

Tips and Guidelines for Writers

Introduction

A good, efficient Writer who understands their role, plays an essential part in making a competition run smoothly and successfully. S/he will make it easy for the judge to concentrate on their role assessing the competitors; and will make it easy for the competitor to read and understand the judge's comments afterwards. It is also an excellent opportunity to enjoy dressage from a good position, whilst learning from the expert – the judge.

To write well you will need to be able to:

- Be very organised; on time; well briefed; in control of your paperwork; ensure the correct identification of each competitor
- Have good listening skills, so the judge doesn't have to repeat anything
- Write legibly and quickly, with good spelling, so you get all the comments down in a readable manner; for instance, "trans" may look like "turns" when scrawled so "loss of balance through trans" could be unclear if not properly legible
- Understand the test for which you are writing, both on paper and visually, so you know where any extra marks are likely and can remind the judge if they've missed a mark
- Make sure you understand how the judge wishes to give the marks and any other requirements they may have of you (some, for instance, like the writer to keep running records)
- Be methodical about correct completion of the test sheets and other paperwork
- Be diplomatic about prompting the judge
- Keep quiet so the judge can concentrate and don't query the marks given, including tuts and sighs if you disagree!
- Maintain confidentiality afterwards as it is unacceptable to discuss marks, comments or any other conversation you might have had with the judge **What will you actually do on the day?**
- Arrive early, by at least 30 minutes before the class begins, as the judge or organiser may be anxious until they know you're there
- Dress appropriately to the level of competition - you'll be in close proximity to your judge, so your mucking out clothes might not be appreciated!
- Have plenty of pens (writing must be in ink not pencil) and a spare clipboard, just in case
- Make sure you have any glasses you might need so you can see both the test sheet and the competitor; clothing suitable for the weather such as sun hat/warm rug/gloves/scarves and anything else you would find essential to your comfort (hot water bottle/insect repellent) such as a cushion
- Report to the Secretary, collect your score sheets and start list, check for withdrawals and timing of breaks, find out where your arena is
- Check your score sheets are the correct ones for the class and that you have enough for the number of competitors, with a couple of spares – while you are waiting you may be able to prepare a couple with the name of the judge, the position from which they are judging, date, competitor details etc. to save time later, but not too many in case of unforeseen changes.
- Familiarise yourself with the score sheets, making sure you know where to put the marks. Make sure you know the test
- Check arrangements for breaks and refreshments, as sometimes you may need to collect refreshments for both you and your judge and make sure you both at least have water. If you are given a basket, check that the contents are complete
- Identify the nearest loo to your arena. This can be very important as breaks are often short
- Either remain at the Secretary's Office to meet your judge or go to your arena to wait for them
- Don't forget to switch off your mobile phone
- When your judge arrives, take a brief from them as to how they like to give the marks and any other preferences they may have

- When each competitor starts to ride around the outside of the arena, check you have the right name on the test sheet – in most competitions they will have a number to check, ideally on both sides of the bridle or saddle cloth
- Make sure you write the judge's name and position and all other details on the top of each test sheet – this is essential
- The Writer Training videos show horses with boots/bandages on, as it was a demonstration – horses may not wear them in competition
- The marks are the most important element of your role – write it down as soon as the judge gives it, even if that interrupts a comment you are writing
- If you miss a mark say so immediately, and if the judge does so also mention it immediately (but tactfully)
- Keep half an eye on the progress of the test, so you are sure you are writing the comments and marks in the right place and nothing is missed – it is very difficult to rectify your errors after the test is complete
- You may use abbreviations i.e. trans (transition) and the judge may ask you to underline words in the directives on the sheet. Use clear abbreviations so you can write quickly and don't get cramp, but don't use text speak! For instance:

1/4s = quarters	trans = transition
O = circle	<input type="checkbox"/> = square
½ O = half circle	4hand = forehand
str = straight	obed = obedient
s/in = shoulder-in	G and R = give and retake
½ pass = half pass	thru = through
½ pir = half pirouette	

- Know how to spell rhythm!
- Don't ask questions or make conversation unless checking you're writing something correctly, so the judge is free to concentrate
- Don't indicate any view on the performance or the judge's comments – including tutting, sighing, nodding etc.
- If there is a break between tests and the judge is happy to discuss marks or comments, then it is acceptable
- Confidentiality is essential – repeat nothing that you heard whilst writing
- Make sure that the judge signs each test sheet before handing it to the runner and make sure all sheets are collected for the scorer
- Enjoy – it's a great way to learn! You'll be in one of the best seats in the house and with an expert