



# JUMPING

## Project Guide



CANADA  
4-H Alberta

The 4-H Motto

“Learn to Do by Doing”

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge

My **head** to clearer thinking,

My **heart** to greater loyalty,

My **hands** to larger service,

My **health** to better living,

For my club, my community

my country, and my world.

Acknowledgements

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Robert Young, 4-H Volunteer, Red Deer Alberta

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For more information or to find other helpful resources, please visit the 4-H Alberta website at [www.4hab.com](http://www.4hab.com)

# Jumping

In these levels you will work through the basic skills that you will need to jump. These skills are very important because good clean jumps are the product of good flatwork and the complete understanding of both horse's and rider's biodynamics, jump construction, the ground underfoot and riding techniques.

A lot of the basic information has already been given to you in the **Horse Reference Manual** and the **Dressage** manual, so it will not be repeated here. This project is about learning to jump. There are several different types of jumping competitions that you could enjoy.



Stadium Jumping

There is stadium jumping, which is a competition where only fence knockdowns, refusals and time counts.

In hunter jumper, the way the horse jumps and how smooth and pleasant the horse looks to ride, is judged.

In equitation over fences the horse is not judged. The rider is judged on his/her position and style through



Show Hunter Jumper



Horse Trials Cross Country

the course.

For eventing and horse trials, the horses have to do dressage first, then both stadium jumping and a course of fences through fields and woods called “cross country.”

In other parts of the world people jump when they go foxhunting, in the country, and jockeys jump in steeplechase



In these pictures the riders are sitting back for landing but in no way pulling on their horses' mouths.



## Your Horse

and point to point races.

Your partner! Most horses enjoy jumping when they have learned how and they don't like to hit fences. When you ask your horse to learn something new, you must be very clear in your explanation to



Horse free jumping

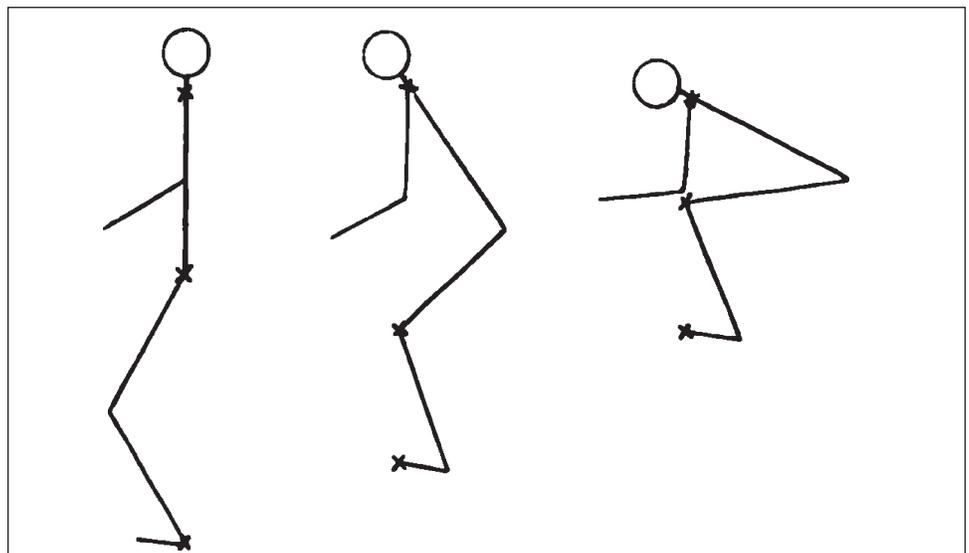
him or he may become confused and offer you all sorts of movements in an effort to understand you. If your horse is becoming totally upset, don't blame him, STOP, go back in your mind over what happened and see if you gave him clear aides and directions. Start at a point where your horse understood what was wanted and bring him slowly on.

The best thing you can do is to teach your horse to jump all sorts of fences in many combinations and settings: indoors, outdoors, while trail riding and in competitions. Try not to jump the same fences over and over again; horses get bored the same as we do and like a bit of variety.

