



Creative Freestyle Questionnaire



Use this worksheet to get your thoughts flowing. I will bring clarity to your strengths and weaknesses. Circle your answers and use the advice below each question to get you started in the right direction.

Your Horse's Gaits

1. Your horse's **STRONGEST** gait is the:

Walk Trot Canter

Highlight this gait in your freestyle by using it for your entrance and your final centerline. This will help make a great first and last impression. Fully showcase this gait by riding diagonal lines so the judge can clearly see the horse's legs.

2. Your horse's **WEAKEST** gait is the:

Walk Trot Canter

Ride away from the judge on the centerline or quarter line to make it more difficult for him/her to see the horse's lack of overstep, suspension, and ground cover. Instead, you will be highlighting other qualities such as straightness and submission.

3. As a rider, you feel the most **CONFIDENT** and **COMFORTABLE** in this gait:

Walk Trot Canter

Use this gait for the beginning of your test to build your confidence to carry you through the test. If you are comfortable, you will have more fun and get higher artistic and collective scores.

4. Your horse is most **RELAXED** in this gait:

Walk Trot Canter

Use this gait for your opening entrance so that his first halt will be relaxed and balanced. Remember that your halts are scored in the freestyle test.

5. Your horse is most **TENSE** in this gait:

Walk Trot Canter

Sandwich this gait in the middle of your freestyle and end with your best gait to leave a good impression on the judge. You do not have to follow the traditional, trot, then walk, then canter test format for your freestyle. Example; Tense at the walk? Ride your medium and free walk separately to avoid long periods of walking.



Creative Freestyle Questionnaire



Test Movements

6. You usually score the **HIGHEST** on these test movements:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Give these movements top priority for degree of difficulty and optimum placement for choreography (closer to the judge, facing forward or to the side). End your freestyle with one of your best movements to leave the judge with a good impression. That will translate into better collective and artistic marks.

7. You usually score the **LOWEST** on these test movements:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Place your weakest test movements in the middle of your freestyle and limit the degree of difficulty to avoid unnecessary stress and tension. Use simple choreography for these movements so that you can execute them to the best of your ability, rather than over-reach and fail to deliver.

Collective Marks

8. You usually score the **HIGHEST** on these collective marks:

Gaits Impulsion Submission Rider

Utilize your strengths. If you chose gaits: highlight them with diagonals and ground-covering movements. If you chose impulsion: highlight with more difficult upward transitions. If you chose submission: highlight obedience and suppleness with lateral work, circles, bending lines, and counter-canter. If you chose rider: ride your favorite movements with one hand.

9. You usually score the **LOWEST** on these collective marks:

Gaits Impulsion Submission Rider

Downplay your weaknesses. If you chose gaits: highlight them with diagonals and ground-covering movements. If you chose impulsion: highlight with more difficult upward transitions. If you chose submission: highlight obedience and suppleness with lateral work, circles, bending lines, and counter-canter. If you chose rider: ride your favorite movements with one hand.



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Your Horse

10. What is your horse's personality? (circle all that apply)

Serious Goofy Insecure Confident Aloof Nervous
Dominant Aggressive Passive Show-Off Flighty Calm

Some of the best freestyles have a way of expressing the horse's personality. Remember Debbie McDonald and Brentina at the Las Vegas World Cup? Her music, "Brickhouse", matched the mare's personality to perfection. If you have a goofy horse you might add a humorous line from a movie, or use cartoon or game music that lends a sense of childhood energy to your routine. Confident horses go well with dramatic music, and nervous/flighty horses you might want light/airy music that won't get too loud and add tension.

11. What is your horse's energy level at home?

Lazy Level-Headed Motivated Hyper

12. What is your horse's energy level at a horse show?

Lazy Level-Headed Motivated Hyper

If your horse is considerably different at a show compared to schooling at home, you can use your freestyle music to help balance him/her out. If your horse gets really tense at a show, use music that is slightly slower-paced, encouraging you to ride slower to match the music. Dramatic, up-tempo music helps energize a lazy horse and a horse that anticipates might benefit from softer, gentler music at the beginning of your test with a slower crescendo that builds towards the end.

