

What is Para Dressage?

Para Dressage is dressage for riders with an eligible permanent physical impairment (a deficiency in or loss of body function or structure) as defined by the FEI Para Equestrian Dressage Classification Manual.

In Para Dressage the athlete's mobility, strength and coordination are assessed in order to establish their Classification Profile. Athletes with similar functional ability Profiles are grouped into competition Grades. The Grades range from Grade Ia for the most severely impaired, to Grade IV for the least impaired. The competition within each Grade is then judged on the skill of the individual competitor on their horse, without regard to the competitor's impairment.

Para Dressage is parallel to Dressage using the same basics in training, gaits, movements and figures but unlike dressage athletes compete according to their Classification Grade.

Parallel to Dressage riders not beginning at the High Performance (HP) Grand Prix level, Para Dressage riders also have to train and build their riding skill level & knowledge before reaching the High Performance level of their Grade.

What are the first steps to getting started in Para Dressage?

- **Learn to ride independently** & ride 2 or more times per week
- **Determine if you have an eligible physical impairment.** Contact the USEF Para Equestrian Director, Lauren Johnson at lkjohnson@usef.org to put you in contact with a classifier who will work with you to determine your edibility and as appropriate give you the needed information to schedule a National classification and apply for a USEF Dispensation Certificate.
- **Find a barn** where you can learn the basics of dressage. Gaits, rhythm, relaxation, connection, basic horse care. This could be a USEF/USPEA Center of Excellence (COE), dressage barn, or a Path In'l Center that has instructors and horses that are appropriate for your ability/needs. (United States Dressage Federation (USDF.org) has a wealth of information on their website and some great educational materials/training information opportunities. If available & appropriate riders should be encouraged to join a local pony club.)
- **Continue learning the basics of the Dressage/Para Dressage tests** learning test movements and gaits, training to ride a test. At some point you might have to look into changing barns/centers and buying or leasing a horse if your current training place isn't geared to dressage and/or competition or once your riding skills have outgrow the horses and dressage knowledge of that center. Do not lease or buy more horse than you need! Look for a sound horse with correct basic gaits and a good mind, safety first. A nice four beat walk is important no

matter your grade. The quality of your horse will be more important as the quality and level of your riding skills improve.

- **Learn the basics of competition** and learn about what is required (memberships horse & rider, USEF dispensation certificate, horse medical docs or passport, etc) to participate at a local USEF/USDF licensed shows riding either USDF or USEF tests or FEI Para Dressage tests. Attend a Para dressage clinic that will give you additional information and resources.
- **Build a “Team”** of individuals who will help you at clinics and shows. It is the rider’s responsibility to cover their needs, care for their horse, equipment, transport, mounting, etc.
- **Begin showing** at your skill level. FEI offers Para dressage novice tests in each grade, if you are a Grade Ib – II, USDF offers Intro tests that are walk trot only and ridden in a small or large arena that only require a beginner skill level. Grades 2, 3 & 4 and some grade Ib’s could start riding USEF Training Level test and advance, First, Second Level etc as their riding skill level and impairment allow. *(When riding a USDF or USEF test the rider must follow USEF dressage rules.)* Continue training until you reach the skill level to ride at your National classification Grade. This level offers the opportunity for you to meet the requirements to earn USDF Para Dressage awards and to work for qualification of USEF Para Dressage Nationals at the National Division!!

What are the first steps to becoming a High Performance Para Dressage Athlete?

- **Obtain an International FEI classification IF** your goal is to compete in Para Dressage at the International Level. International FEI Para dressage competitions have additional requirements for both rider and horse. Contact the USEF Para Equestrian Director, Laureen Johnson at lkjohnson@usef.org to ask for information for International classification opportunities. Usually these are available at CPEDI3* (International FEI Para Dressage) competitions. Attending a CPEDI3* competition as a spectator is extremely beneficial to learn/observe how these competition are conducted, meet HP Para dressage riders, obtain your FEI International classification and review/update your compensating aids. This level of competition requires regular training and riding 4 - 6x/week and a horse that has an FEI passport, is sound and has good quality FEI level gaits for the gaits & movements your grade FEI tests require, along with the ability for the horse & rider to travel across the country for competitions and abroad if working toward making a Team. This level offers you the opportunity to meet the requirements to earn USDF Para Dressage awards, work toward qualifying for USEF Para Dressage Nationals National or HP division, qualifying to compete in CPEDI competitions, and work to qualifying for USA Para Dressage Teams including CPEDI3*, NAJYRC US Para Dressage Team, World Equestrian Games (WEG) US Para Dressage Teams and US Paralympic Para Dressage Teams!!!

It is the rider/athlete's responsibility to know the rules and requirements of their sport!

"If you want to be successful, it's just this simply. Know what you are doing. Love what you are doing. And believe in what you are doing." – Will Rogers

Below are some useful websites to explore & become familiar with in order to learn about the sport of Para Dressage (& Dressage) and for information regarding competitions, symposiums/training sessions and classification.

Rules are constantly being reviewed and updated and symposiums/training sessions and competition opportunities are always being added so it is recommended that you check the sights frequently.

United States Equestrian Federation – usef.org (Governs US Para Dressage & National competition)

- High Performance Para Equestrian: ***Check frequently***

<https://www.usef.org/IFrames/breedsdisciplines/discipline/allparaequestrian/hpparaEquestrian.aspx>

Check here for Para Dressage information including upcoming symposiums/training sessions, CPEDI competitions, Centers of Excellence (COE), Dispensation Certificates and other important information

- USEF Para Dressage & Dressage rules (Para dressage rules are found in and part of the dressage rules.) <https://www.usef.org/documents/ruleBook/2016/08-DR.pdf>

United States Dressage Federation - usdf.org (USEF affiliate for US Dressage)

- USDF Competition & Results: <https://www.usdf.org/calendar/competitions.asp>

USDF/USEF licensed shows calendar list shows by region (look for shows that have a PE next to the show name which shows they offer FEI Para Dressage test of choice classes)

- Adequan®/USDF Para Dressage rider of the year awards program:

<http://www.usdf.org/awards/performance/year-end.asp> (pgs 22 & 30 in USDF Member Guide)

- Good basic dressage information to read & know

About Dressage: <http://www.usdf.org/about/about-dressage/>

New to Dressage: <http://www.usdf.org/about/about-dressage/newtodressage.asp>

Tack & Equipment: <http://www.usdf.org/about/about-dressage/competition/tack-equipment.asp>

Federation Internationale Equestrian – FEI.org (Governs International Para Dressage & International competitions)

- FEI Para Dressage Tests: <http://www.fei.org/fei/your-role/organisers/p-e-dressage/tests>

- FEI Para Dressage Rules:

http://www.fei.org/sites/default/files/PED%202016_rules_clean.pdf

- Classification manual:

http://www.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI%20Para%20Equestrian%20Classification%20Manual_January%202015.pdf

United States Para Equestrian association – USPEA.org (USEF affiliate for Para Equestrian)

USPEA serves to advise, advance & promote US Paralympic Equestrian & Para Equestrian sport

- Sign up for USPEA's **Email Newsletter** and keep up to date with what's going on in US Para Equestrian disciplines.
- Browse the website for news on upcoming, present, and past events in Para Equestrian sport
- Para Dressage Mentor Program – become a mentor for new Para Dressage riders

For additional information contact Hope Hand, USPEA President at wheeler966@aol.com

USPEA
United States
Para-Equestrian Association