



# GUIDELINES FOR DRESSAGE BIT CHECKERS



*From the USEA Volunteer Committee*

The instructions that follow give you the basics of your job; consult with the Volunteer Coordinator or officials of the event if you have questions or need additional information to fill in and supplement this document.

**Checklist of what to bring with you to the event on competition day.** Depending on the day and predicted weather, for your comfort:

- Closed-toe shoes that are comfortable for walking and good in any weather (wet grass, mud, arena footing, etc.)
- Folding chair, rainwear, extra warm clothing or jacket, bug repellent, sunscreen, hat/visor, a snack and thermos/cooler with beverages.

**Generally provided by the event:**

- Clipboard (with waterproof covering), pencils, radio

**Before the event:**

- Watch the video for this position. Go to the USEA website, [www.useventing.com](http://www.useventing.com) and search for the Volunteer Videos.
- Get the address of the show facility and ask the Volunteer Coordinator where the meeting point is located at the show grounds.

## GETTING READY FOR YOUR JOB

**Checking in**

- Arrive at the meeting point at least 15 minutes before your shift begins to check in and pick up your materials. At a minimum, you should have a clipboard with the dressage order-of-go, radio, pens or pencils, and latex or vinyl gloves.
- Some shows will provide you with a measuring tape for checking whip lengths.
- If the event is using the [www.eventingvolunteers.com](http://www.eventingvolunteers.com) app, don't forget to check in on the app so that your volunteer hours count towards the year-end awards.

**Setting up your station**

- Your station is usually by the dressage warm-up area or the dressage competition ring. Check with the Volunteer Coordinator to find out where you should set up.
- When you get to your station, organize your materials (pens/pencils, order-of-go, radio) so you have everything ready before the competitors arrive at the dressage warm-up area.
  - Set up your area for efficiency.
  - Find a place to measure out the maximum length of a legal whip (47.2 inches) and mark it with masking tape. Use this to measure whips.
  - Make sure there is somewhere to dispose of used gloves
- Review the order-of-go to see how many competitors are in each level, which competitors have multiple horses, if there are any missing numbers, etc.

**Communicating with other volunteers and officials**

- Communicate with the Dressage Warm-up Steward to identify competitors who have not completed their bit check and to direct these competitors to the bit check station.
- Ask the Volunteer Coordinator or Technical Delegate if you will need to visually identify the competitors who have completed their bit check (for example, with a colored dot on the bridle tag), and make sure you get these identification items from the Volunteer Coordinator.

## YOUR JOB AS DRESSAGE BIT CHECKER

Your job as Dressage Bit Checker is to check every competitor's bit for legality, spur and whip length, tightness of the noseband, and ear hoods for illegal soundproofing.

**What you Need to KNOW**

- Schedule and order in which the levels will take place.
- Tack specifications (see next page) for whips, spurs, ear hoods, bits, etc.

**What you need to DO**

- When a competitor comes up for their bit check, approach the horse quietly and safely.
- Put on a clean glove and check the bit. Do not touch any other part of the horse with the glove before checking the bit.
- Then check the noseband for tightness.
- If the horse is wearing an ear hood, explain to the competitor they must return to the bit check station after they complete the test. It is their responsibility to return to bit check, and not yours to chase them down. They will then take off the ear hood in your presence to be checked. If the horse is wearing ear plugs, inform the Technical Delegate.
- Check the spurs to see if they are legal and worn correctly. Nervous competitors often put spurs on upside down.
- Measure their whip if they are carrying one. If the competitor is in a championship class, remind them that a whip is not allowed in the test.
- Make sure their bridle number is visible.
- If you find an infraction, contact the Technical Delegate (or FEI Steward, if appropriate) immediately and make a note of the infraction on the order-of-go sheet.
- Any infractions may be fixed by the competitor and rechecked before they go in for their test.
- If the competitor wishes to have everything checked after their test, explain to the competitor it is their responsibility to return to the bit check station, and not yours to chase them down. If the competitor does not return to the bit check station after their test, inform the Technical Delegate.
- After checking and passing a competitor, mark their name on the order-of-go sheet.
- If you see blood on the horse, contact the Technical Delegate (or FEI steward, if appropriate).

