

Please note!

Now that we are getting into the exercises you must recall again that this book was written when the vaulting rules were quite different from what they are now – depending on your location.

The compulsory exercises:

Google FEI Vaulting Rules!!! Or the ones applicable to your country/ vaulting association.

Vaulters now have more freedom in choosing the compulsories they want to perform – however: the basic line is that compulsories are important, because they prove the vaulter's ability to show correct mechanics for balance (in static exercises), for flexibility (such as in the mill and the flag) and dynamic exercises (the swings in scissors and flank for example).

For beginners there might be simplified versions of such exercises. This makes a lot of sense, since our first thought should always be of the comfort of the horse – and the more complicated moves (such as the scissors) must be practised on the barrel horse for a long time, before a vaulter is ready to perform them softly on the back of a horse.

The scores:

Treat ALL INFORMATION REGARDING SCORES as a guideline ONLY – as the scoring system has been completely overhauled. I cannot revise the scanned pages of the book. But I trust your intelligence to sift out, what is still valid information: all concerning gravity point, alignment etc.

14 *The compulsory exercises*

Compulsory exercises are important for two reasons:

Through them the vaulter learns the basic prerequisites of good jump, good balance, good swing, good arm work and timing.

In competitions they provide the judges with a show of performance, evenly measurable and easily comparable for all vaulters of those basic prerequisites for good vaulting.

This does *not* mean that the compulsories are easier or less important than the freestyle exercises. They are the important ground work for all else to follow. It is quite intricate to teach correct technique, and in the description I will mention the things you should in my opinion emphasize at the various stages of your vaulters' development and according to their age and understanding.

Although we here discuss the compulsories mainly in the context of competition, they can't be undervalued, even if you only train your vaulters for show. There are no team exercises where you can disregard a good balanced seat (as practised in the basic seat and mill), a good balanced kneel or stand (as practised in the flag and stand), or well centered swinging exercises (as in the scissors and flank). The vaulters must learn the correct posture and body control, the timing and balance for all other exercises and a good way to see the progress, is to practise the basics in the compulsories. So the argument that a vaulter does not have to bother with them, since he does not want to compete anyhow, is totally pointless.

In competitions the compulsories carry a lot of weight. Also, for two teams achieving the same end result in marks in a competition, the higher scores in the compulsories decide the winner. The sooner your vaulters learn to ‘respect’ the importance of training for the compulsories, which are always perceived as less fun than the team exercises, the better for the team results in the end.

There are six compulsory exercises in vaulting:

the basic seat	}	block 1
the flag		
the mill		
the scissors	}	block 2
the stand		
the flank		

Some countries now offer an easier version of compulsories for the beginner divisions in local or national competition. These are then parts or pre-exercises to the full compulsories (and are discussed in this book as such) like: a free kneel rather than a stand, a series of leg swings over the neck rather than a full mill with backward seat, and pre-swings with consequent vault-off rather than a full flank. Often the scissors are omitted altogether for beginners, as the combination of swing, push, rotation and crossing of legs is a very complex movement. Consult your vaulting association on what is expected of your beginners in which area.

Depending on which competition your vaulters are starting in, these exercises are performed in one go-through or two blocks, and if you plan to go into a competition, they must be trained in that sequence. In team competitions, each vaulter must perform the first block – basic seat, flag and mill – and then dismount (via leg over the front, which will hereafter be called ‘basic dismount’). After the last vaulter of the team finishes, the first vaulter will begin with block two, performing scissors, stand and flank. And so on to the last vaulter. In individual competitions,

both blocks are performed together, with a touch-down after the mill and direct re-mount into the next exercise, the scissors.

Scores

All exercises will be scored in competitions on a scale from 1 to 10 (including the freestyle exercises, individual as well as *pas-de-deux* and team). These marks mean:

10 excellent	5 sufficient	0 not executed
9 very good	4 insufficient	
8 good	3 fairly bad	
7 fairly good	2 bad	
6 satisfactory	1 very bad	

and the words are somewhat misleading. You get a better idea by considering this: there are internationally three categories of performance, and here we are talking about vaulters who of course perform all exercises in canter:

C category vaulter (or a team), who has reached the average mark of 5.0 not more than once per year in a recognized competition.

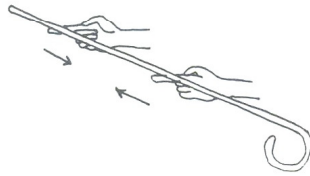
B category vaulter (or team), who has reached the average mark of 5.0 at least twice per year, but 6.5 not yet twice.

A category vaulter (or team), who has reached the average mark of 6.5 at least twice a year.

