

But I have only got an ordinary horse.....



We would all love to own a horse that has been bred for dressage, probably a flashy warmblood, but in reality any horse or pony can with correct training, and a correctly trained rider, has the ability to work through the levels.

Indeed there are some interesting types, traditional cobs, driving breeds, ponies and thoroughbreds that have competed to Grand Prix and some you see at the Olympics!

If our horse or pony has a trainable attitude, correct paces and conformation with correct training there are many opportunities at Affiliated, On line and local dressage competitions.

Look at our amazing event horses and what they achieve in the dressage phase and many who go on to become good dressage athletes despite their “non dressage” breeding.

Without the flat work training to improve **suppleness, balance and obedience** they would struggle in the jumping phases!



The FEI principle states “ The object of dressage is the development of the horse into a happy athlete through harmonious education”.

Core Abilities for Dressage Training and Success

It does not matter what level you aim to compete at, if these are not on your horses positive list he may be more suited to an alternative discipline.

Ask yourself if these reflect **your horse:**

Attitude

Does my horse have **energy and enthusiasm** to work? Is he lazy, too sharp, unhappy in the arena?

Character

Is my horse **sensible and happy** to work with me? Is he tense and spooky and difficult to keep focussed?

Conformation

I can't change my horse's conformation so I need to think can he do the job to the level I hope to train and compete to?

Does he have a good hind leg and not straight in the stifle?

Is he croup high so tending to always push downhill?

Does he have a strong back and a neck that allows him to move with freedom through his shoulders?

We don't want to ask a question that is physically impossible for our horse to answer as that will result in disharmony and even pain!

Paces

Correct paces are essential for success in dressage. They do not have to be expressive but must show correct footfall.

Is the walk a correct four beat and room for overtrack to develop? A long backed mare won't be able to develop the overtrack of a short coupled gelding.

Is his trot regular, showing a two beat of alternative diagonal legs? Is it free and active? A "pacer" does not have a correct trot as it moves both legs one side of its body at the same time. It is therefore not suitable for dressage as it has an incorrect gait.

Does his canter show a clear three beat with a moment of suspension and an uphill tendency?



We cannot change our horses natural pace but we can improve them with correct training and **CORRECT RIDING**.

Watch how your horse moves when he is playing in the field and appreciate what his basic paces offer.

Are you enabling him to work in rhythm and balance and show his correct paces when under saddle?

Type does not matter!



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What influence do I have as a rider/owner?

Rider skills come more naturally to some than others and we look for a harmonious partnership.

Help to train you and your horse comes from **many places.**

A good trainer/coach will help you both develop your ability and share their knowledge to support you.

They will be **correctly trained** as a rider and coach, and have success themselves at higher levels.

They may **run clinics** that you and your horse can access so that you can observe them coaching others to improve your knowledge on the ground as well as in the saddle.

Find a coach who can help you get the best out of your horse, what ever his breed type, and help you **set and achieve realistic goals.**

As a rider you have a responsibility to develop your own balance and quiet aids and a true understanding of your horse.

A small child will often be unable to apply the “aids” like an adult and a good coach will help to modify them to suit the partnership, an older rider may not be as supple as they once were and again a good coach will help to improve their seat and suppleness so they do not have a negative effect on the horse

Training of all types of horses

Whatever type your equine friend is, whatever age, training is based on the **Scales of Training**. This is the basis that your coach will work with you and your horse. **Without the correct foundation you and your horse will not be successful or work in harmony as happy athletes together**

BUT with the correct training ANY horse and rider will be able to enjoy their dressage and flat work training to achieve realistic goals



Supporting information

Study the Scales of Training available in the BD Members Handbook, FEI Training Documents and many other sources

Observe good professional You tube presentations to understand the application of the scales to your training and

what “Good 8.0” looks like and what the picture of a horse at your level of training looks like, despite its breed type

Observe trainers at your yard, clinics, you tube etc