



**USDF**

# UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION™

Show Biz, Chapter 8, Arena

The rules for location and construction of the dressage court are very specific. It is strongly recommended that they be reviewed prior to set-up date. Refer to [USEF DR Subchapter 1](#) and the Dressage Levels Chart within this chapter.

Experienced show managers offer the following suggestions:

- The letters should be black on white, tall enough to be easily seen over the fence (by both judges and rider) and should be firmly fixed against the wind.
- The court fencing should be visible to the horse and sturdy enough to resist displacement, while remaining safe. For example, arena stakes, if used, must be covered with a ball or similar object. Rope or unbreakable chain fencing is not allowed, and the chain must be pulled tight enough to be 18” off the ground so the horse’s feet cannot become entangled.
- The marker on the arena for the letter location can be red tape or red plastic hook-ons that are available commercially.
- The arena, including the letters, may be decorated with flowers and greenery but not distracting or frightening to the horses.
- The enclosure for the judge must be stable. Vehicles or horse trailers are often used in inclement weather. Place the horse trailer so that the judge can see H and M. Judges and scribes prefer a table rather than just a clipboard.
- When using an indoor arena, be aware of the problems that may be encountered by having the judge seated opposite the large entry opening. This can result in the judge being able to see only the silhouette of the competitor. If there are doors and another entrance, consider keeping the doors closed or place the judge with his back to the opening.

Setting Up the Dressage Arena: Complete instructions on setting up the dressage arena can be found in [Arena Set-Up](#) on the USDF website. Please note, specific requirements for the location of judge’s stands and dressage letters are outlined in the USEF rulebook under Arena Specifications ([USEF Subchapter DR-1](#)).

Quick Guide to Shorten an Arena: Most dressage arenas have 4-meter rails, so this quick guide is based on that assumption. If the rails of the dressage arena are a different length, then some minor calculations will be necessary. A roll of red duct tape and a roll of white duct tape are useful supplies when shortening an arena.

Remember: With 4m rails, the long sides have 15 rails to make 60m. With 4m rails, for a length of 40m, there are 10 rails. Across the short side, there will be 5 rails. At A, the middle rail will be missing for the entranceway.

To shorten a 20m x 60m arena, remember that letters C, M and H will always remain the same as will that part of the configuration. Take the rails in front of P and V out and lay them on the outside of the arena toward where F and V currently stand. Bring the 4 rails comprising the short side in front of A, including the corner supports and put them in front of where P and V were. This should be the new short end. Use the corner

supports as the new end of the shortened arena. To check (with 4m rails), the corners should be at the end of the 10th (4m) rail from the C short side.

Pull P and V away from the arena and pull R and S away from the arena. Move B and E to the center support so that there are five rails on each side of B and E on the long side. Move A to about 5m from the entrance. Normally, the side rails for the 20m x 60m arenas are left in place except for the ones that were removed near P and V. This simplifies the process when reversing the arena to the longer 20m x 60m version.

Move F and K to 6m from the short end (middle of the second rail).

If there are clip arena markers, move arena markers to F, K, E and B. Remove arena markers not at a letter (or clip them on the outside of the arena, so that they are not visible from the inside). If arena markers are not available, use the red duct tape to denote the new placement of the letters, and use the white duct tape to cover red tape where there should not be a marker for the shortened arena.

If there is a side judge, it is easiest to set up a riser and table with chairs ahead of time at the 5th rail from the C end.