The major considerations in the evaluation of each compulsory exercise are the following seven points:

- (1) *Mechanics*: the way to get into, and execute (dynamic) or hold (static) the exercise, and terminate the motion correctly (getting out of), that is, correct position and arrangement of

body parts to fulfil the criteria of an exercise as defined and prescribed. For example: height in the scissors is *not* mechanics, but not truly exercising the scissoring motion or turning the pelvis *is* a matter of mechanics. Under the new rules a basic score is given for the mechanics in each compulsory exercise. This means that even if the 'performance' (the execution) is one hundred per cent wonderful, the mark can not go higher than this basic score given. From this basic score points are then deducted for all other faults. In the discussion of each compulsory exercise it will be explained which faults are 'mechanic' and how they get penalized.

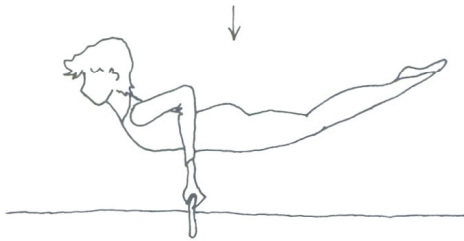


Find the gravity point!

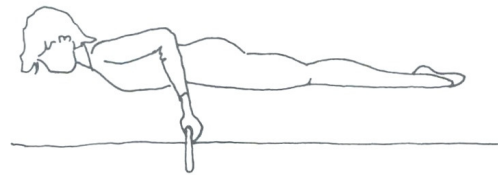
The most important criterion for good mechanics is the correct alignment of gravity point: gravity point is the alpha and omega of balance and control, and equally important in static and dynamic exercises, in compulsories and team kur configurations. If the vaulter's gravity point is misaligned in regard to the horse (taking into account the horse's bending on the circle), and to the speed (centrifugal force) *and* within himself, he will lose balance. This either means a fall or, more often, a hard landing on the horse; it means throwing the horse off balance or pushing your team mates off his back!

Smaller children especially have no concept of gravity: explain it to them. Tell them, it is the *one* point in their middle, where they are *heaviest* and then let them find out, where that point is. Take any long object and place it over two out-stretched fingers held apart. Move the fingers toward each other, keeping the object balanced. Where the fingers meet without the object falling off, *that* is the location of the gravity point of that object. (Choosing an irregular object, so the gravity point does *not* lie in the middle, makes the point clearer!) Now move to the 'human object' with the exercise we call 'the killer'... demonstrate if you can. Let the vaulters grip as shown in the illustration and slide their legs from a kneel position with pointed toes to the back of

the barrel. Elbows must be kept together, knees lift off and the weight is slowly shifted to the front. The legs become fully stretched, and will lift off the barrel as soon as all the weight is transferred to the arms of the vaulter. Note that your gravity point is always *much further behind your shoulders* than you might think. I tell my vaulters that although they wish their brain might be the heaviest part of their body it is usually their posterior. . . It is essential for good vaulting to understand this sad truth!



Wrong: alignment too far back, vaulter tries to correct through arching the back



The perfect 'killer'! Gravity point is in the middle of the body

- (2) *Essence*: the prerequisite skills without which the exercise can't be properly executed (like sense of balance, flexibility etc.) are matters of essence. They are to be tested. What are we trying to show or prove? Essence expresses the *intent* of the exercise.
- (3) *Form*: posture and stretch and straightness of the body, limbs and extremities. Correct position of hands, feet, head.
- (4) *Scope*: elevation, width, amplitude of movement (dynamic exercises). In other words: how high can the vaulter lift the leg in the mill? How high can he clear the horse in the swing of the scissors? How high and wide is the flight phase in the flank?

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- (5) *Difficulty*: of execution, meaning the degree to which the vaulter takes on risks, in order to heighten scope and elegance. For example: is he standing very tall with feet close together, rather than broad-legged and more secure? Is he bringing out leg and arm together to go into the flag, or does he establish safe balance first, before letting the hand go?
 - (6) *Security*: and balance, shows the level of proficiency of the vaulter's performance. (This applies more to freestyle as the vaulter is not given a choice in the compulsories. In the kur, the vaulter can choose between a more or less secure version of an exercise.)
 - (7) *Consideration*: meaning soft landings on the horse out of any position in particular, and generally the minimum disturbance to the horse (canter rhythm, throwing horse off balance etc.)

Compulsory and freestyle exercises may be scored in 1/10th of a mark.

Mounts as well as dismounts are counted into the exercises (where applicable). For example: the first mount traditionally counts for forty to fifty per cent of the score for the basic seat. When compulsories are performed in one go-through (as in individual competitions), the touch-down and immediate remount count into the *next* exercise, that is, the scissors. And so on.

The next chapters will take you through the compulsory exercises in detail, including approach, mounts and dismounts, and are broken down into phases for more clarity.