Any breed of horse will do, as jumping ability appears to be more related to athletic ability than any specific breed. Some breeds are more naturally athletic than others; but most horses will have a try if you ask. The perfect picture shows a horse who rounds his back over fences, snaps his shoulders and front legs up then tucks his hind legs up behind him.

## Rider Position

For flatwork you start with the basic position already learned: heels,





Two point position



Balanced jumping position

Position over jump  
- note neck strap

hips and shoulders lined up, straight line from the elbow through the hands to the reins and the horse's mouth. Back nice and straight but not rigid, shoulders back and down. The jumping position, sometimes called "two point," has you standing on your feet in the stirrups, heels slightly lower than toes, with your knees bent, folding forward at the hips and with your shoulders also lined up with knees and toes, sort of like a downhill skiing position. If someone took your horse out from underneath you, in the jumping position you would land on your feet crouched forward but balanced. Again hands and forearms lined up with the horse's mouth. Head should be up and looking forward. You should stay in this position, letting the horse come up underneath you and closing the angles of your knees and hips as he jumps. Stay up



Crest release

off your horse's back all the time that you are on a jumping course when he is going well, only sitting down to push if you need to. A quiet, light load is easier for the horse to balance, so the less you are "doing" on top, the easier it is for the horse to get his job done.

To start with, hold on to the neck strap or grab a handful of mane to stop yourself from jerking your horse's mouth if you get left behind when he takes off. As your legs and seat become tighter and more independent, you will be able to develop a crest release with your hands just pressed up into the crest

of your horse's neck. Finally, a following hand which floats beside the horse's neck following the bit in his mouth, as he stretches his frame over the fences. You may hear the term "three point position" used, this means a cross between the two point position and sitting right down in the saddle, your floats against



Following hand

seat sort of the saddle. This is used when you want to give a little more push to your horse with your seat, between jumps, or when you need to bring your shoulders back to steady him.

## Clothes

Remember that you may have the best trained horse in the world, but if you are a weak and unbalanced rider, then your horse cannot do his job properly!



Informal outfit

Next let's talk about clothes. While practising at home you can wear any comfortable breeches, jeans or pants. You must wear boots with a smooth sole and a heel so that your foot will not slide through the stirrup or be too easily trapped if you have a fall. If you are not wearing tall boots then full length or half chaps are fine for giving your legs more support and protection against getting pinched by the stirrup leathers. Always wear an ASTM/SEI or BSI approved helmet. No joking and no excuses!

For the show ring quite strict rules apply. You must wear either jodhpurs or breeches. Jodhpurs are fitted riding pants that go down to the ankle and are worn with jodhpur boots or lace-up ropers. Breeches are worn with tall boots. In either case the colour should be light: beige or tan. You may wear breeches with half chaps but they must match the colour of your boots. With your boots you may wear spurs if your horse needs them but remember english spurs are worn much higher than western ones. The spurs should rest on the seam between the leg and foot of the boot, not way down low on the heels like cowboys wear.

Fashions come and go, but basically, show jackets should be dark, either black, navy blue or dark grey. In schooling or 4-H shows you may wear a tweed jacket. Under your jacket wear a light coloured shirt, either with a tie, stock or a collar with a stock pin. To finish off the look and to give yourself better grip on your reins, wear gloves, preferably leather or string in dark colours.

Of course, girls will wear their hair neatly tucked under their helmets and kept in place with a hair net. If you have a white or coloured plastic helmet, then buy a velvet cover for it as helmets should be black or very dark.

## Tack

Use an english saddle; either all purpose, eventing, close contact or jumping. All purpose is the best choice for general use as the others are more specialized and require greater skill to use as they offer different rider support. Do not use a dressage saddle as the straight cut flap does not allow your knee to move forward when your stirrup leathers are shortened. When you start to jump, shorten your stirrup leathers by at least 2 holes from your regular length. This increases the spring angle in your ankle, knee and hip joints. When you jump higher, you will want to shorten your stirrup length again.

