

# Correct Attire for the Dressage Ring – Training through Fourth Levels

*The traditional sport of dressage requires riders in recognized competitions to wear formal attire with an elegant appearance. Strict adherence to United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) dress code rules applies, though you'll find subtle ways to suit your individual taste through fabric choices and finely detailed clothing accents.*

Here we quote the 2011 USEF Rule Book for dressage attire, and follow the rule with tips from Dover Saddlery's product advisors to help you make the right choices for riding Training through Fourth Levels. For dress code requirements and exceptions for any FEI level including Junior, Young Horse and Pony classes, USDF Pas de Deux and Quadrille, for individuals with Federation Dispensation Certificates and for armed services/police uniforms, please refer directly to the USEF Rule Book.

Note: Check the USEF web site regularly and prior to a show for changes to rules on dress code requirements including those for headgear, whip and spur regulations.



## USEF Dress Code Summary from USEF Rule Book DR120 Article 1:

“The dress code for Training through Fourth Levels is a short riding coat of conservative color, with tie, choker or stock tie, white or light-colored breeches or jodhpurs, boots or

jodhpur boots, and protective headgear as defined in DR120.5 and in compliance with GR801. A cutaway coat (modified tailcoat) with short tails is permitted. Half chaps, gaiters and/or leggings are not allowed. Gloves of conservative color are recommended. Exception: Riders through First Level may wear half-chaps, gaiters or leggings in solid black or brown, without fringe, matching the color of their boots, and made of smooth leather or leather-like material.”

### Dover Tips for Dressage Attire

#### Coat:

Choose either a hunt coat or dressage coat (a modified tailcoat) in black or navy.

#### Shirt:

Top a white competition shirt or show shirt with standup collar with a stock tie, choker or a conservatively-colored tie for men. Stock ties are most commonly seen on women.

At Training and First Levels, stock ties are usually the most conservative in style; ruffled stock ties look best in upper level tests.

#### Breeches:

Choose to wear white or light-colored breeches. Light-colored jodhpurs are allowed, but are usually seen only on young children. White breeches are available for children from Kerrits, Tuff Rider and Irideon.

If your breeches have belt loops, pair them with a conservative belt. A belt will give you a polished appearance with attention to detail as you walk around the show grounds or if you ride without a jacket in extremely hot weather conditions.

#### Boots:

At any level, you can choose to wear dressage boots, such as the Ariat Maestro Pro Dress Boot, or field boots, such as the Mountain Horse Supreme High Rider Field Boot, that reach your knee. Riders most commonly select tall boots in black, and dressage boots rather than field boots.

If you're riding at Training or First Level, you also have the option to wear paddock boots (also known as jodhpur boots) instead

## A Note about Schooling Shows

For dressage schooling shows, you'll always be dressed appropriately if you follow USEF rules. But depending on the organization that is running the event, more relaxed riding apparel may be acceptable. Check with the organization holding a schooling show to determine an appropriate level of dress and headwear.

of tall boots. Paddock boots may be black or brown in color and may have either zippers or laces. Examples of paddock boots include the Grand Prix Prestige Paddock Boot and the Ariat Cobalt Quantam Performer Pro Boot.

If breeches and paddock boots are worn together, you should top them with smooth, conservatively-styled half chaps that most closely resemble the look of a tall boot, such as Tredstep Pro G2 Half Chaps and Ariat Covington Half Chaps. If jodhpurs and paddock boots are worn together, as in the case of a young child, garters or jodhpur knee straps that match the boots are usually worn too.

#### Protective Headgear:

Dover Saddlery recommends that all riders wear ASTM/SEI certified helmets at all times. For your dressage test, choose a helmet in a dark, conservative color or top it with a dark helmet cover. You'll find all sorts of ASTM/SEI certified helmets that will both protect and flatter you in the dressage ring. Examples include the Charles Owen Wellington Professional, the Troxel Grand Prix Classic Helmet and the IRH Olympian Helmet.

While you're selecting your show headgear, remember that your hair must be neat. Except for very young riders who may wear braids or pony tails, long hair should be contained in a hairnet and/or fashioned into a bun. Short hair that cannot be tied back should also be contained in a hairnet to prevent distracting flyaway strands.



## The Little Extras

Remember to pack these easy-to-forget items when preparing for your show:

- Copies of your dressage tests. (An easy way to keep tests at hand is to use Whinny Widgets Pocket Test Books!)
- Hairnets
- Stock tie pin
- Safety pins
- Conservative stud earrings
- Belt with conservative styling



### Gloves:

Gloves protect your hands from blisters, help provide grip for the reins and create a finished look for your dressage outfit. The appropriate color to choose for your riding level depends largely on geographic location, so you should check with your trainer or local riders for any preference. Generally, you should choose gloves that are either black or white. However, if you wear a cream-colored stock tie and use a cream-colored dressage pad, you may wish to select coordinating cream-colored or ivory gloves.

Consider design features that may assist you with your riding comfort, such as flexible gussets between the fingers, added textures for grip and ventilation panels to keep your hands cooler. Product advisors at Dover Saddlery suggest that you ride in your show gloves several times before your competition to become accustomed to the feel of them.

### Note:

In extreme heat or humidity, jackets may be waived according to Rule DR120.7. When jackets are waived, you may choose to wear your jacket in the dressage ring anyway if you feel more comfortable doing so. If you ride without a jacket, you should wear a show shirt that is solid colored or nearly solid colored long or short sleeved shirt with collar, without neckwear, and without

decoration. The shirt should be tucked into your breeches and you should wear a belt if your breeches have belt loops. A plain white competition shirt, such as the Romfh Coolmax Long Sleeve Dressage Show Shirt or the Goode Rider ideal Long Sleeve Show Shirt, are both appropriate choices.

### Tip:

A clear rain coat is an essential yet budget-friendly item to have on hand along with a waterproof helmet cover. These items cost very little, but provide excellent protection for your show clothing should you have rain on competition day.

## Curious?

Few people enjoy learning to tie the long tails of a stock tie into the traditional knot. But do you know the practical reason for wearing stock ties? In the 19th century, hunters in the fields wore the stock ties as a safety measure. If a horse or rider was injured, the long strip of fabric could be used as a bandage, sling or tourniquet. The long stock tie pin was used to secure the bandage.



### Related Topic

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## Stock Tie Tips

- Having trouble sliding your stock pin through the fabric of your tie? Rub the side of the pin shaft against your scalp a few times, and try again!
- Secure the loose ends of your stock tie to your competition shirt with safety pins so they don't flap out of your coat lapel while riding.
- If you opt for the traditional stock tie rather than a pre-tied one, practice tying the knot several times the day before the show.