

The Writing Scribe

By Robin Weinstein

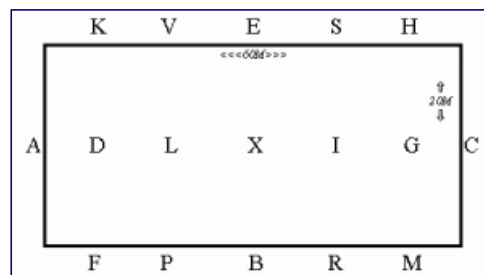
Benefits

In many ways, working with a dressage judge is like riding in a clinic with her — the difference is that you have her *all day* to yourself and you're listening, not riding. Careful observation will reveal what a judge likes to see in a test and what she doesn't. You'll learn through her comments and scores how specific movements should, and shouldn't, be ridden. What you will learn will help you to succeed whether you are an avid competitor or a rider who seeks excellence in schooling at home. Adhering to the guidelines below will open the door to years of wonderful learning experiences. And you'll meet some terrific people along the way.

Before the Show

A volunteer coordinator's life can be blissful or hellish — depending upon her volunteers and how they perform. So here goes.

- 1) If you are interested in scribing, network with local show officials and state your availability to work. If you commit to a show, stick to your commitment. Nothing will sound the death knell for you faster in your scribing career than if you are a no show for an event.
- 2) While you don't have to memorize the tests for which you will be scribing, be familiar with them. One helpful hint is that tests generally will mirror themselves — movements will be ridden in both directions. Exceptions are movements with "coefficients." Know where transitions appear in tests — unfortunately, judges sometimes forget to give transition scores, and missing a score can cause incorrect marks down the page. Judges will appreciate gentle, tactful reminders if they should forget this mark.
- 3) **DO know** where all of the letters are in an arena. If you don't know the road map, you're going to get lost.



- 4) Check the weather report and dress/prepare accordingly. In general, it's better to layer and un-layer than to freeze and sweat to the point of discomfort. If it's cold, bring gloves to keep your writing hand warm and limber. Remember to bring a hat and sunglasses – early morning sun shining into your booth can be deadly regardless of the temperature. In the event of rain, have waterproof gear available. Also pack clear plastic bags to protect your tests. I like to keep the larger roasting bags in hand to cover my

clipboard against the rain while I write. Bring a polar fleece throw if it's really cold. (Bring one for the judge for extra "brownie points.")

- 5) Have your cell phone fully charged in the event something unplanned happens to you on the way to the show. Make sure you have the volunteer coordinator's cell phone number. Remember to turn your cell phone off while you are in the booth!!
- 6) Generally the show office will provide tissues, Chapstick, hand sanitizer, hand lotion, cough drops, bug spray, paper towels, pens (red for sure, and black or blue), clipboards, and paper towels, but you might want to pack these things just in case. I bring my own pens — always — because the brand I use, Paper Mate Profile, doesn't streak or glop on the page. Because they are padded, they are easy on the fingers. Binder clips help to keep tests together when it is windy. You can also use a hockey puck or a horseshoe to keep papers from flying away. Wear a trusty watch that has a second hand. Your judge may ask you to check how long it takes for a rider to get into the ring or the length of time that a horse is disobedient in the arena.
- 7) Either email or call your volunteer coordinator several days before the show to learn what time you are needed and if any change of plans has occurred. Do not rely on the times stated in the show program — remember, programs are printed in advance and may not necessarily have the correct start times.
- 8) Make sure you get a map of the show grounds if you haven't been there before. Know where you are going!
- 9) Triple check to make sure you have packed everything you will need.



The Day of the Show

- 1) Arrive at the show office about 40 minutes before your first class and check in with the volunteer

coordinator. Find out for whom you are scribing and pick up your scribing box and tests. (You also may be asked to tote chair pillows to your booth.) Find a quiet spot and check your tests against the day sheets. **Make sure your tests and day sheet entries are in the same order and that the tests themselves are the right ones for the classes and riders listed!!!** I can't emphasize this enough. Also, if you are at C, make sure a **bell or whistle** is included in the scribing box. Check to see if there is a sign at C that states which one will be used and plan accordingly.