Under your saddle use a saddle pad. For the hunter show ring a numnah, (a pad shaped like the saddle) above it is required, in either white or black. For general riding the larger square all purpose pads are useful as they fit all sorts and sizes of saddle. Remember to pull the saddle pad up into the gullet of the saddle to take the strain off the horse's spine when you are saddling up. If your horse's back is uneven or swayed and you cannot find a saddler to re-stuff your saddle to fit him, try using one of the various wedge pads which come in all shapes and sizes. Remember the seat of the saddle where you sit should be level and that the stirrup leathers should hang straight down.

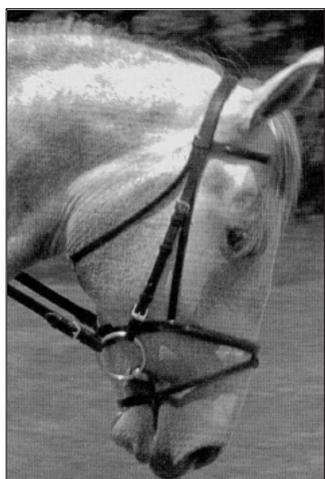
The stirrup leathers should match the saddle in colour and should be the best you can afford because a cheap, easily broken leather could cause a bad fall. Stirrups should be stainless steel because it is a strong metal and easy to keep clean. The stirrups may have rubber pads in them to help keep your feet from sliding around.

The girth also should match the saddle in colour and be made of leather, fabric, string or synthetic material. Some horses with sensitive skin find a string girth more comfortable and less likely to rub girth galls. These string girths are often white and should be kept sparkling clean by washing. Of course it goes without saying that all your tack should be kept clean and supple.

For general riding you can use any english type of bridle, with a browband and noseband. The noseband may be a plain cavesson, dropped, figure 8 or flash. Always start with the simple noseband, as the others are used to increase the severity of the bit by holding the horse's mouth closed. Be sure they are adjusted so that the horse can breathe easily. Use english reins not split ones; flat, laced or web reins are all comfortable. For showing, your bridle should match your saddle in colour, either brown or black leather with either flat or laced reins. For Hunters it should be plain, no fancy coloured browbands for the show ring. You can check the Equine Canada Handbooks for Hunter and Jumper, Section G and F for exact tack rules for recognized shows.



Figure 8 noseband



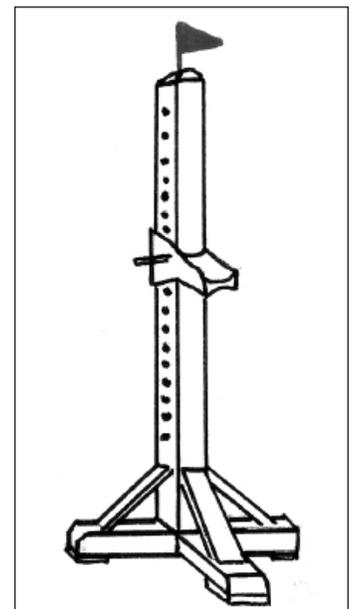
Flash noseband

A snaffle bit is a good choice for beginner jumpers because it is gentle on the horse's mouth. Most horses in 4-H are happy jumping in snaffles. Certainly while you are learning it is safer to use a mild bit in case you lose your balance and jerk your horse's mouth. If your horse pulls and goes too fast, try a different snaffle like a slow twist or a Dr. Bristol. Stronger bits are kimberwicks and pelhams.

A breastplate is a useful piece of equipment which stops the saddle from sliding backwards which can happen easily when jumping. There are different designs of these and you will have to find out which one suits your horse best. A running martingale is used for a horse that throws his head in the air; it is commonly used on show jumpers and eventing horses going cross country. Remember that if you use a running martingale you must use rubber rein stops on your reins so the martingale rings don't slide up and get tangled with the bit. Standing martingales are of little practical use but are fashionable in the hunter show ring. A useful, temporary piece of equipment you might try is a neck strap. This can be a stirrup leather or even a braided strap of baler twine placed around your horse's neck about one third of the way up which your hands can grab for support.

