

Using The Scale of Marks - *Stephen Clarke (UK 5* Judge)*

The following was written by **Stephen Clarke** to give some indicators as to what each mark means.

USING THE SCALE OF MARKS

To be a good judge you need a clear picture in your mind of what each mark 'looks like'. This together with saying the corresponding words for a mark, ie fairly bad, sufficient etc, helps one to use the scale consistently.

O-NOT PERFORMED

I have only given a 0 when a horse continued in passage and did no piaffe because the rider knew he would resist. Neither the transitions or the piaffe were performed, but this is very rare. Also once when a horse jogged or passaged through the entire walk movements.

Usually there is always a fragment of the movement performed. For example if the horse trotted through a flying change there is still some canter to mark.

1 – VERY BAD & 2 – BAD

These marks are about severe resistance. For example if a horse stops, runs back or naps. Provided the nap is not for more than 20 seconds (when he would be eliminated) then the movement has to be bad or very bad.

3 – FAIRLY BAD

This could be given if there is fairly bad resistance, or a resistance combined with a lack of quality and/or other mistakes. If there is a total lack of quality and mistakes it would also be possible to give a 3 or even a 2.

4 – INSUFFICIENT

The most important thing when giving a 4 is that one thinks of the movement as 'insufficient'. If in the quality area the horse loses the regularity throughout the movement, such as half pass, through stiffness or resistance rather than unsoundness then it is a 4 or even a 3.

Serious mistakes like changing leg in a pirouette, breaking pace, dropping out of canter, jogging through part of a walk movement, not walking in a simple change are examples of when a 4 or even a 3 would be appropriate.

5 – SUFFICIENT (MARGINAL)

If the horse has achieved the movement it is usual to give at least a 5. Even if the movement is a somewhat restricted, earthbound, lacking suppleness or impulsion as long as the regularity is clear and the figure is fairly accurate, it can still warrant a 5. The important point is that in your remarks you state clearly why the movement is not 'satisfactory'.

When there is nothing wrong with the quality but there has been a fairly serious mistake it is also usually a 5. For instance if the quality of the rein back is good but there were two steps too many or too few and on

the other hand it is still a 5 if the steps were correctly numbered but the quality was lost as if it is crooked.

When there is a mistake in the number of flying changes or a mistake in one of the changes but they are of a good quality then it is usually a 5. However, remember that it is not automatic to give a 5 for one mistake, as it could be 4 if the quality is not very good and a 6 if the quality is very high.

6 – SATISFACTORY

This covers a multitude of sins. It is normally a 6 when the movement is basically correct but lacking in quality – not supple enough, needing more engagement and balance, or maybe the contact is inconsistent.

Also a 6 can be for a high quality movement with a small mistake or inaccuracy, for example a good quality walk or canter pirouette that is too big. Straightness issues often result in 6s as long as otherwise the quality is good.

7 – FAIRLY GOOD

There is usually nothing to really complain about when I give a 7. Normally everything needs a little more impulsion, suppleness, expression and/or cadence. The basic qualities are clear and show a certain amount of harmony and ease within the movement itself.

8 – GOOD

For an 8 there must be no basic problems. The movement has been properly executed. Maybe there was an extended trot that was worth a 9 but it came down to 8 because the transition was not good enough. Usually it is the secondary part of the movement that stops it being a 9, like that transition or the collected trot along the short side. Or sometimes there could be more brilliance. A 20m working trot circle may be balanced and regular but could do with some more impulsion and elasticity.

9 – VERY GOOD

'Goose bump material' with most of the movement being excellent.

10 – EXCELLENT

For a 10 you cannot imagine that a movement could be done better. It is however something very special to give a 10 and if given too lightly will lose its significance.

USE THE RANGE

Our job as judges is to be fair and clear with the marks as we can. If we see a 'very good' or 'excellent' movement we should be brave enough to reward the competitor. However, if the movement is only worth a 6, then we can only give a 6. The main point is that when a movement is good enough go up to the 9s and even the 10s, and if you see major problems be prepared to go down to the lower marks.