

How to become a judge

Trainee / Candidate Judges

The process of becoming a dressage judge takes a lot of time and commitment which is essential to ensure quality judging. Many people use their background as a rider or a trainer in dressage to progress into a career in judging. To be able to judge a class, technical knowledge is not enough, it is also necessary to instantly put thoughts into words and, at the same time, evaluate the movement with the appropriate mark. To ensure that you have the time to fulfil the appropriate level of training and self-learning to be fully prepared it is strongly advised to take 18 months to two years before sitting your first exam.

Registrations / applications

Registration takes place in January and June each year; with the closing date for applications on the 31st of January and 30th June. To apply to become a trainee judge the following are compulsory:

- The candidate must be a registered, adult member of Dressage Ireland (over 18 years of age at the time of application)
- Have ridden at a minimum of affiliated Novice level and achieved a minimum score of 64%.
- Submit completed application forms to the Dressage Ireland Judges Committee; Form A for details of your experience and Form A1 with references from two dressage judges or dressage trainers to confirm your suitability to become a judge.
- If not already obtained, apply for Garda Vetting / Access NI Clearance and Safeguarding certificates as these are necessary to become a DI judge (Please see the bottom of this page for more information).

If the Judges Committee accepts you as a Trainee Judge your application will be valid for two years. You will automatically be added to the Judges Newsletter email list which will keep you up to date on Training dates as well as receive a list of senior Judges who have agreed to mentor Trainee Judges and those looking to upgrade to the next level. If you have not become a listed judge by the end of the two years, you will need to re-apply.

Next steps

- Contact your mentor who will advise you during your training to become a judge.
- Download and print the Judges Logbook which you need to record your training and any other self-learning undertaken.
- Understanding the relevance of the 'Scales of Training' to judging is imperative as this will guide you to the appropriate comments and marks. In order to develop the skills necessary to become a good judge the following are compulsory as part of your training:
 - Scribing for judges on the Dressage Ireland Judges List on a minimum of two occasions, more if possible – this enables the trainee to become familiar with the terminology and understand the demands made on the writer.
 - Sitting in with judges on List 3 or above when tests of Preliminary, Novice and Elementary standard are being judged for at least 10 horses at the appropriate level. When sitting in you must not interrupt or offer comment as the Judge needs to keep their full concentration on the competitor. Allow the judge to decide how much discussion of marks and remarks can be undertaken. To keep to the strict timetable usually set for classes, in all probability any discussions will be limited to the coffee break.
- Take part in online training via the Dressage Ireland Judges training portal and Dressage Webinars
- Study the F.E.I Dressage Handbook.
- Study the F.E.I. definitions of Paces and Movements as given in the Rule Book.
- Make sure that you are familiar with the Dressage Ireland rules, so that you are not thrown into confusion if something goes wrong.

To help Trainee Judges improve their knowledge and enable them to express their thoughts clearly and concisely the following is recommended:

- Watch horses training, either in person or online.
- Read books and magazine articles on Dressage Training.
- Watch and practice judge out loud tests that are available online either via You Tube or on H&C TV

Prior to applying for your exam, the following steps are compulsory:

- Candidates must attend at least two National Judge training sessions within six months of the exam – details of Judges training can be found [here](#).
- Practise judge Preliminary classes at Dressage Ireland shows according to the procedure set out in the [List 6 to 3A upgrading protocol](#)
- Liaise regularly with your mentor.
- Keep your Log Book up-to-date.

Judge Examination process:

The exam will consist of judging a minimum of 8-10 tests in a 'real life' situation. The examining judge will separately judge the same tests and afterwards will analyse your sheets to assess the awarding of correct marks, accompanied by appropriate comments, and the ability to summarise the test in the collective marks and summary remarks while following the Scales of Training relevant to the level of the class. Exam results will be made available 7-10 days after the exam. The examining Judges decision is final.

Useful resources / study material:

[FEI Dressage Judges Handbook – Guidelines for Judging](#). Learn to love it, it is all there – every mark for every movement from 10 to 0.

[Dressage Webinars](#) High quality online dressage training with webinars on many varied dressage topics. Each webinar involves theory, video clips and interactive polls (anonymous) with a great range of horses to watch. These webinars fill quickly so it's important to book early to secure a place. You can sign up to a mailing list to get notifications of dates.

[Through the Eye of the Judge](#) with Stephen Clarke and Joanne Graham - Judge education videos for all levels from Novice to Grand Prix available to purchase as DVDs and downloads. Also available on this website are downloads looking at the training of specific movements with Gareth Hughes.

[Horse & Country TV](#) Live and on demand footage from many British Dressage events covering all the levels as well as dressage training. Seven days free trial / monthly and annual subscription options.

Score 10 Dressage Judge Training CDs. Listen and learn about the paces and movements required, alongside information on the Training Scale and suitable scores. Easy to listen to at home, in the car or lorry.