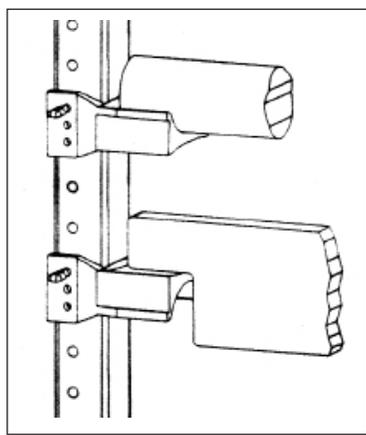
For protection on the horse's legs, splint/galloping/jumping boots are a better idea than bandages as they are simpler to put on. Splint boots made out of neoprene or rubber which can be washed are easier to look after than leather ones which require careful saddle soaping and oiling. Bandages have two disadvantages: they can come undone and tangle in the horse's legs, causing an accident and they can be wrapped with uneven tension, causing tendon damage. If there is danger of your horse stepping on his front heels with his hind feet then he should wear bell (overreach) boots for protection.

For jumping on soft footing your horse may be able to go barefoot, depending on his hooves. Horses jumping regularly over low heights need front shoes. Once you start competing you will have to consider hind shoes as well. For bad footing many people use caulks (corks, studs) screwed into the heels of the hind shoes. If you must put caulks on the inside heels then bell boots are advised so that your horse does not catch the coronet band on the opposite leg. However, these double caulks put a very great twisting strain on your horse's legs and can cause great damage.



Plain jump standard

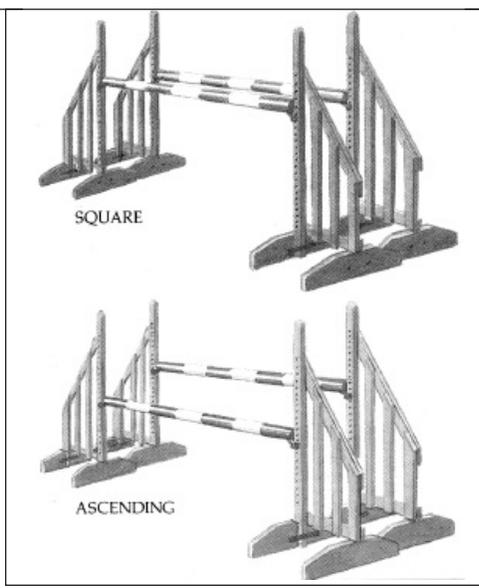
## Jumps



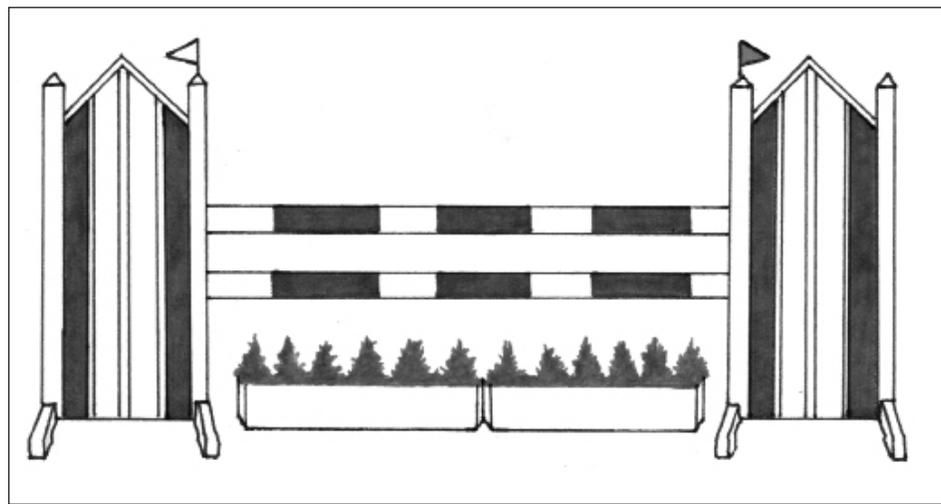
Jump cups

Front shoe caulks are only used by very experienced riders competing at a high level again because of the extreme strain they can place on the horse's legs.

When you are schooling, use the minimum of equipment needed so that you and your horse learn to be more accurate and subtle. Shod horses should wear leg protection, barefoot horses are usually safe without boots.