2) After you've checked your sheets, set up shop in your booth. Booths often are grimy and damp. Clean/dry off writing surfaces and chair seats. If your booth has windows that will be used because of inclement weather, clean them if necessary. Unpack everything you'll need, but don't clutter the desk top. You'll have enough to manage once classes get underway. Make sure to set out water bottles, especially if it's going to be hot. And, please, if it's warm, drink lots of water — dehydration can sap your energy and mental acuity. Making non-sticky snacks available for your booth team will be appreciated. The judge's chair always sets at the letter, which sometimes results in cramped quarters. Sit where the judge wants you. In general if you are working with an electronic scribe, the judge and writing scribe sit together and the electronic scribe sits next to the writing scribe.

3) Set out a copy of the day sheet for the judge and a blank copy of the test, which usually is the last sheet of the class. Make sure the judge has pens (that work!!). I usually put only the tests for the class currently being judged on the clipboard. Managing too many papers and folders on the desktop can cause confusion and lead to mistakes. If it is raining or windy, or both! make sure to put tests for later classes in a dry and sheltered spot.

Ten Minutes to Start

1) When your judge enters the booth, introduce yourself and ask where she would like you to sit. Please let her know if you don't hear well — she'll change her habits to accommodate you. Get settled quickly and take a moment to focus. Ask your judge how she presents her comments and scores. Some will give you comments and then scores; others will give scores and then comments. Some will ask you to do the collectives and write the Further Remarks; others will handle these tasks themselves. It's always good to know up front. Also, ask your judge how she wants you to handle comments you weren't able to catch in their entirety. Ditto, scores. Sometimes she will want you to note the deficiency and come back to it after the test. Another judge may want to know right away and complete it then. Review the test one more time. Take a deep breath — the learning is about to begin!

Work Begins

1) Remember that although you are volunteering, your judge is working. Keep chat to a minimum, especially while she is weighing scores for collectives and gathering her thoughts for Further Remarks. Some judges can concentrate through a tornado; others can't and disturbing their thoughts may lead to a scolding. If the runner arrives when the judge is still writing, refrain from talking to her and don't hesitate to politely shush her if necessary. Part of your job is enabling your judge to do her job as efficiently and stress free as possible. Later, after you have gauged your judge's personality and approachability, you can ask her if she minds an occasional question. Most judges are glad to

accommodate and share their expertise.

2) Know the standard scribing abbreviations — these are life savers if you have a talkative judge. A list of these abbreviations is included. Write as quickly and neatly as you can. Usually the first few tests are a bit messy — you're nervous and you haven't caught on to your judge's verbal style yet. Usually after you get three or four tests under your belt, you'll be in the zone and writing will become easier. At the end of each test, check to make sure each movement has a score — scorers don't like missing scores in tests, so be especially careful here. If you have a scratch or no show, write "scratch" or "no show" on the test's label so that the test can be used again. Also note the scratch or no show on the day sheet. And, if your judge changes a score make sure she initials the change. Finally, check to make sure she has signed the test.

3) Remember that judges may now use half points, so don't be surprised if you hear your judge say, for example, 6.5. If the number is just a 6, for example, it now is to be written 6.0 — you must use the decimal point and the zero. A note about the number 5. At the beginning of the day I always ask my judge to stipulate 5.0 when she is awarding a score of *five*. Doing so reduces the risk of tacking on a .5 to one movement (5.5) when that *five* was intended for the next (5.0).

4) Remember to check the horse's bridle number against the day sheet and test before the test gets underway. If you can't see the bridle number when a rider rides around the outside of the arena, don't hesitate to ask her for her number when she approaches your booth.



Do's and Don'ts

1) What your judge says in the booth is confidential, so don't discuss her comments about tests, riders, or horses with anyone. If someone asks you to share this information, tell her that it isn't appropriate to do so. This protects your judge and helps to ensure that you'll have scribing opportunities in the future. This is especially critical when writing for Young Horse. The judge's panel

is brainstorming and short on time, and sometimes members may say things that could have been worded better. Be discrete, don't repeat. Never question a judge's score or comment. She's the expert, not you.

