

Para-Equestrian



**Courtesy of Equine Canada
&**

**Developed by Para Equestrian Canada Coaching Committee
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Introduction



- A sport for riders with a disability
- A Paralympic sport since the 1996 Atlanta Paralympics
- Became the 8th FEI discipline in 2006
- Is widely practiced though out the world
- Riders are assigned a 'classification' from grade 1A to 4 based on their functional ability
- Depending upon their profile, riders can use compensatory aids



Classification



- Classification of riders ensures fair equestrian competition.
- Riders with a disability may have more than one impairment.
- There is a functional profile system used to classify riders that enables the physical or sensory (vision) impairment of the rider to be expressed numerically.
- The profile is established by assessing muscle power, joint range or coordination of the rider and is not a test or judgment of the rider's ability on a horse.
- Once classified, the rider is given a profile number that represents their impairment. Profiles are grouped into five grades.

Grade IV



- **Grade IV** riders usually have impairment in one or two limbs, or some visual impairment.
- At this level the rider will ride FEI-PE tests roughly equivalent to EC Fourth Level tests.
- Collected, medium and extended gaits with half passes at trot and canter and counter changes of hand are required.
- All lateral work, single, 3 and 4 time flying changes are allowed in Freestyles.
- In Freestyles, piaffe, passage, full canter pirouettes or sequence changes of less than three strides are not allowed.

Grade IV



Pacific Rim International CPEDI**** - Langley, BC – 2006

Left: Karen Brain

Right: Eleonore Elstone

Grade III



- **Grade III** riders are usually able to walk without support. They may have moderate unilateral impairment, or moderate impairment in four limbs, or severe arm impairment, or total loss of sight in both eyes, or be intellectually impaired.
- At this level the rider will ride FEI-PE tests roughly equivalent to Second Level tests.
- Collected, medium and working gaits are required.
- All lateral work and canter work including single flying changes are allowed in Freestyles.
- In Freestyles, piaffe, passage, half or full pirouettes or sequence changes are not allowed.

Grade III



Inner Vision – New York – Greg Honour riding Grade III

Grade II



- **Grade II** – Mainly wheelchair users, or those with severe locomotor impairment involving the trunk and with good to mild limb function, or severe unilateral impairment.
- At this level the rider will ride FEI-PE tests roughly equivalent to EC First Level tests excluding canter.
- Required movements include 8 m walk circles, turns on the haunches and rein back.
- All lateral work in walk and trot and canter work including counter canter are allowed in Freestyles.
- In Freestyles, piaffe/ passage/ canter lateral work, flying changes and half or full pirouettes are not allowed.

Grade II



Left: Pacific Rim International, Langley, BC – Lauren Barwick riding Grade II

Right: World Championships, Belgium – Dax Adam riding Grade II



Grade I



Grade 1

Split into two sections Grade 1A and Grade 1B:

- Mainly wheelchair users with poor trunk balance and/or impairment function in all four limbs; or no trunk balance and good upper limb function; or moderate trunk balance with severe impairment in all 4 limbs.

Grade 1A



Grade 1A

- At this level the rider will ride a walk only technical test.
- Required work includes 8m and 10m circles, and free walk.
- In Freestyles, trot and all lateral work in walk and/or trot are allowed.
- Piaffe, passage and canter are not allowed in Freestyles.

Grade 1A



Inner Vision Championship, New York,
2002 – Judi Island riding Grade 1a

Grade 1B



Grade 1B

- At this level the rider will ride a technical test at walk and trot.
- Required work includes 8m circles, turns on the haunches and lengthened stride at trot.
- In Freestyles all lateral work is allowed in walk and trot.
- Piaffe, passage and canter are not allowed in Freestyles.

Grade 1B



Pacific Rim International – Langley, BC
Ashley Gowanlock riding Grade 1b

How To Get Started!



A person can become involved in Para-Equestrian in one of three ways:

- You were born with a disability and became involved in the sport.
- You have acquired a disability through an accident and may, or may not have been a rider before your accident.
- You have a deteriorating medical condition, and you are rider who wishes to continue your participation in a sport you love.

What do you need?



To get started in Para-Dressage you will need:

- Access to a suitable horse.
- A coach with some experience in dressage.
- A facility for training.

A Suitable Horse



- Should have a quiet manner and a solid disposition.
- Should be sound and healthy.
- Must have good paces for the level required.
- Must have good basic training in the dressage discipline.