Oxers

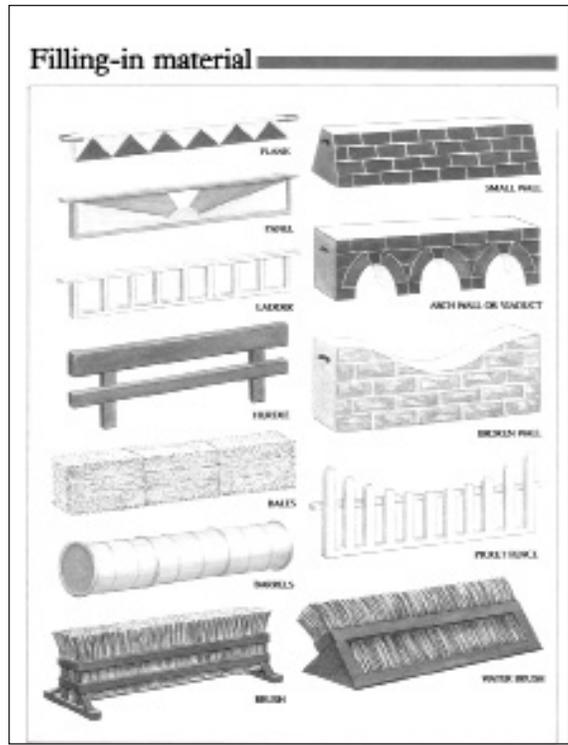


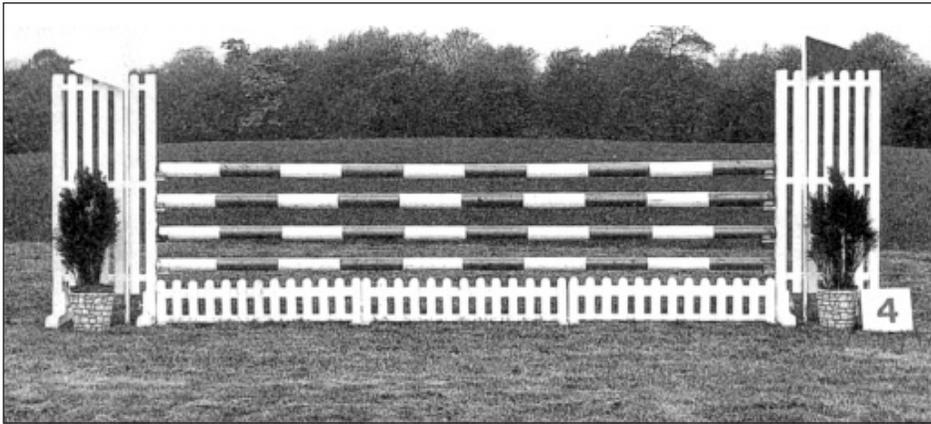
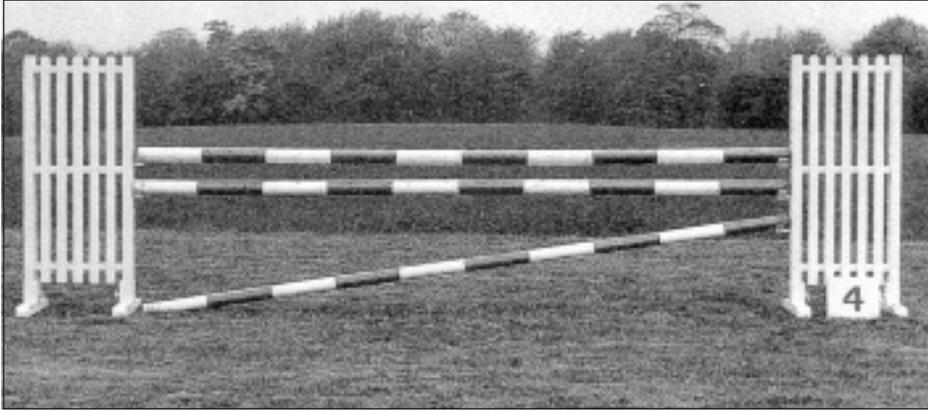
Vertical fence with wing standards

Don't introduce extra equipment, especially before a competition or when introducing new or higher fences, without giving the horse time to get used to it.

