

Flat - C2 through RA

There are 4 components:

- turnout
- warm up
- flat ride
- alternate (no alternate at C2)

Know the Classical Training Scale

- there is a direct correlation between the Training Scale and Pony Club flat testing
- each of these levels in the Training Scale is a *progressive building block*
- it's a given that the horse is already *forward* and *relaxed*
- **Rhythm** (def'n: movement having a regular repetition of beats)
- **Suppleness** (def'n: able to move and bend easily and gracefully)
 - lateral (bend side to side): be aware that horses are usually one-sided
 - longitudinal - which leads us to...
- **Contact** aka *on the bit* (note that it is not the same as collection - **do not** use these terms interchangeably, especially in the critique)
 - you need to have contact part of the time for C2; most of the time for B; all the time for B2 and A
- **Straightness** - need to have this for B2 - which coincides with the movements at B2 (shoulder in and counter canter) that promote straightness
- **Impulsion** (def'n: driving force; impetus)
- **Collection** - need to be working towards this for RA

Warm up

- 15 minutes (at C2 level) to 25 minutes (at A level)

- this is a demonstration of a warm up

- it is likely a compressed version of your real warm up
- if your horse needs more time than that given, you can start your warm up early, but in your test you have to make sure that you demonstrate all parts (from the beginning)
- do start at the beginning, showing walk and long and low prior to picking up contact

- be aware that position marks are taken here

- try and show all the movements, in case they don't work out in your flat ride

Flat ride

- this is **not** looked at as a dressage test
- smoothness trumps accuracy
 - if you need to repeat a movement, or to circle to prepare, that is preferred over producing something that is not up to standard
- if you go off course, it's not the end of the world - that's not what we're looking at
 - your test should be called for you
- the higher the level, the more important special movements are
 - approximately 70% of the RA marks are special movements
- think of where the testers are, why they're positioned there, and what they are looking for

The basic gaits:

- medium walk
 - working trot
 - working canter
- be able to produce them*
- should be good quality

Maintain the correct **contact**

- keep it consistent, make corrections if necessary

Corners should be **balanced** and **bending**

- tests are won/flat rides are passed with good corners
- ride your own track, don't follow that of the others
- use corners as suppling exercises

Make sure you can do all the simple stuff **REALLY** well

nail your turnout with a 10

practice your halts

ensure that your horse actually does a working trot and can maintain it

make your figures the correct size and shape

show a difference between going around the ring and doing circles - ride the corners of the ring differently than when you're doing a circle

C2 leg yield

- you have a choice about walk or trot, and where to do it in the ring
- be smart about how you set it up
- trot is typically easier to do and produces a more correct movement than does walk
- quarter line to rail is easier than centre line to rail
- if you turn onto the centreline off of the left rein, leg yield your horse to the left and vice versa for the right.

Aids

- know your aids for your movements
- if you don't do the movement well, they will ask you about it
 - if you can tell them **how** to do it and **why** yours went wrong, or how to fix it, that may help you

Transitions

- prepare your transitions
- you will be marked on your transitions from gait to gait (walk to trot, etc.) as well as your transitions within a gait (working trot to lengthen stride to working trot).

Preparation

- ride your test beforehand so that you are familiar with it
- memorize your test; in order to prepare for the next movement, you need to know what is coming
 - your test will be called, but you should know where you are going
- visualize your test
 - diagram your tests

- work on your figures (size/shape)
- prepare your test outside of the ring - if your first turn at C off of the centreline will be onto the left rein, plan to make your circle outside of the ring off of the left rein
- video yourself
- take lessons
- go to clinics
- go to dressage shows (some will let you do your PC test) - the more feedback you get, the more you ride under pressure and in different situations, the better you will be able to withstand the 'heat' at the test

If it's not perfect

- if something goes wrong in your flat ride, you can ask to re-do that section again
 - you must improve it. If you don't do it better the second time - *bad news*
- if a mistake is minor, ride on
 - leave it behind you. Don't let it disrupt upcoming movements. One movement does not a test make...
- be aware of what you have done. You will be asked to reflect on it in the critique

Critique

- listen carefully to what your Examiner asks of you. They may want to hear:
 - about how your warm up prepared your horse for the flat ride, and things you may have done differently
 - a succinct critique of your flat ride
 - an in-depth blow-by-blow retelling of your flat ride
- make sure your critique is actually reflective of what happened
- try and start with something positive (e.g., "Today I was really happy with our rhythm throughout"), end with something positive, and use those to frame the things that didn't go as well
 - always speak in a constructive way, by pointing out what you can change to improve the movement

- don't blame your horse; instead, talk about how you influence him (e.g., instead of saying, "He was really stiff in the poll and pulling on me", say, "I need to work on making him more supple by softening him and using half halts... blah blah blah")

Alternate Horse

Alternate horse is not done at C2

You will have 10 minutes to ride the alternate horse

Keep an eye on all the other candidate's horses during warm up and flat ride - you will be riding one of them

The Examiners will typically pick a horse that's the opposite of yours, or one that might allow you to demonstrate a movement you had trouble with on your own horse with more ease; this is your opportunity to show them you can do it!

Make any tack changes (altering stirrup lengths, etc.) and equipment changes (putting spurs on/taking spurs off - copy what the horse's rider has) BEFORE you get on the horse

Try and work through as many of the movements in your flat ride as possible within the time

Your goal is to NOT UNSETTLE THE HORSE; if it's getting rattled, back off. Try something different.

You will have to critique this horse, and the owner will likely be present. Be tactful.