

## Introduction to Dressage

Contrary to popular opinion dressage is not a niche discipline and any horse or rider can take part. Dressage underpins every aspect of riding – for example, a well-balanced horse will find jumping easier - and you do not have to have an expensive horse to do it. Dressage rider Edward Creamer and his girlfriend Ali Dane have recently started a campaign to make dressage more accessible. Here Edward talks about his career so far and gives some advice on how to get started in dressage.



### How long have you been involved in Dressage?

I first became involved in dressage aged 17 when I went to work for International dressage rider Zoe Colgate for a summer. I was not paid but the experience was payment in itself as I learnt so much and realized dressage was what I wanted to do. Subsequently I moved on to Andrew Gould's yard and I was then lucky enough to work for Olympic Gold Medallist Monica Theodorescu in Germany. Ten years on and I now have my own yard with my girlfriend Ali, who is an event rider.

### What is it about dressage that appeals to you?

What appeals to me about dressage is the discipline involved and need for real precision. I love the harmony between horse and rider and the training aspect. For me it is not really about competing I just enjoy working with the horses and getting the most out of them. My first horse, Sven, who I bought as a three-year-old, has taken years of hard work and has recently been placed in a number of competitions. It is incredibly rewarding to know that it is as a result of dedication and persistence on both our parts. Having gone through the training process with Sven I am keen to repeat it with other horses.

### What horse do you need if you want to do dressage?

You do not need to go out and buy the most expensive horse to start dressage, far from it. My first pony I rode was a Dales pony and although she was a real madam she taught me a lot as I had to really work to get anything out of her. Her owner also let me ride a 17.1hh sports horse called Baloo. I did some novice work with him and worked with him up to elementary level, which was really his limit. With both horses I was really forced to learn as they were not schooled to perfection and it was up to me to teach and work with them. If you only ride an expensive schoolmaster you do not learn nearly so much.

### What is your motivation for setting up the campaign to make dressage more accessible?

I wanted to give others the opportunity to get involved in dressage the easy way rather than having to work up through yards like I did. My goal is to make dressage accessible for everyone and give them a chance to enjoy it without the pressure of competition. At the moment we are organizing demonstrations and lectures at our yard near Lambourn. We are inviting people to come and talk about every aspect of horsemanship not just dressage. For example, biting expert Hilary Vernon is coming to talk about the importance of getting the right bit for your horse. We will also be having osteopaths, nutritionists as well as dressage riders to talk. It is important to look after every aspect of your horse if you want it to perform to the best of its ability. Horses need to be treated like athletes.

## How does someone get into dressage?

If you do not own a horse riding schools are the best place to start. Emilie Faurie has set up a foundation to fund a number of riding schools so children can have riding lessons and learn about all aspects of horsemanship including dressage. If you are lucky enough to own a horse then the most important thing is that you find an instructor who you get on with and will explain what they are teaching you in a way you understand. Your local Riding Club may be able to suggest someone otherwise contact British Dressage – [www.britishdressage.co.uk](http://www.britishdressage.co.uk) – and they will be able to help. The Pony Club is fantastic for children wanting to get into dressage and I am actually teaching at the Old Berks Pony Club this year.

## Top tips for anyone starting dressage

- It won't happen straight away, you must be patient with yourself and your horse.
- Keep an open mind, if you have a bad day don't let it stop you continuing.
- Don't be intimidated and feel that you are not good enough, achieve what you are setting out to achieve.
- There is no such thing as an expert in horses, you never stop learning and you can never know everything.
- Have fun!