Well built jumps encourage horses to jump better because of the confidence they give the horse. Certainly horses can jump almost anything you put in front of them but they will do a better and safer job for you with a nice, solidly built jump.

There are several styles of jumps you can build. The easiest jump is a simple cross rail. A vertical jump





Bad and good ground lines

is, as its name suggests, an upright one; easy to jump at low levels but much harder when the height gets up over 4 feet.

Spread fences, often called oxers, look more imposing to the rider but in fact horses usually like jumping them. Your horse likes an ascending (ramped or staircase) oxer better than a parallel one which has the 2 top poles level.

You might start with plain jump standards which have plastic or metal jump cups. These jump cups should break loose if you or your horse fall on the jump, saving you from a nasty injury. Wing standards look fancier and

make the jump easier for the horse as they direct his attention to the centre of the jump.

Poles used for the jumps are easier for the horse to see if they are white or bright coloured. They should be 10 or 12 feet long and 3 ½ to 4 inches in diameter. Planks are the same length as poles but have their ends cut and braced to sit in the jump cups which should be turned so that their shallow sides are up.



Barrels braced on the ground for safety n

To make the jumps more interesting and fill in the spaces, use fillers. They can be flower boxes, brush boxes, small picket fences, etc. Fillers are usually built in two 4 foot long sections to fit under the jump and to make them easier to move. They can be 12 inches, 18 inches or 2 feet high. The main point about fillers is that they should not present a danger to the horse; so use nothing that could trap a hoof or cut a leg if a mistake is made. Horses like to see a ground line to give them something to focus on. It must be either slightly in front of the vertical line of the poles or planks above or line with them. When building an oxer, the front

## Ground

standards carry 2 or 3 rails and the back ones only 1. This is for safety should the horse not make the spread.

Remember that when planning jumps for a show, the top element must be something that can be easily knocked down like a pole or plank. If you are using a wooden painted wall, then it must have a pole over it or blocks that can be knocked off.

Be careful not to jump unsafe things. NEVER jump wire! It is very hard for your horse to see and he may hit it with disastrous results. If jumping barrels lying on their sides, make sure they are braced on both sides so they don't roll if the horse hits them, causing a bad accident. Avoid anything with sharp edges which could cut your horse or you if you fell on it. Horses like solid jumps, not see-through ones. The easiest is a simple cross rail.

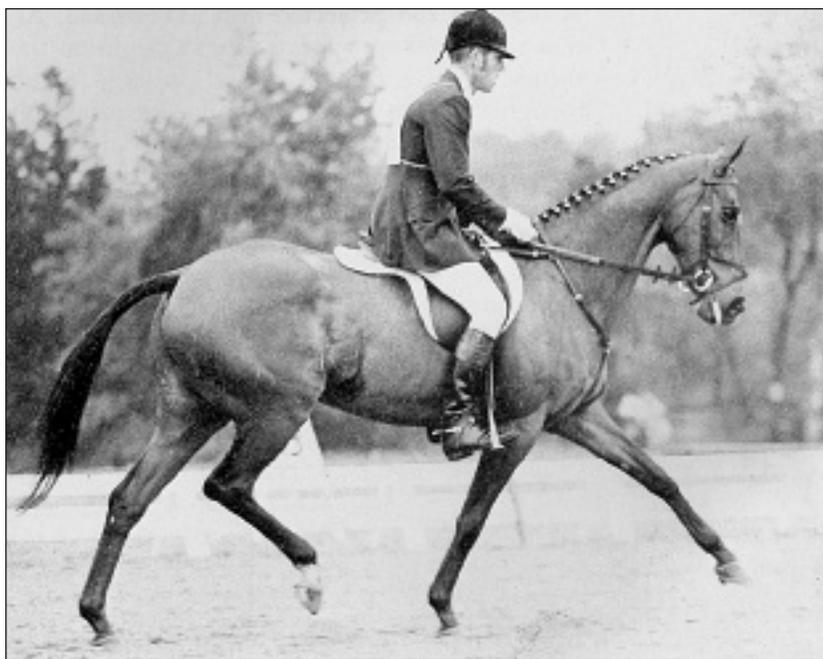
Never, ever, jump alone! Always have someone watching in case you need assistance. Besides, it helps to have a pair of eyes watching to tell you to keep your heels down or whatever else needs to be corrected. Never jump a tired horse. Be careful when starting or training a horse that you don't present him with more of a jump than he feels capable of jumping. Consider whether your

horse's muscles are well enough conditioned to do the job you are asking of him. Many horses refuse because they are unsure of the jump, but are then blamed by their riders for being stupid or lazy.

