

SPEED

The speed refers to miles per hour; the rate at which the horse moves over the ground. The length of stride determines the speed, since the tempo should remain the same within each gait. Riding at a correct speed is very important, both in competition and during ongoing daily training. The horse's level of training and natural gaits must be considered when determining the correct speed.

FACTORS IN DETERMINING THE CORRECT SPEED

When determining the correct speed for a horse, a number of factors must be taken into account. Especially for younger horses, it is important not to ride in either too fast or too slow a speed. Some young horses are better able to keep their balance in a higher speed, while others lose their tempo totally if the speed becomes too great.

By riding your horse forward, you can achieve straightness, and as I have said above, help the horse to stay in balance. But we must also remember that a part of the horse's education is about building strength in the horse's top-line so that these muscles can begin to work as a lever to move some of that forward energy upward. As a result, we want to feel as if the horse is moving up a staircase. We want the horse to carry his shoulders a little higher. By only sending the energy forward, this cannot be achieved.

We can use speed to create energy, but we also want energy from strong hindquarters that can push the horse forward and up. By collecting your horse, you can turn the hindquarter into a powerful spring. That will say, if you only create energy by speeding up, you will feel your horse losing energy when you are going back to a slower speed. Energy should come from trust in the hind legs, not only from speeding up

There is no formula for determining the correct speed. All the factors above must be considered when deciding on the correct speed for an individual horse.