## AFTER COMPLETING YOUR JOB

**Checking Out**

- Return all materials (clipboard, pens, radio, etc.) back to show office and let the Volunteer Coordinator know you are leaving. If any lost items were brought to you, turn these in at the show office as well.
- If the event is using the [www.eventingvolunteers.com](http://www.eventingvolunteers.com) app, don't forget to check out on the app so that your volunteer hours count towards the year-end awards.

## BIT AND TACK SPECIFICATIONS

All of the bit and tack specifications apply both in the warm-up area and during the test. If you observe an infraction in the warm-up area, notify the Technical Delegate or Ground Jury member.

Refer to the USEF Eventing Annex 1 document (updated March 24, 2022) for a detailed list of permitted bits, saddlery and equipment.

<https://useventing.com/events-competitions/resources/rules>



### Whips

- One whip no longer than 120 cm (47.2 in) including lash may be carried when riding on the flat at any time.
- One whip no longer than 120 cm (47.2 in) may be carried during the dressage test except in USEF/USEA championships and USEA championship divisions.

### Spurs

- Spurs are optional for the dressage test.
- Spurs capable of wounding a horse are forbidden.
- Spurs must be of smooth metal.
- If there is a shank it must not be longer than 4 cm (1 9/16 inches, measured from the boot to the end of the spur) and must point only towards the rear.
- If the shank is curved, the spurs must be worn only with the shank directed downwards.
- Metal or plastic spurs with round hard plastic or metal knobs "Impulse spurs" and "dummy spurs" with no shank are allowed.
- Spurs with rowels are allowed in the dressage test and when practicing/warming up. If they are used, rowels must be free to rotate and the rowel must be round and smooth (no tines allowed).

### Ear hoods

- Ear hoods are permitted and may also provide noise reduction. However, ear hoods must allow for ears to move freely and must not cover the horse's eyes and ear plugs are not permitted.

### Bits/Bridle

- Bit material must be:
  - Durable enough to be safe
  - Smooth and solid surface, not to be altered by the chewing of the horse in order to prevent horse from injuries
  - Not health-damaging
- Snaffles can be made of metal, flexible rubber or synthetic, or plastic or leather material.
  - May have one or two joints
  - May be double-jointed with rounded or rotating mouthpiece allowing for better fit and comfort
  - May have a slightly curved port, allowing more room for the tongue. The maximum height is 30mm from the lower part of the side of the tongue to the highest point of the deviation
  - Wavy bits are allowed
  - A bushing or coupling is permitted as the center link and must be solid with no moveable parts other than a roller
  - The center link must be smooth and rounded
- Curb bits with bradoons (double bridle) are permitted at Advanced level. For FEI levels, refer to the FEI rule book.
  - Bridoon and curb must be made of metal and/or rigid plastic and may be covered with rubber/latex.
- The following bits are illegal:
  - Any single- or double-jointed cable bits (which may cause pinching of the tongue or cheeks)
  - Bits which place mechanical restraint on the horse's tongue (large immovable center link causes excessive pressure on tongue)
- The reins must be attached to the bit.
- The noseband may never be so tightly fastened as to harm the horse.

## Other Tack

You do not need to check these; however, it is provided for you in case a competitor has a question.

- Martingales, bit guards, any kind of gadgets (such as bearing, side, running or balancing reins, etc.), reins with any loops or hand attachments, and any form of blinkers, including earmuffs, earplugs, hoods, and seat covers are, under penalty of elimination, strictly forbidden.
- Any kind of boots or leg bandages are prohibited in the areas around the arena and inside the arena. The boots and/or bandages must be removed before entering the space around the competition arena or the athlete will be penalized.
- Shoes (with or without cuffs) that are attached with nails or glue, or wraps that do not extend past the hair line of the hoof are permitted.
- Nose nets are permitted under the following conditions:
  - The entry must be accompanied by a letter signed by the horse's veterinarian on letterhead, stating that the horse has been diagnosed with head shaking syndrome and that the horse's condition is improved with the use of a nose net.
  - The nose net must be made of a transparent material and cover only the top half of the muzzle, not the bit or the horse's mouth.
- A neck strap or pommel strap may be used. The strap must be made primarily of leather.