Always look at the ground your horse is jumping on. Is the footing very deep, soft sand that will strain his legs? Is it dry, slippery grass, rutted dried mud or full of holes? Try to make sure the ground is even and neither too hard nor too soft and deep. If you think the footing is bad then jump more carefully; always think of your horse's comfort and safety.

When jumping logs and obstacles

in woods and fields, always check the landing side of the jump first, to see that there are no nasty surprises like holes or branches.



Impulsion

## Flatwork



Balance

Because most of the basic riding is explained in the Horse Reference Manual and the Dressage Project Book, it will not be repeated here. Basic dressage or flatwork develops your horse's balance, impulsion and rhythm. It teaches him how to go straight on lines and how to bend on corners. However, you will now be looking for a different emphasis in your riding; your horse must be rounder, more bouncy and flexible. He must carry his weight on his hindquarters because that is where he pushes off from, and

that's where the power comes from!

Remember to always do flatwork before jumping to warm your horse up and get him supple. Do several minutes of posting trot to warm your horse's back muscles before you do sitting trot or canter and he will carry you more comfortably.

One of the most important things your horse must have or develop is **impulsion**. This means he must push himself forward with energy. It doesn't mean rushing faster, it means controlled energy. You create energy with your legs and push it forward to your hands which contain it, gently. You will often hear people saying a horse should be more "forward". What they mean is that the horse should show more impulsion. They want to see the horse stepping in under himself, with his hind feet either in or in front of the prints of his front feet. To you, your horse should feel as if he wants to go faster but is listening to you and feels really light in your hands.

**Balance** is also important. Both you and your horse must develop balance together so that you ride together, jump together and land together, ready to set up for the next jump. This means that you are sitting as still as possible in relation to your horse or if necessary using your weight to help him.

**Rhythm** is produced by power and balance in the horse. He must be able to trot and canter rhythmically so that he can lengthen and shorten his strides as needed. When you're doing your trotting warm-up, ask for an even rhythm in lots of big bends and circles.

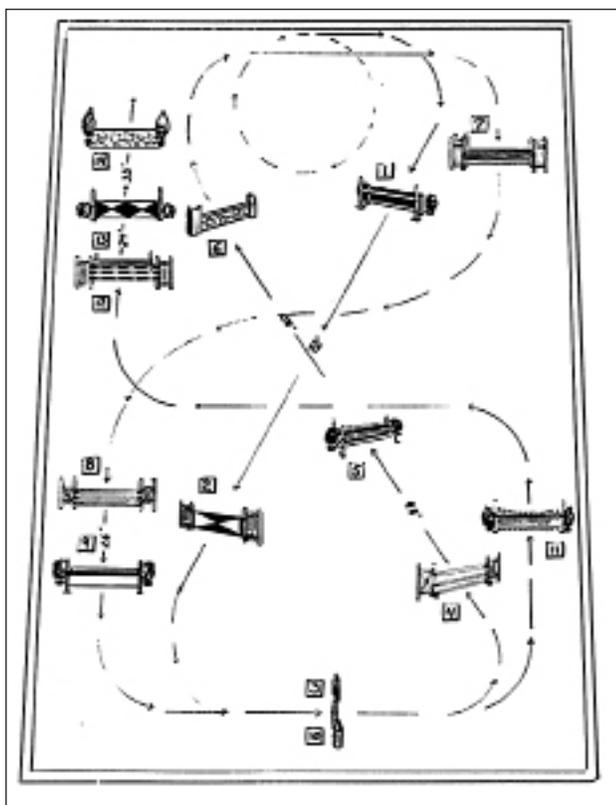
**Pace** refers to speed and is related to the forward motion of the horse. The paces or gaits are walk, trot, canter and gallop. To supple your horse, you do transitions from one gait to another and within a gait do transitions from collected to extended.

