Alternatively, you can also order by telephone no. 024 76 698830.</p> <p>The BR Pairs Freestyle to Music Test is available from <a href="http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook">www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook</a>.</p> <p>The Quadrille competition is held at the BRC Dressage to Music Championships and the top four Quadrille Teams are invited to perform at Olympia Horse Show in London. Further information can be found online at <a href="http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs">www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs</a>.</p> |
| <b>The Pony Club</b>        | <p>During the last three years, the Pony Club has been developing its dressage to music competitions and it now has three Championships for Individual Riders, a Pairs Championship and a Musical Ride Competition which is held at the annual Dressage Championships.</p> <p>The relevant freestyle tests are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Novice Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012</li><li>2. Intermediate Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012</li><li>3. Open Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012</li><li>4. Pairs Freestyle Dressage to Music 2012</li></ol> <p>All of the above dressage to music freestyle tests can be found online at <a href="http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests">www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests</a>.</p> <p>Further information about the musical ride competition can be found online at <a href="http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical Ride_competition">www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical Ride_competition</a>.</p>  |

## STEP 4 – How To Create A Dressage To Music Freestyle

### Editing Music

Experience has shown that when creating dressage to music freestyle programmes for riders who have never ridden a freestyle test before and/or for lower level tests up to say British Dressage Elementary Level it can be easier to edit the music first and then work out a freestyle floor pattern to the music. At the higher levels it might be done the other way around so that greater interpretation of the music can be incorporated into the freestyle programme. In the lower level tests there is less opportunity to show a great deal of interpretation of the music. For example, at novice level a rider may try to ride medium trot or medium canter to a crescendo in the music to show interpretation.

In tests which include all three paces and normally last around 4 ½ minutes you would expect the initial music timings to be within the following bands:

Intro before first halt 15 – 25 seconds (not included in overall time limit)

Walk 40 seconds – 1 minute 10 seconds

Trot 1 minute 30 seconds – 2 minutes

Canter 1 minute – 1 minute 30 seconds

Ending before final halt 20 – 30 seconds

The paces can be shown in any order within the freestyle test. The intro and ending pace will depend on the rider's ability and the music selected. The walk and canter timings will obviously depend on the quality of the walk and the rider's ability to show more complex canter work e.g. counter canter at novice level.

If you have sourced your music from cds you will need computer software capable of loading your chosen tracks onto your hard drive as MP3 files (e.g. Windows Media Player). Alternatively, you will need a computer with reliable internet access to download your selected tracks if you have chosen tracks on the internet. Please note that iTunes tracks will need to be converted to MP3 files for editing purposes. You will then need some MP3 files editing software such as Audacity, which is available as a free download from the internet. A search on the internet will show many MP3 editing software programmes. However, the editor of this document has used Audacity for several years and it has proved itself to be quite intuitive and very reliable to use.

Listen to your chosen tracks and, using the timing guidelines detailed above, or timings from your own freestyle floor pattern select parts of each track suitable to ride to and save them as new MP3 files. The new MP3 files then need to be 'burnt' as audio files onto a cd. Windows Media Player is not suitable for this because it saves a 2 second gap between tracks. You will need software such as Audacity or Real One Player to burn your DTM cd so that the tracks play 'continuously'.

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
|                                      | <p>It is not necessary to merge your newly created MP3 files as one track. Indeed, if you keep say the walk, trot and canter parts of the freestyle test as separate MP3 files you can then play them over and over to practise various parts of the test.</p>  |
| <p><b>Creating Freestyles</b></p>    | <p>Whichever organisation you chose to compete under will publish Freestyle Test Sheets which detail the compulsory movements required at each level. Some organisations allow you to print the Freestyle Test Sheets from their respective Website (RDA, FEI Para Equestrian and The Pony Club) and others (British Dressage &amp; British Riding Clubs) require you to purchase them from either their online bookshops or other websites such as <a href="http://www.dressagediagrams.org">www.dressagediagrams.org</a></p> <p>The movements can be ridden in any order and the arena letters can be used to help you create a floor pattern. Try and make the floor pattern clear for the judge to understand. Some arena symmetry is helpful if compulsory shapes i.e. circles are to be ridden on both reins. Incorporate the compulsory movements in each pace at the beginning of each track and then 'fill in' with circles, loops and serpentines until the music changes for the next pace. Wherever possible plan the floor pattern so that the things the rider finds more difficult are less exposed to the judge e.g. canter transitions at the 'A' end of the arena, perhaps on a circle.</p> <p>To give an indication of the movements that can be incorporated into a freestyle test Appendix 2 is a summary of the compulsory movements required in the Introductory (walk and trot only), Preliminary and Novice British Dressage Freestyle to Music Tests.</p> |
| <p><b>Practise Makes Perfect</b></p> | <p>Any freestyle test should always be practised in a correctly sized arena. The riders and helpers need to learn the music so that they know when each track is coming to the end and can prepare for the transition to the next pace in the floor pattern.</p> <p>Try to practise on different surfaces – they all ride differently. By learning the music the riders and helpers should be able to cope with adjusting the floor pattern 'on the hoof'. Be prepared to cut across the arena or add extra circles when waiting for the music to change to the next pace. <b>TRY NOT TO CHANGE PACE UNTIL THE MUSIC CHANGES!</b> This can lose valuable marks in a competition.</p>  |

