Dressage
For Therapeutic Riding

Cecelia Conway
PATH Intl & ISRB Instructor
Dressage For EA

Overview

● Barriers to Entry
● Defining Dressage
● The Training Pyramid
● Incorporating Dressage into Your Program
  ○ Teachable Skills
  ○ Teaching Techniques
  ○ Goal Incorporation
● Creating a Plan for Advancement
● Benefits to the Horse
● Competition Opportunities
● Additional Resources
Dressage Stereotypes

Aka- Barriers to Entry

- Sophisticated
- Expensive
- Snooty
- Well Trained
- Stoic
- Good exercise/fit
- White breeches
- Disciplined
- Harmonious
- Boring
- Nuanced
- Precise
- Connected
- Perfectionist
Who/What do you think of?

Edward Gal - Moorlands Totilas

Charlotte Dujardin - Valegro

Heza Classic Fox
What is Dressage

- Dressage is a French term meaning “training” and its purpose is to develop the horse’s natural athletic ability and willingness to work making him calm, supple and attentive to his rider.
  - USDF.org
- The execution by a trained horse of precision movements in response to barely perceptible signals from its rider
  - Merriam-Webster
Breaking it Down: Dressage in Layman’s Terms

- Oldest equestrian discipline
- Gymnastics For Horses
- System of riding and training
- Energy and Relaxation
- Precise, subtle performance
- Rider’s connection with the horse
Basics of Dressage

- Collection (Versammlung)
- Straightness (Geraderichten)
- Impulsion (Schwung)
- Contact (Anlehnung)
- Rhythm (Takt)
- Relaxation (Losgelassenheit)

Pyramid:

- Steering
- Whoah
- Go
- Survival
Breaking it Down

- Relaxation
- Contact
- Rhythm
- Straightness
- Impulsion
- Collection

Circle of Training

- Relaxation (with elasticity and suppleness)
- Rhythm (with energy and tempo)
- Impulsion (increased energy and thrust)
- Connection (acceptance of the bit through acceptance of the aids)
- Straightness (improved alignment and balance)
- Collection (increased engagement, lightness of the forehand, self carriage)

www.dressage differently.com
Circle of Aides

1. Rider’s Core/Lower Body
2. Horse’s Core
3. Horse’s Hindquarters
4. Over the horse’s back
5. Through the Neck
6. Over the horse’s poll
7. On to the bit
8. Through the reins
9. Rider’s Upper Body
Incorporating Dressage Into Your Practice
Blending in Students’ Goals/IEPs

Goals to keep in mind...

- Advanced Planning
  - Task progression
    - Steps to achieve the movement
    - Steps to make the task more difficult
  - Task analysis
    - What do you have to change to succeed
    - What could they perform more accurately
  - Multi Step memorization and execution
    - Putting together patterns
Blending in Student’s Goal/IEPs Cont

- Improved physical abilities
  - Motor Coordination
    - Upper and lower extremities
    - Seat aides
  - Balance and stability
    - Core strength
    - Independent movement
  - Flexibility and strength
- Increased self esteem and positivity
- Independence

* * Talk to the student’s PTs and OTs * *
“Feel”

Physical Sensation

- Feeling the horse’s movement
  - Primarily through the seat and lower body
  - Secondarily through the hands
- Following the horse’s movement
  - Seat first
  - Then hands
- Balance/Coordination
- Strength

Emotional Sensation

- Confidence
- Bravery
- Self Esteem
- Independence
Riding Skill

Physical Skills

- Transitioning
  - From movement to movement
  - From gait to gait
  - Pace i.e. free walk to extended walk
- Straightness
- Precision and accuracy

Mental Skills

- Memorization
- Multi tasking
- Problem Solving
- Concentration
Strategies for Teaching the Movement

20 Meter Circles (~65.5 ft)

- Emphasize symmetry
- Focus on feel of hips moving
- Focus on mirroring horse’s shoulders with rider’s shoulders and head
● Lunge line lessons
● Crepe Paper Races
● “Tracing”
Strategies for Teaching Movement

Shallow Loops

- Emphasize symmetry
- Focus on transition points to change the bend
- Accuracy of distance travelled off the rail
- “Driving” Gates
- Barrels
- “Bending Lines”
Strategies for Teaching Movement

Change of Rein across the diagonal

- Emphasize straightness of line
- Gauging the correct distance and bend
- Timing the transition back on to the rail
Strategies for Teaching Movement

