

## Why Not Try...?



### The Discipline of the Month

# Dressage

Five reasons to enjoy dressage more

1.

Dressage, or flatwork, is the foundation for success in all riding disciplines

2.

Your horse will be easier to ride if you put the flatwork training in early

3.

Add music, costumes and more riders and you can produce a real show

4.

This is a sport that can take you to national and international competitions - exciting!

5.

Dressage does not have to be in an arena, and it can include jumps.

# ACTIVITY

## 'Dance' Your dressage

Put on some music

Dress up.

Dance - singly, pairs or teams.

Grab a friend and work out a 'mirror test'. Eg whenever one turns left, the other turns right. One canters a circle to the left at C while the other canters a circle to the right at A. When you have memorised it, show the rest of your group.



# ACTIVITY



## Challenge yourself

The paralympics equestrian dressage riders at Tokyo 2020 have inspired us all. Why not try dressage one-handed?

When placing the reins in one hand, the hand that will hold both reins moves over the top of the hand that will release the rein. The reins will be crossed as they are held in one hand.

A light contact should be maintained on both reins with slight wrist and finger movement. Your coach will still be making sure you ride into your corners.



Musical rides can be great fun and can take you and your team to the State Championships, like these two Tasmanian teams.

(How did the team on the left manage to have two almost identical ponies?????)

To find out more about Musical Rides and riding to music, check out the [PCA Discipline of the Month page on our website](#) - there's a whole issue devoted to Musical Rides.





## Add some obstacles . . .

# Prix Caprilli Dressage tests

Prix Caprilli is ideal for kids who love jumping and find pure dressage a little too staid. The discipline has plenty of benefits too, including:

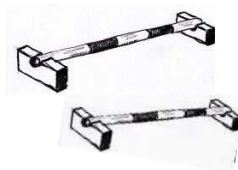
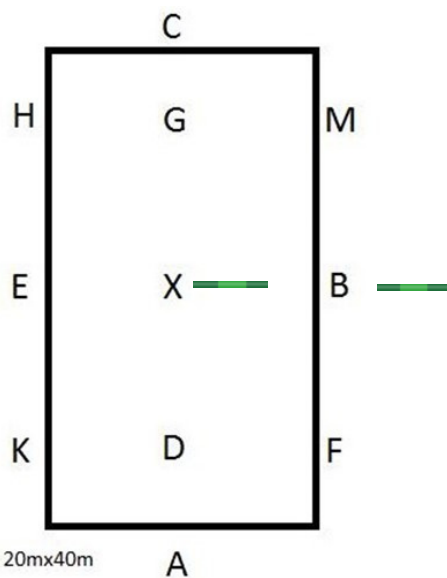
- Learning how to perform correct changes of pace within the gaits, allowing the rider to lengthen or shorten the horse's stride into the jump.
- Teaching the rider how to maintain the correct tempo and prevent a hot horse from rushing his fences.
- Learning how to apply the half-halts correctly, which helps the horse to use his hindquarters to prepare for the jump and to lift his forehand so that he clears the obstacle cleanly.
- Improving the rider's balance and seat so that they go with the horse over the fence.

Flatwork also makes the rider more aware of the horse's straightness and balance. If the horse is crooked and unbalanced, it will be very difficult for him to bascule correctly over the fence and show good form.

## ACTIVITY

You can make up your own Prix Caprilli tests, or here's some help from PCANSW:

[https://www.pcansw.org.au/docs/calendars/prix\\_caprilli\\_test\\_2.pdf](https://www.pcansw.org.au/docs/calendars/prix_caprilli_test_2.pdf)



## Who Was Caprilli?



Captain Federico Caprilli (8 April 1868 - 6 December 1907) was an Italian cavalry officer and equestrian who revolutionized the jumping seat.

His position, now called the 'forward seat,' formed the modern-day technique used by all jumping riders today.