## STEP 5 - Understand the legal implications of playing music in a public place

### Playing music during RDA Sessions

There are currently two separate independent companies which licence the use of music and collect royalties for the music:

- PPL collects and distributes money for the use of recorded music on behalf of record companies and performers.
- PRS for Music collects and distributes money for the use of the musical composition and lyrics on behalf of authors, songwriters, composers and publishers.

In most instances a licence is required from both organisations to legally play recorded music in public. This is because they both represent different rights holders and have separate licences, terms and conditions.

Buying an audio cd, a music download or using MP3 files which have been created from an audio cd or from music downloads only allows its use for domestic purposes, such as listening to it at home for private enjoyment. If however you play such music in public, then in almost all cases a PPL licence and possibly a PRS licence will be legally required. There is no statutory definition of 'playing in public' (also sometimes referred to as 'public performance') but the UK courts have given guidance on its meaning and ruled that it is any playing of music outside of a domestic setting – so, for example, playing recorded music at a workplace, public event or in the course of any business activities is considered to be 'playing in public'. Therefore, any venue that plays recorded music in public, such as a shop, bar, office, restaurant, gym, equestrian centre, livery yard, community building, not-for-profit organisation – or activities such as riding to music – is almost certainly legally required to have a music licence. In contrast, any recorded music being played as part of domestic home life or when there is an audience entirely comprised of friends and/or family (such as at a private family party) does not require a music licence.

RDA are currently investigating whether it will be possible in the future to hold a music licence which will allow all local RDA Groups to play music without having to consider PPL or PRS Music requirements. **However, such a licence agreement is not yet in place.**

This means that any local RDA Group will need to ensure that the venue it uses already has the necessary licence/s. Bearing in mind that most Riding Schools, Equestrian Centres and Livery Yards etc. play music even if it is only the radio (in a public space) then they will already hold the necessary licence/s.

**STEP 5 - Understand the legal implications of playing music in a public place  
(continued)**

**Other  
Freestyle  
Competitions**

If any of your riders wish to compete in a competition run by British Dressage, British Riding Clubs or the Pony Club they will need to be a member of British Dressage who has a range of special membership levels depending on whether the rider only intends to compete in freestyle classes or not and they are not expensive. This is so that the music can be registered with BD and played legally in public. It is not a difficult process. Full details can be found at

[www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle](http://www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle).

Alternatively, you can telephone British Dressage on 024 76 698830.

## Step 6 Where to find additional resources

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>Online</b> | <p><b>RDA</b><br/><a href="http://www.rda.org.uk">www.rda.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>British Dressage</b><br/><a href="http://www.britishdressage.org">www.britishdressage.org</a><br/><a href="http://www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle">www.britishdressage.org/competitions/howtogofreestyle</a></p> <p><b>British Riding Clubs</b><br/><a href="http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs">www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs</a><br/><a href="http://www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook">www.bhs.org/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-rulebook</a></p> <p><b>The Pony Club</b><br/><a href="http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests">www.pcuk.org/indexphp/disciplines/dressage/dressagetests</a><br/><a href="http://www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical_ride_competition">www.pcuk.org/indexphp/activities/activity_musical_ride_competition</a></p> <p><b>Dressage Diagrams online</b><br/><a href="http://www.dressagediagrams.org">www.dressagediagrams.org</a></p> |
| <b>Books</b>  | <p><b>Dressage to Music – Build a Freestyle from Choreography to Competition</b><br/><b>Claire Lilley</b></p> <p>This book covers all aspects of riding to music from schooling exercises and how to create individual freestyle tests through to choreography ideas for Musical Drill Rides and Quadrilles.</p>   |

