



# Designing Musical Freestyles Step by Step

## With Connie LaSalle Wyatt



Musical freestyles for dressage have increased the general public's attention and appreciation of the sport. A musical freestyle, also known as a musical kur, is a creative interpretation of a piece of music by a horse and rider. It combines the visual power and beauty of the horse with music. Musical freestyles can be designed for individuals, pas de deux or quadrille teams. To be successful, a freestyle must include all of the technical requirements of the level being performed

### Step 1: Select a Level

- Select the level that is appropriate for the horse and rider. The levels for USPC Competitions include USPC Training Level and USDF First through Fourth
- Obtain the correct score sheets to determine the technical requirements.

### Step 2: Basic Test Structure

- Observe the time limits carefully.
- Riders at the lower levels may want to stick closer to the minimum time.
- Advanced riders should aim for the maximum.
- Feature the strengths of each horse and rider combination.
- Do include all required movements of the selected level.
- Do not include movements *above* the selected level to avoid penalties.

### Step 3: Selecting Music

- Allow the child to select the music; parents can help guide them.
- Keep the judge and audience in mind.
- Avoid music with vocals and extreme musical genres.
- Popular music genres for freestyles include:
  - Classical
  - Movie soundtracks – a good combination of classical and contemporary
  - Jazz, Broadway, Rock
- Do not include movements *above* the selected level to avoid penalties.
- Establish a theme.
- Video tape horse and rider at all working gates.
- Select music that fits the horse.
- Match horse's rhythm and tempo.

Rhythm is the repeatable pattern of the action, such as the one-two of the trot.

Tempo is the rate of the action.

- Use a digital metronome to measure tempo. Set your metronome for the gaits of the average horse:
  - Trot: 152 bpm.
  - Canter 96 bpm
  - Walk 108 bpm.
- Adjust the rate by increments to be accurate. The judges have been instructed to watch the front foot falls for this.
- Select four pieces of appropriate music
  - Introduction (20 seconds)
  - Trot music (2-beat rhythm)
  - Walk music (4-beat rhythm)
  - Canter music (3-beat rhythm)

#### Step 4: Pre-Editing

- Time the segments on a computer.
- Check totals to conform to time limits.
- Making a Working Tape
- Combine the segments.
- Close gaps as much as possible on home recording equipment.
- Take it to the barn. Let the kids work out the basic movements with the music playing.

#### Step 5: Structuring the Ride

- Actively interpret the music.
- Be creative in organizing the required movements.
- Keep training level rides simple and organized.
- Slack factor – Allow for some timing or movement mistakes.

#### Step 6: Practicing

- Practice in the correct size arena
- Have copies of your ride with you
- Have a helper to work tape player

#### Step 7: Editing

- Find a DJ or musician that can do the work
- The fee may vary from \$ 25 an hour and up
- They have the best equipment and ear for the music
- They can increase or decrease the tempo of recorded music, they can do fades and make soft music louder
- You can use free programs like Audacity
- Free download at [www.audacity.sourceforge.net](http://www.audacity.sourceforge.net)
- Includes features such as increasing and decreasing volume, fade in and out, repeat, echo, ect.
- Website includes user manuals under “Help” section
- Import your audio tracks and cut them together
- You can do it on your computer
- For best results use a professional
- Have at least 2 CD’s made
- Make a tape as well.
- Keep one for competition only
- Check all your copies to make sure they work properly.

#### Step 8: Professional Editing

- You can have your freestyles done by a professional.
- They will do all the work. Cost : Between \$500 and \$2,000

#### Conclusion

- Freestyles are a fun activity to do with your kids
- It can make Dressage fun and interesting.
- Go home and start right away.

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**Hey! Remember the rule: Have fun!**