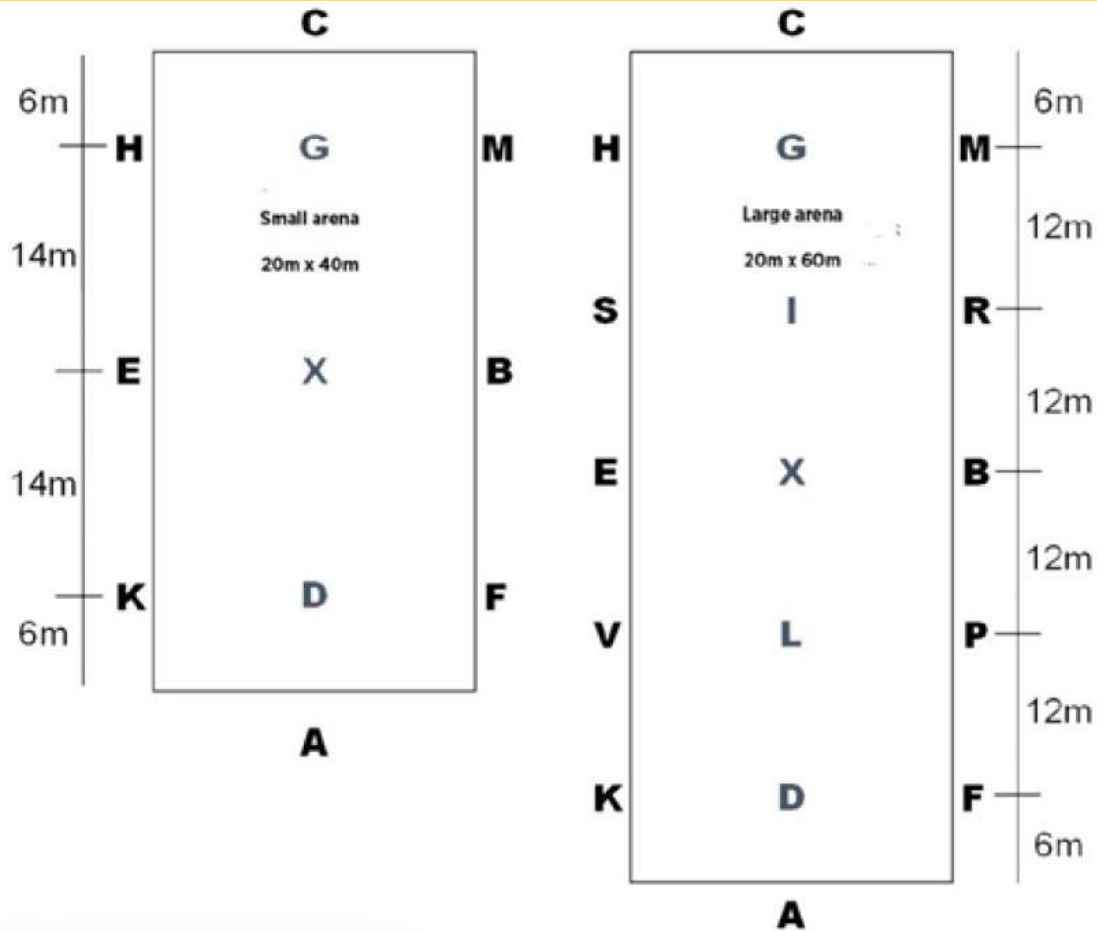
Previously, riders leaned back over jumps, shoved their legs forwards, held onto the horse's mouth and tried to 'place' them at the jump (see below).

Caprilli's position made horses much more willing to jump obstacles, now that they were free of interference, but it took quite awhile for his radical idea to be accepted.



Jumps can be inside or outside the dressage arena; outside is usually easier.

# How To Learn Your Markers



## ACTIVITY

1. It can be hard to learn your dressage markers. But you need to know them to memorise a dressage test. One way is to tell a story - start at A and think of a sentence using each letter to start a word, in an anti-clockwise then clockwise direction.

Everyone reads out their sentences when finished. Example: A Fat Black Mother Cat Had Eight Kittens. All King Edward's Horses Can't Manage Big Fences.

2. Each rider thinks of a three or more lettered word using only letters from the arena markers. Then one at a time they ride into the arena and spell out their word, coming to a halt at each letter in their word before moving on. The others have to guess their word. You can score each rider on their halts.

- Make it harder by not halting, but changing pace between each letter (walk, trot, walk, canter...)

- Make it harder again, by having no letters showing.

There are two sizes of dressage arena and all levels of test are ridden in either a 20m x 40m or a 20m x 60m arena. The letters appear rather random as they do not follow the alphabet and have no obvious pattern.

A 20m x 60m Dressage Arena has 12 letters: **A B C E F H K M R S V P**  
The five invisible letters down the centre line are **D L X I G**.

A 20m X 40m arena has 8 letters :  
**A B C E F H K M**  
The three invisible letters down the centre line are **D X G**

## ACTIVITY

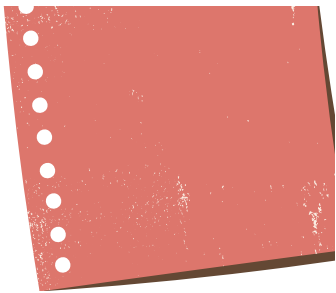
Homework- find out why these letters are used.

# ACTIVITY

## Paper Game

Ask each rider to place a piece of paper (eg 1/4 of A4 page) between their knee and the saddle. If it stays there for a certain amount of time (eg 15 mins, 30 mins, whole lesson) they win a small prize or sticker.

In a small group it might be worth risking a \$5 note each for added incentive. Make sure several paces are covered in the lesson, including sitting trot.



# ACTIVITY

## Snowman

Along with the normal figure of 8s, you can try one large circle then one small circle, eg 20m and then 10m.

You can even add a third circle for a head or hat. Make sure the changes of rein are correct, ie. straighten the horse for several strides through the centre before changing direction, using the correct aids. This is easier if you have two poles along the straight section, for riders to ride between.



