

Glossary of Vaulting Judging Terms – Horse

Abduction – Movement of a limb away from the midline. Widens the base of support, causes leaning in or popped outside shoulder.

Adduction – Movement of a limb toward the midline. Narrows the base of support. In correct turning and bending, there is some adduction of the outer foreleg.

Amplitude – reach of the limbs, range of motion.

Balance – Equilibrium. Because of changing weight and movement on his back, the vaulting horse must be allowed to adjust his longitudinal and lateral balance in order to give the impression of “steadiness”. A dressage horse should be in “unstable balance” for mobility whereas the vaulting horse must be allowed to make adjustments toward “stable balance” in order to cope with the changing weight and movement.

Behavior – Addressed as absence of misbehavior: trotting, bucking, bolting, balking, kicking, running, extreme shying, strong after-effect from shying, etc.

Behind Vertical – Head position in which the horse’s nostrils fall behind the imaginary vertical line that falls from the front of the eye.

Bend – The laterally arced position in which the horse’s body appears to form a uniform curve from poll to tail. Requires adduction of the outer foreleg and inner hind leg, thus repeatedly narrowing the base of support while turning.

Carriage – The outline or profile of the horse; bend or flexion; vertical over the legs.

Collection – Increased engagement, and lifting of the forehand, with shorter steps relative to the other paces of the gait. In a collected canter, there is often no suspension, or little to see with the naked eye at normal speed.

Contact – May be contact with the longe line and/or contact with the side reins.

Diagonal Dissociation – The hooves of the diagonal pair of legs do not contact the ground, or leave the ground, at the same moment.

1. **Positive Dissociation** – the hind foot of the diagonal pair strikes the ground first. This happens in collection, or from lack of energy. This dissociation is often only visible when viewed in slow motion. It should only be addressed (judged) when seen with the naked eye.
2. **Negative Dissociation** – the forefoot of the diagonal pair strikes the ground first. This is always bad.

Disobedience – Willful determination or intent to avoid doing what is asked, or determination to do what is not asked.

Elasticity – Springy tension, neither slack nor rigid. The tendency to return to the original position after being displaced.

Energy (Impulsion) – Think in terms of Generated Energy, Stored Energy and Energy Released as speed. Of the energy generated, some should be stored as tallness, roundness, etc.

Glossary of Vaulting Judging Terms – Horse

Engagement – The increased flexion of the lumbosacral joint, and of the joints of the hind leg during the weight-bearing (support) phase of the stride.

Visual indicators include:

- Angle of cannon at landing, and upon leaving the ground
- Forward reach of outer legs
- Flexion of the lumbosacral joint during or after phase 6

Evasion – Avoidance of the difficulty, purpose, intent, connection, or the influence of the longeur.

Flat (canter) – Often mistakenly called 4-beat, because we know it is not good, but we're not always sure how or why; it shows up in slow motion.

The causes can be:

- Lack of engagement of the Thoracic Sling Muscles (Serratus muscles)
- Lack of rocking action around Center of Mass
- Lack of phrasing (counting) – 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3 OR 123456789, etc.
- Lack of deliberateness – spacing of the footfalls in time and space
- Lack of flexion of the lumbosacral joint

Flexion – Closing of the angle between two bones. When applied to the carriage of the horse, it refers to inward/outward position of the head, or the vertical line of the face. The horse can be counter-flexed in the poll even though quite straight in the body OR it can be counter-bent (throughout the whole body). When applied to the gait movement, it refers mainly to the joints of the hind legs and the lumbosacral joint.

Fluency – The easy movement of the horse showing his natural suppleness, his lack of rigidity and his elasticity.

Four-Beat (4-beat) Canter – A canter in which the diagonal pair is broken (see Diagonal Dissociation). Positive Dissociation may not be bad. Negative Dissociation is always bad.

Gait – Any of the various patterns of foot movements or rhythms [sequence] of a horse, such as walk, trot, pace, amble, canter, or gallop. The two main elements are Purity and Quality

Hollow Back – 2 versions

- Sagging back (passive) – slackness of the abdominal muscles that stretch the back muscles, and arch the back upwards. Slack back muscles.
- Depressed back (active) – sustained contraction of the long back muscles

Lateral (gait) – The ipsilateral pairs of legs (the two legs on the same side e.g., left fore and left hind) move without sufficient separation in time and space, so the canter resembles a “pacing” gait.

Glossary of Vaulting Judging Terms – Horse

Methodology – standardized system.

We have 3 aspects of Methodology:

1. **Mandated methodology** – the system of deductions or base scores in the rules or guidelines that tell us how to deal with such things as timing faults in the Mill, where to address issues in the Technical Test (Composition, Performance, etc.). We do the same thing in judging the horse. There are some mandated methodology issues – such as a suggested range of deduction for loose longe line, score range for 4-Beat canter, etc. The 3-Category system is a mandated methodology.
2. **Typical methodology** – the way most judges usually address an issue – breaking gait, above bit, etc.
3. **Personal methodology** – the way each judge deals with problems – breaks gait once vs. breaks gait repeatedly, resistance to bit, haunches falling out, second major disobedience, etc.

On Forehand – Poor longitudinal balance, in which the forelegs push the horse forward, rather than pushing the forehand (thorax) upward and body weight backward. The forelegs stay grounded too long in the stance phase, leaving the ground far past the vertical. A low neck carriage is not a reliable indicator of being “on the forehand”.

Pace – Variation within a gait, e.g., medium, extended, working, collected. Also, a gait in which the ipsilateral pairs of legs move together.

Phases – Stance Phase, Swing Phase, Aerial Phase.

Propulsion – Energy released as speed. The hind legs push against the ground in a backward direction more than a downward direction. It is mainly pushing power and lacks carrying power.

Purity, Regularity, Rhythm – The recurring characteristic (correct) sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait.

Quality (of gait) – Freedom, Amplitude, Elasticity, Fluency, Energy, etc. Not the same as Purity. The canter can be pure, but of poor quality, e.g., flat, short, stiff, lacking energy, etc., but still be 3-beat

Resistance (to the bit) – Above or against the bit. The face is too far in front of vertical.

Speed – Meters per minute (or MPH). Ground covered per unit of time. Not the same as rhythm or tempo.

Straightness – 3 versions

1. Parallelism to line of travel or reference (haunches or shoulders in or out)
2. Alignment of body parts relative to each other (neck twisted in or out)
3. Directness of line of travel (drifts or falls in and out on circle, often changing stretch of longe line)

Suppleness – The natural flexibility of the horse.

Glossary of Vaulting Judging Terms – Horse

Suspension –The moment or phase in which the horse has no feet on the ground. The aerial phase in trot or canter. Often not apparent in collected or slow canter.

Tempo – The rate of repetition of the rhythm, strides, or emphasized beats per unit of time. As measured by a metronome, for example.

Cadence – Expressiveness or emphasis of the tempo

Thoracic Sling Muscles – The Serratus muscles, which contract to lift the thorax over the forelegs.

Three-Beat (3-beat) Canter – A correct canter sequence in which the diagonal pair of hooves strike and leave the ground simultaneously.

Way of Going – Carriage, Balance, Responsiveness, Steadiness of Tempo, Attention, Relative Straightness, Stretch of Longe, etc.