

Is it a Walk, Trot or Canter, Discerning the Difference:

Walk: At this gait, the foot falls are one at a time making this a four beat gait. The horse moves one, while all others stay in contact with the ground. If the left front moves forward the left hind will follow, then the right front, then the right hind, then the sequence starts again. A **working walk** "tracks up", the stride of the left hind will be placed exactly where the left front just left etc. The **medium walk** will be distinguished by at least one full hoof length of "over track" where the left hind will be placed in front of where the left front just left. The **extended walk** is an even longer stride and demands that "over tracking" is at least two full hoof lengths between where the left front just left to where the left front will be placed. The collected walk is distinguished by a "shortening" of the natural pace of walk where the foot falls do not track up (the left hind does not reach the position where the left front has just left). The frame of the horse in all collected paces is more compact as well, he is nonetheless on the bit, the footfalls remain very active, rhythmic and regular.

Trot: At this gait, the foot falls land on the ground in diagonal pairs and are lifted and thrust forward in the same diagonal pairing, it is therefore a two beat gait. A **working trot** "tracks up", the left hind will be placed exactly where the left front has just left etc. The **medium trot** will be distinguished by at least one full hoof length of "over track" where the left hind will be placed in front of where the left front just left. The **extended trot** has an even longer stride length and demands that the "over tracking" is at least two full hoof lengths. The distance between where the left front has hit the ground and where the left hind will hit the ground is at least two hoof lengths in front of the placement of the left front. To be correct, there must be as much reach forward with the front leg as is with the hind. A judge will penalize a horse that reaches way out in front but fails to reach the proper over reach position with his hind leg. Additionally judges will penalize a team if the horse reaches out very far with a front leg then pulls it back before placing it on the ground. These inconsistencies in the true rhythm and regularity of the medium and extended trot are the cause of much point loss for a pairing during a dressage test. The **collected trot** is a "shorter more compact" movement that does not track up. It is nonetheless on the bit, but the frame of the horse is more compact and the legs of the horse are more active up and down rather than forward. The **Passage** is a very animated collected trot, each pair of limbs is lifted higher off the ground than that of collected trot with an added moment of suspension when the limbs reach their highest position, almost held up momentarily. The Piaffe is basically a Passage that gains no ground as the horse remains in one place without forward progression. The flexion of the knees and hocks are more exaggerated at both the Passage and Piaffe trot gaits. The quality of both depends on the continued smooth rhythm and regularity of the horses pace which must remain as a two beat gait at all times.

Canter: At this gait, the foot falls occur in a sequence of three. For the left lead for instance, the right hind will land first, then the left hind and the right front will land simultaneously followed by the third foot fall the left front. A **working canter** "tracks up", the left hind will be placed exactly where the left front just left etc. The **medium canter** will be distinguished by at least one full hoof length of "over track" where the left hind will be placed in front of where the left front just left. The **extended canter** has an even longer stride and demands that the "over tracking" is at least two full hoof lengths between where the left front has just left the ground to where the left hind will be placed. The **collected canter** is a "shorter more compact" movement that does not track up. It is nonetheless a gait that requires that the horse remain on the bit, and the horses strides must remain regular and rhythmic.



Dutch Rider, Edward Gal on Ten Year Old Black, Hanoverian Stallion Morelands Tortilas Anky van Grunsven on Keltic Salinero