# ACTIVITY

## Human dressage

This is a good way to memorise a test - do it without a horse. Riders need to learn a simple test before a rally or muster. (Use one from the handbook or make one up; and 3-4 minutes is long enough.

Set up a human-sized dressage arena and give riders a hobby horse to do their test on. Other riders give them a score and a comment for each move, on prepared scoresheets.

Suggested size: 6m x 2m (big arena) or 4m x 2m (small arena), or double these sizes.

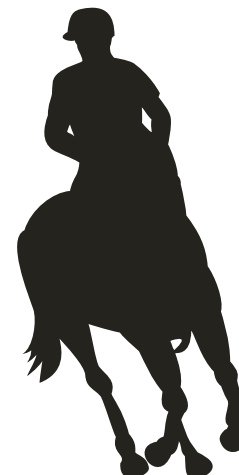


# ACTIVITY

## Galloping dressage

Dressage does not have to be in a small arena. It can be on a cross country course. Teach riders how to turn balanced corners at a canter or gallop, to help with turning onto jumps. Remind them it is a skill which can be practised in a dressage arena too.

They also need to learn how to speed up and slow down at all paces.





# Do Some Cartwheels



Performing cartwheels has many benefits. Not the human, gymnastic kind, the horse and rider kind!

## ACTIVITY

Get the class to line up side by side. At the walk, on the signal, everyone rotates around the rider on one end. (either end).

Riders will quickly learn the inside rider has to slow down and almost turn on the spot, while the outside rider has to speed up considerably. It's a good exercise in managing your horse's pace.

Repeat the turn a few times, then make turn on the other direction, so the outer rider is now the centre of the wheel.

Then try at a trot and even a canter if riders are up to it. Turning, steadying and increasing and decreasing pace are all great exercises.

You can also shuffle the order of riders, so they all get to experience being on the end. If you line up your team in size order (top photo), they might find it easy turning one way, and much harder the other (when the smallest horse is on the outside.)



### SAMMY SNAKE

This is a fun way to teach the younger members how to ride a three loop serpentine.

Place two poles at A so they can ride between them, then another two poles on the centre line guiding them straight after their first loop, then another two poles on the centre guiding them straight after second loop and then finally two poles at C to finish of the exercise.

They start at Sammy Snake's head either A or C and ride in between the poles and finish at his tail. You can make the poles narrower so they have to really steer straight and the little ones enjoy telling you what Sammy Snake has eaten as they ride around him!!

## ACTIVITY



*Thanks to Pony Club UK for these two activities.*

### THE TROLL UNDER THE BRIDGE

This is a fun way to teach the younger members how to ride a circle.

Place two poles at A or C and two at X so they can ride between them and place two cones on the other two points of the circle to guide them.

They will then trot to the start of the poles and then walk between the poles so not to wake up the troll and then trot round to the next set of poles and walk through them and so on.

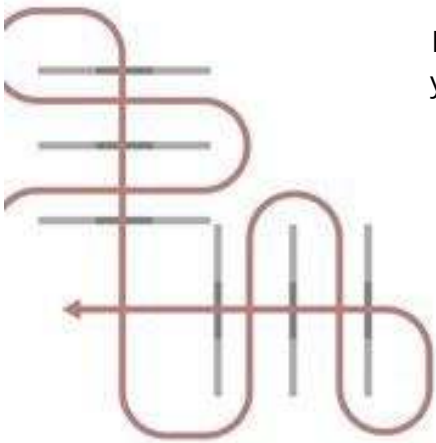
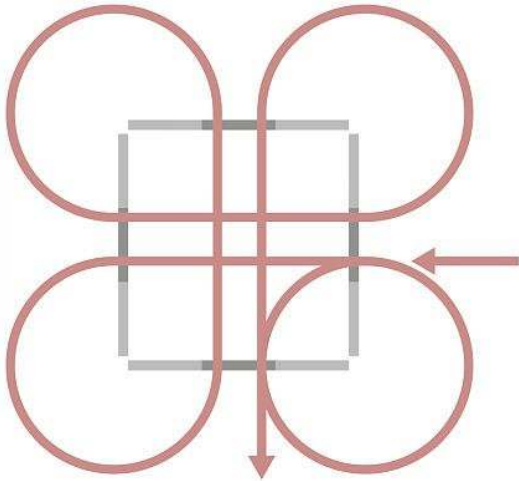
If the rider is fairly competent then try this in canter. The canter round with trot in between the poles can get a little chaotic but is great fun!!

(Also good for figure of eight training)





## Poles and Cones



Poles or cones can help you practise your turns. Here are some interesting tracks.



Some people like to use a large or handheld white board to learn their tests. Remember also to 'walk' it on foot so you get your sense of direction right.



Make your own dressage markers to practise at home. Two litre sauce bottles filled with sand or water do the job well.

If you are looking for activities to try at your Club or at home, all previous Disciplines we have covered so far are [on our website here:](#)

or

visit [www.ponyclubaustralia.com.au/sports/disciplineofthemoth](http://www.ponyclubaustralia.com.au/sports/disciplineofthemoth)



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