Rider Classification Cards

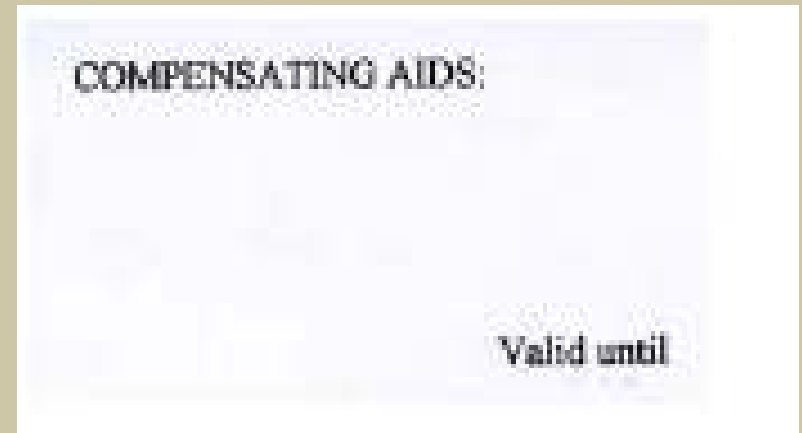


- Riders wishing to be classified for purposes of competition at the National level must be seen by a National Classifier before a card can be issued. Compensating aids are to be discussed at this time as well. Cards can be obtained from the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association office.
- The rider will complete the classification process per the Rider Classification system.
- A fee of \$10 for the initial card, payable to CanTRA, must be paid at the time of classification. The classifier will forward the completed classification assessment information.
- Riders wishing to be classified at the International level must be re-classified by a qualified classifier from another country. Cards for this level of competition are issued by the FEI.

FEI ID Card



The FEI ID or Classification Card must be carried by the rider at all FEI competitions in which they are entered. It may also be used by the rider to enter some FEI governed competitions permitting the use of the sanctioned compensating aids listed on the card. The rider's own National Sport Organization may also give permission to the rider to use this card, and the compensating aids listed on it, to compete in national competitions for the able-bodied. Should you use this card or the card issued by the National body to compete in able-bodied competition, you must attach a copy of the card to your entry form and you must carry your card with you in competition.



Compensating Aids



- **Salute** – helmets must not be removed at the salute, and contact must be *maintained* on the reins.
- **Voice** – Riders in Grade I and Grade II may use their voices as an aid, provided that they do so in moderation.
- Riders in Grade III and Grade IV may not use their voices at any time during the execution of their test.
- **Whips** – One or two whips may be carried, if required.

For all competitions, whips may only be carried by riders who are able to control their hand movements. At the salute, the rider must either carry the whip(s) in the non-saluting hand, or salute with the head only.

Compensating Aids Cont.



- **Spurs** – are optional for Para-Dressage competitions.
- In all competitions, spurs may only be used by riders able to control their leg movements.
- In those competitions for able-bodied riders where spurs are compulsory, riders who cannot control their leg movements should have this noted on their FEI card.
- An application must be made to FEI for any necessary alteration.

Compensating Aids Cont.



- **Commanders** – Only those riders with intellectual impairment, visual impairment (B1) or following head injury leading to short term memory loss, may have a commander to read their tests.
- All compensating aids must be approved and included on ID cards.
- For further information and clarification, see the FEI Rule Book for Para-Equestrian Dressage Events. This can be found on the website:
<http://www.fei.org/Disciplines/Para-Equestrian>

Compensating Aids Cont.



Compensating Aids will be approved according to a rider's functional profile and may include, but are not limited to:

- Grade I – hand holds, rubber bands to stirrups, straps from stirrup leathers or stirrups to girth, loop reins, raised pommel and/or cantle away from the body, salute with head only, 1 or 2 whips, use of voice, seat saver, no stirrups, Devonshire boots, Andersen stirrups. May ride with one hand only.

Compensating Aids Cont.



- Top – Rubber band to stirrup. Must break free in case of a fall.
- Also, straps from stirrups to girth to stabilize leg.
- Right - Metal hand hold
- Below-Pommel strap



Compensating Aids Cont.



- Grade II – Rubber bands to stirrups, straps from stirrups or leathers to girth, loop reins, 1 or 2 whips, hand holds, salute with head only, use of voice, seat saver, one or no stirrups, Devonshire boots, Andersen stirrups, raised pommel and/or cantle away from body, connecting rein bar.

Compensating Aids Cont.



Devonshire Boots



- Top – Toe stoppers (on English Stirrup iron)
- Bottom – On western stirrup with wide rubber tread.

Compensating Aids Cont.



- Grade III – Neck strap, rubber bands to stirrups, straps from stirrups or leathers to girth, 1 or 2 whips, connecting rein bar, loop reins, salute with head only, use of voice, seat saver, Devonshire boots, Andersen stirrups, one or no stirrups, looped reins, reins through ring attached to saddle.
- For Profile 36 (blind) – Callers at letters, commander allowed. NB, when riding in Grade III, these riders must wear an FEI approved blindfold when training at the competition venue or while competing.

Compensating Aids Cont.



- Webbed loop reins
- Leather loop reins
- Foot reins used in conjunction with webbed loop reins.



Compensating Aids Cont.



- Grade IV – Neck strap, connecting rein bar, use of voice, salute with head only, may ride with one hand only. Rubber bands to stirrups, straps from stirrups or leathers to girth, seat saver, 1 or 2 whips, Devonshire boots, Andersen stirrups, looped reins, if arms are very short allowed reins through ring attached to saddle, salute with head only.

Compensating Aids Cont.