## APPENDIX 1

### RDA DRESSAGE GRADE I-V FREESTYLE (2001) (With or Without Music)

|                                       |                               |                                |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| The Scale of the marks is as follows: | Allow 9 minutes between tests | Penalties for Errors of Course |
| 10 Excellent                          | 4 Insufficient                | Time of test 4 – 4mins 30 secs |
| 9 Very Good                           | 3 Fairly Bad                  | Arena 20m x 40m                |
| 8 Good                                | 2 Bad                         | First Error 2 marks            |
| 7 Fairly Good                         | 1 Very Bad                    | Second Error 4 marks           |
| 6 Satisfactory                        | 0 Not Performed               | Third Error 8 marks            |
| 5 Sufficient                          |                               | Fourth Error Elimination       |

No compulsory movements except halt on centre line at the beginning and end of the test.  
This test can be performed in the following: Walk, Walk and Trot, Walk Trot and Canter  
You can only perform the paces allowed in the test you have entered ie no trot walk in the walk only section.

| TO BE JUDGED ON |  | Maximum Marks |
|-----------------|--|---------------|
| 1               | Halt at the beginning and end of the test                        | 10            |
| 2               | Pace. Freedom and regularity                                     | 10            |
| 3               | Activity, forwardness, engagement                                | 10            |
| 4               | Straightness and suppleness                                      | 10            |
| 5               | Submission. Attention, harmony, lightness, acceptance of the bit | 10            |
| 6               | Rider's equestrian skill and balance                             | 10 x 2        |
| 7               | Fluency, clarity and ease of movements                           | 10            |
| 8               | Choreography, inventiveness                                      | 10            |
| 9               | Degree of difficulty   | 10            |
|                 | Total Marks  | 100           |

0.5 of a mark may be given.

Penalty of 2 marks if duration of test lasts less than 4 minutes or more than 4 minutes 30 seconds

To be ridden in a snaffle bit.

| <b>APPENDIX 2</b>   | <b>BRITISH DRESSAGE<br/>INTRODUCTORY FREESTYLE TO<br/>MUSIC 2012</b>   | <b>BRITISH DRESSAGE<br/>PRELIMINARY FREESTYLE TO<br/>MUSIC 2012</b>  | <b>BRITISH DRESSAGE<br/>NOVICE FREESTYLE TO<br/>MUSIC 2012</b>  |
|---|--|--|---|
| ARENA:  | 20m X 40m  | 20m X 60m  | 20m X 60m   |
| TIME:   | Minimum: 3.5 minutes<br>Maximum: 4 minutes   | Minimum: 4 minutes<br>Maximum: 5 minutes   | Minimum: 4 minutes<br>Maximum: 5 minutes  |
| <b>COMPULSORY MOVEMENTS:</b>  |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Halts</li> <li>▪ Medium Walk</li> <li>▪ Free Walk</li> <li>▪ Working Trot Left</li> <li>▪ Working Trot Right</li> <li>▪ Medium Trot</li> <li>▪ Stretch in Trot</li> <li>▪ Working Canter Left</li> <li>▪ Working Canter Right</li> <li>▪ Medium Canter</li> <li>▪ Medium Walk Left</li> <li>▪ Medium Walk Right</li> </ul> | <p>Beginning and End</p> <p>Minimum 20m</p> <p>Minimum 20m</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>None</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter – one rein only required</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>10m half circle</p> <p>10m half circle</p> | <p>Beginning and End</p> <p>Minimum 20m</p> <p>Minimum 20m</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>None</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter – one rein only required</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>None</p> <p>Not required</p> <p>Not required</p> | <p>Beginning and End</p> <p>Minimum 20m</p> <p>Minimum 20m</p> <p>Circle 15m diameter</p> <p>Circle 15m diameter</p> <p>Some medium trot strides</p> <p>Optional movement</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>Circle 20m diameter</p> <p>Optional Not Mandatory</p> <p>Not required</p> <p>Not required</p> |
| <b>OPTIONAL MOVEMENTS:</b>  | Those occurring in current British Dressage tests up to and including Introductory Standard.   | Those occurring in current British Dressage tests up to and including Preliminary Standard.  | Those occurring in current British Dressage tests up to and including Novice Standard.  |