13. How does loud music/noises affect your horse?

Not sure Not at all More energetic Tense/Spooky

Sound systems at horse shows can sound terrible. The speakers can spook your horse if he has sensitive hearing. Sometimes they will crackle or squeal and that can bother the horse. Practice riding at home with your music really loud and see if there is any reaction. You can also buy cd's that have really loud clapping and weird noises to see if your horse reacts. Some horses love music and they will follow the beat and learn their freestyle routine. Pay attention to the location of the speakers during your music test at the horse show. If you have a spooky horse you will want to be aware of potential problem spots in your freestyle due to the loud speakers.



Creative Freestyle Questionnaire



You - the Rider

14. How do you feel when you are riding at home on a regular basis?

Unmotivated Relaxed/Confident Anxious/Insecure Serious/Stressed

15. How do you feel when you are riding at a horse show?

Unmotivated Relaxed/Confident Anxious/Insecure Serious/Stressed

I don't expect any of you to consider yourself "unmotivated" if you are putting forth the effort to design a freestyle. And to the lucky few who are actually confident at a horse show you can skip ahead! For those of you who tend to doubt yourself or get stressed at home, those feelings will only be amplified at a show. Build your confidence with plenty of time to prepare, memorize, and practice your freestyle. Listen to your music every day. Pretend you are a horse and run through the movements on foot until you have memorized every transition in the music.

You will need to know when you are ahead or behind the music. What usually happens at a show is riders get ahead of their music because tension will cause the horse to quicken the tempo. Expect that to happen and give yourself a few spots in the freestyle to double check how you are doing and potentially add a circle if you are ahead of the music. When you pick your music pay attention to how you feel when you listen to it. If a piece of music is too dramatic it will get you a little too hyped-up. It should make you feel energetic but at the same time relaxed.

Music

16. What are your favorite music genres? (ex. Country, pop, jazz, classical)

I would suggest that you begin your music search with this question. Start with a genre and then narrow it down. If you love classical music start exploring the different styles of classical. You can get creative with classical music that is re-mixed with a techno beat or played by a rock band to lend a modern feel to something old-fashioned.



Creative Freestyle Questionnaire



17. Who are your favorite bands/singers?:

Songs with vocals can be distracting and are discouraged in a dressage freestyle. If you have a favorite song most likely you can find an instrumental version by searching online. However, a well-timed lyric will lend personality to your freestyle if done in the right way. Using vocals in your entrance can set the tone for your freestyle, especially when it is recognizable puts the judge in a feel-good mood.

Music from live concerts, where the audience is clapping and singing along with the music, will lend a different vibe and may encourage your audience to clap along (only choose this option if your horse is comfortable with clapping!).

18. Name some of your favorite movies:

When you listen to a soundtrack, it tends to evoke the emotions you felt as you were watching the movie. Think of *The Man From Snowy River* or *Pirates of the Caribbean*, both have recognizable soundtracks that make great music for riding. The downside with soundtracks are the varying highs and lows in the music that follow individual scenes in the movie. You may need to be patient and clever with your editing.

19. What music do you listen to for relaxation?

If you are a highly anxious rider at shows, use music that is relaxing and recognizable for your entrance to help you enter your happy place at the beginning of your test.

20. What music do you listen to when you want more energy?

Need something to get your energy flowing? Use music that pumps you up and helps you get into the zone. This can help if you have a low energy horse that tends to get behind the leg when you are nervous.

Creative Freestyle Questionnaire

21. What song/style of music would be in your dream musical freestyle?

Is there a piece of music that you are just dying to ride to? I always have a list of favorite songs in the back of my head, just waiting for the right horse and the right opportunity to use them.

22. Which professional dressage riders do you admire? What type of music have they used in their freestyles?

When you are in the creation stage of your freestyle you should watch as many freestyles as you can. You will draw inspiration from their musical choices and choreography. The World Cup is very popular, the World Equestrian Games and the Olympics, of course, are all available on dvd or you can find clips on YouTube. [I have playlists for musical freestyles, organized by levels, on my YouTube channel to help you get started. Click here.](#)

23. What song/artist/or style of music CALMS your mind?

Feeling stressed at the show? Listen to this music when you are preparing for your ride; while you are grooming or warming up. This music may not be suitable for a freestyle, but it could help ease your show day jitters.

“Life is a dance. Sometimes we lead, sometimes we follow. Don’t worry about what we don’t know, what’s important is we learn new steps as we go.”
-Unknown