- Hand hold
- Large thigh blocks
- Velcro thigh straps (to stabilize leg)
- Rubber bands to stirrups
- Straps from stirrups to girth
- 2 whips
- This is a Grade II rider



Mounting & Dismounting



- Most riders with a disability require the use of a mounting block or ramp.
- Riders with poor balance or little strength in their legs should use a mounting block.
- Use of the mounting block makes mounting safer for the rider and easier on the horse's back.
- Therapeutic riding instructors are experienced in mounting riders with various disabilities.

Mounting & Dismounting



The mounting block should be sturdy, non-slippery and should be located in a safe area.



The mounting block should be large enough for two people to stand safely on if assistance is needed to mount.

Remember



- When in doubt, err on the side of safety!
- Consult a medical practitioner such as a physiotherapist to assist with exercises to develop and strengthen muscles and improve balance and co-ordination. This is their area of expertise!
- No question is too foolish, but not to question at all is!
- The motto is “Do no harm”! If it causes pain, don’t do it!
- No matter what activity you are doing, wear your helmet, every ride!

Para-Coaching FAQ



Legal

1. Do I need special insurance to coach a rider with a disability?

No, you require a standard coach insurance policy. See below in the box a response from an insurance provider.

2. If I ask volunteers to help in the mounting and dismounting of a rider with a physical disability, or to help support the rider in learning an activity, am I putting the volunteers at risk of liability?

If you are an insured coach and the volunteers are working under your direction, they are covered under your policy.

3. What liability waivers, releases, consent documents, etc. will I need to add riders with disabilities to my coaching clients?

A medical doctor's approval is recommended. Other forms (waivers) are the same as for able bodied coaching.

FAQ Con.t



Coaches, no matter what discipline or style of coaching, must take adequate steps to ensure the safety of their students. Insurance companies provide coverage for coaching activities with the assumption that coaches are offering their services in a safe and responsible manner.

Creating a safe learning environment requires coaches to take a “risk management” approach to their operations. Risk management is important regardless of whether the students are beginners, riders with special needs or advanced competitors. As you are coaching riders with physical or mental disabilities, it would be prudent to obtain a written note from the student’s medical doctor confirming the student is able to participate in your program. Other important risk management techniques would include the following procedures : all students need to sign waivers, horses used in lessons need to be trained for riders with disabilities, any volunteers (side walkers, grooms) need to be trained in whatever capacity you use them, the tack used in lessons needs to be suitable for your exercises.

As a coach, the onus is on you to take all necessary steps to provide your students with a safe and controlled environment.

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FAQ Cont.



Facility

4. What mounting blocks, ramps, lifts, etc. do I need to get a rider with a physical disability safely mounted on a horse?

A ramp is ideal for wheelchairs. Steps or a ramp to a surface high enough to mount without a foot in the stirrup is highly recommended. Your horses will love it if your able bodied riders also mount this way and do not twist their spines.

5. Are there any special considerations that I need to know about as far as arena layout and organization?

Safety is paramount. Avoid clutter. Practice good horsemanship. Start the lessons in a small area of the arena and move on as appropriate. Ensure there are no jumps or jump cups in the way.

6. What about wheelchairs and accessibility?

They are hard to push on arena surfaces. Have your mounting block on a hard surface, separated from the arena.

FAQ Cont.



Disability Awareness

7. How can I be sure that what I am doing in my coaching is appropriate for the person with a disability?

Check with the doctor or physiotherapist who works with your prospective student. Contact therapeutic riding professionals for advice. Use common sense.

8. Where can I find information about working with a student with a particular disability?

The internet is a good source. In most cases the student or parents will have the disability well researched and will be eager to share that information with you.

9. Which disabilities are contraindicated for riding?

A comprehensive list is available in the CanTRA Instructors manual.

FAQ Cont.



Sport Participation

10. How can I find out if the equipment that I suggest to my student with a disability will be allowed in competition?

If you are involved with dressage or driving, check the Equine Canada rule book, which is available online at www.equinecanada.ca . For other disciplines, you will have to be a bit more proactive and speak to judges and show management about special concessions.

11. How can I determine what grade of classification my student would be in and what level of competition would be expected in that grade ?

This must be done by a qualified classifier. You can look at the different profiles and grade classifications in the classification manuals for dressage and driving available online, but your student would have to arrange with a classifier to get an official card. See the PEC website for more information www.para-equestriancanada.org .

FAQ Cont.



12. How can I find competitive opportunities for a student with a disability?

For recognized Para-Equestrian competition, check the PEC website. For sport involvement at a Discovery level, contact show managers in your area and ask to have your riders included in local shows. Let the management know what you will require for safety and be ready to provide volunteers to support any additional work that must be done to accommodate your rider(s):

i.e. lengthen or shorten the ring. Most show organizers, at this level, are open to ideas to increase participation.

The Para-Dressage exemptions are included in Chapter 14 of the 2009 Section E Dressage rulebook available online at Equine Canada.

For More Information On Para-Dressage



- Check out the PEC website at www.paraequestrian.ca
- Email the Equine Canada office at info@paraequestrian.ca
- Phone the Equine Canada office at:
613-248-3433 Ext. 13
- Check out the FEI website:
www.ipec-athletes.de or www.horsesport.org

Credits



**Courtesy of Equine Canada
&
Developed by Para Equestrian Canada Coaching Committee**

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