2) When you are informed of a scratch, typically by way of a note from the show office, inform your judge about it, and note it on the day sheet and the label of that rider's test. Give this test to the runner in the same order of go as though the rider had competed. The scorers will appreciate it as they don't always know that a rider has scratched. With a no-show test, ask the judge when she wants you to send it in.

3) Most likely you'll be scribing all day, so sit up straight and take care of your body. Judge's booths rarely are designed with the scribe's comfort in mind. Too often the desktop is too high, causing you to raise your shoulders while you write. If this is the case, ask for more chair pads, otherwise you'll be sorry. Wear sunscreen if needed, but nothing greasy that could end up on the tests.

4) Wear attractive casual attire, unless show management has an established dress code. So, please, no jeans or tank tops. You are representing the show and the judge, so do your part.

5) At some point during the morning, ask your judge if she's happy with your work. Take constructive criticism politely and in the spirit it is intended.

6) If your judge changes booths, the tests remain in the booth. Leave them organized and neat for the scribe who is moving in — there's nothing worse than transferring to another booth and finding that the previous scribe has left the place a mess. In general, keep your desktop and booth tidy — put trash in trash cans.

7) During your lunch break, refrain from sitting with your judge unless you are invited to do so. Chances are that she will want to speak with her colleagues and relax in their company. Return to the booth before your judge so that you can prepare for the next class.

8) Let's face it, not all judges are pleasant. If you find you can't work with your judge, inform the volunteer coordinator. She'll find another scribe and hopefully be able to give you another job. Fortunately, this rarely happens since show management strives to hire judges who are personable.

9) A judge will tire as the day progresses, so you may have to help her on occasion. If you are sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that a rider has committed an error of course or error of test and your judge didn't catch it, bring it to her attention. Say something like, "I think she missed her circle at B. Could I be right?" Chances are that she'll appreciate it.

10) Mark an error in red ink within the box where the error occurred; write ERROR and circle it. The judge may ask you to record the errors on the back of the test after the test has been completed. Scoring usually takes care of this, but if a judge asks you to handle this please accommodate. Check with your judge at the start of your first day together how she wants use of voice recorded on tests.

11) If you know a competitor or horse, refrain from sharing this knowledge with your judge. She needs to remain as impartial as possible.

12) If the runner doesn't pick up the tests, please deliver them to the scorer's office during a break.

13) **Never leave judged tests in the judge's box unattended.**

A Note on Freestyle and Young Horse Tests

Freestyle and Young Horse tests don't follow the usual test format. Please familiarize yourself with them before these classes. If you are unsure how they "work," don't hesitate to ask your judge.

Symbol	Definition
A	dressage letter "A"
abr	abrupt
@	at
bk	back
bal	balance
b4	before
beh	behind
bend	bending
C	dressage letter "C"
cad	cadence
ct, cant	canter
c-line	center line
O	circle
coll	collected
cor	corner
crkd	crooked
diag	diagonal
dir	direction
disob	disobedient
eng	engaged, engagement
ext	extended, extension
flex	flexed, flexion
4hd, f/hand	forehand
forw, FW, 4wrđ	forward
gd	good
hlt	halt
½ pass	half pass
hd tilt	head tilt
h/leg	hind legs
hur	hurried
imp	impulsion

incomp	incomplete
ins	inside
insuff	insufficient
irreg	irregular
lack imp	lacks impulsion
LF	left front
LH	left hind
lat	lateral
lrg	large
L, l	left
□□	square
pos	position
prec	precise
reg	regular
res	resistance
R, rt	right
rhy	rhythm
rush	rush, rushed
RF	right front
RH	right hind
sal	salute
satis	satisfactory
serp	serpentine
sh-in	shoulder-in
sl	slight, slightly
sm	small
str	straight
stch ↓	stretch down
thru	through
trans	transition
trans ↓	transition down
trans ↑	transition up
unus	unusual
vert	vertical
v	very
wlk	walk
w	with
X	dressage letter “X”