Gait transitions between walk and trot/ walk and jog

- Emphasizing placement i.e. between two markers or at a marker
- Focusing on core and lower body aides
- Feeling the change in the pattern of movement between gaits
Strategies for Teaching Advanced Skills

15 & 10 Meter Circles

- Developing the control of the haunches and shoulders
Strategies for Teaching - Advancing Skills

Full Serpentes

○ Emphasizing symmetry and placement in the arena
○ Emphasizing correct bend and transitions from one rein to the other
○ Increasing difficulty in depth and number of half circles
Strategies for Teaching

Advancing Skills

Square halts from walk/trot/jog

- Emphasis on placement in the arena
- Emphasize equal use of aides on each side
- Emphasize role of the seat and seat bones
- Focus on change of movement from walk/trot/jog pattern to immobility
Strategies for Teaching Advancing Skills

Change of Rein across the diagonal

○ Begin incorporating changes of gait
○ Changing the length of the diagonal
Strategies for Teaching Advancing Skills

- Gait transitions between walk and trot/ walk and jog
  - Increase precision of movement
  - Focus on harmonious, unobtrusive aides
Strategies for Teaching Advancing Skills

Backing

- Focusing strongly on the seat and leg aids
- Keeping the horse moving willingly
- Precision
  - Number of steps
  - Distance
- Transition out of Backing
Strategies for Teaching Advancing Skills

● Lateral Movements
  ○ Leg yields
  ○ Half passes

● Turn on the forehand and turn on the hind

● Gait transitions between trot and canter/ jog and lope

● Transitions within the gaits - introducing collection and extension

● Square halts from the canter

● Simple changes (HUS and Dressage)
  ○ Canter trot canter
  ○ Canter walk canter
Putting Things Together

- Freestyles
- Pas de Deux/ Drill Team
- Trail / Working Equitation
- “Design a Test” Contest
Benefits to the Horse - From the Rider

- Increased stability and balance
- Less side-side motion
- Less harsh aides
Benefits to the Horse from Training

- Increased suppleness and flexibility
- Promote even muscle tone
- Better use of back and neck in self carriage
- More engaged mentally, attentive to rider
- Improve weight bearing from forehand to hindquarters
Competition Opportunities

- **Traditional Dressage**
  - United States Dressage Federation (USDF)
    - Coordinating with local GMO’s and schooling shows
  - US Equestrian and the FEI

- **Western Dressage**
  - Western Dressage Association of America (WDAA)
  - North American Western Dressage (NAWD) **

- **Paradressage**
  - US Equestrian / USDF
  - FEI

- **Special Olympics**
  - Opportunities beyond dressage
Summary

- Dressage is for everyone
- Dressage is a system of riding and training
- Dressage can benefit horses and riders
  - Mental focus and engagement
  - Physical strength and balance
  - Flexibility
  - Independence
- Dressage as a tool for advancing skills
- Dressage competition to enrich our instruction/curriculum
Additional Tests Resources and Organizations

- FEI Paradressage Tests
- USDF Dressage Tests
- US Equestrian Dressage Tests
- WDAA Dressage Tests
- NAWD Dressage Tests
  - http://bit.ly/2Ig1ul0
- Quadrille and Pas de Deux
- U.S. Dressage Federation (USDF)
  - www.usdf.org
- United States Equestrian (USEF)
  - www.usef.org
- Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI)
  - www.fei.org
- Western Dressage Association (WDAA)
  - www.westerndressageassociation.org
- North American Western Dressage (NAWD)
  - www.northamericanwesterndressage.org
Links for Videos, Diagrams, and Articles

- FEI Dressage Explained Video [FEI Dressage Explained Video](https://youtu.be/_yKkmc8R8gc)
- 2006 WEG Freestyle Video [2006 WEG Freestyle Video](https://youtu.be/zKQgTiqhPbw)
- Carl Hester for The Guardian Video [Carl Hester for The Guardian Video](https://youtu.be/rUc2MWAiY64)
- How To Ride Circles, Corners, and Serpentes [How To Ride Circles, Corners, and Serpentes](http://bit.ly/2FJI22P)
- Shallow Loop [Shallow Loop](http://www.thedigitalhorse.com/membersonly/2015/09/22/the-shallow-loop/)
- Change of Rein [Change of Rein](http://www.lessonsintr.com/2016/03/02/change-of-rein/)
- Dressage for All Website [Dressage for All Website](http://dressageforall.co.uk/)
- Intro to Pas de Deux [Intro to Pas de Deux](https://dressagetoday.com/instruction/intro-pas-de-deux-26441)