Courses are measured in meters, and depending on the level of

competition that you are doing, the speed or pace is determined in meters per minute. Advanced horses are required to go faster than novice riders and horses. Speed is also required to make the jumping effort over larger, higher fences. Most schooling is done at around 325 meters per minute which is a nice working canter.

Too much pace at a canter, for instance, and your horse can't manage turns, too little and he can't launch himself into the air easily over fences. To test pace, measure out a distance of 1/2 km., then ride the distance several times at varying speeds, and have someone time you on each ride to determine what speed you are going.

**Flexion and flexibility** are two different things. Both come from the horse's ability to make maximum use of his joints. Suppleness is the term riders use to describe this when speaking of muscle and joint flexibility. Frame, or the ability of the horse to carry himself correctly and in balance with the rider, is dependent to a large degree on the horse's flexibility.



A jumper course

Collection comes from the ability of the horse to slightly compress his frame resulting in the energy going more up than forward, and a shortening of the stride without loss of tempo (rhythm) of the pace. Extension is a lengthening of the stride and frame to accomplish the extended movements such as extended trot or canter, and comes from the horse's ability to cover maximum distance per stride without losing balance or tempo. Bend is the ability of the horse to "fold" around the rider's inside leg in turns and circles, and bend in the direction he is travelling without loss of shoulder or hindquarter control. Bend should be uniform from poll to dock, without excessive bend in the head and neck which may result in the horse bulging out through the outside shoulder, or losing the hindquarters to the outside. Your horse should remain upright, and not lean into the turns and circles as he bends into them. This is why self-carriage in training is so important. So, bend is not really possible where flexibility is lacking.

Flexion shows in the head and neck as the horse collects and tucks his chin in while accepting the bit. Your horse flexes his head and neck as he bends correctly to left or right. Some people pull their horse's head in to look flexed but this is very wrong and shows because the horse is not flexing through his back which should be round and supple.

When people talk about **stride**, they may mean several things in the jumping world. Basically, stride is the distance your horse covers

until all legs have moved once.

Because the big jumping courses are mostly ridden by very tall horses, Thoroughbreds and Warmbloods, the length of stride used to measure these courses is 12 feet. Most Quarterhorses and general riding horses take much shorter strides so it is best to calculate your courses on an 11 foot stride. Pony courses are 10 foot strides for 14 hand ponies, 9 foot strides for 13 hands and 8 foot strides for 12 hand ponies. However, these measurements really only relate to hunter and equitation courses when the number of strides between fences is designated and the judge expects to see it correct.

In jumper classes the horse may take as many strides as the rider chooses, bearing in mind that the course designer has based his course problems on a set number of strides. You start schooling your horse to his comfortable stride length then teach him to shorten and lengthen his stride when you ask. An exercise you can use to measure your horse's stride is to rake the sand clean in your riding area and then ride at a normal-speed canter, past a friend, who can watch the foot-fall and measure your horse's length of stride. For instance, from one right hind footprint to the next right hind footprint in front of it. Collected canter strides will be slightly shorter than your working canter stride, and gallop strides will be longer. In competition, the course-designer takes this into account to set challenging courses that test the rider's and horse's ability to modify strides to get the distances between fences correct to avoid stops and knock-downs.

Many things influence your horse's stride. Horses shorten their strides when they are jumping indoors or in a small arena, when they go uphill or when the footing is muddy or deep sand. They lengthen their strides when they are going towards home or the "in" gate of a ring, when they are jumping in a large outdoor space, when the footing is good and springy and when they are going down a gentle slope. A steep down slope makes them prop.



Long and low

To achieve all these things, your horse needs to answer your aids **immediately!** You ask by giving the aide then reward by relaxing your aide the moment your horse responds. This way he learns to answer the lightest aide, either from leg, hand or weight. A most important cue used in jumping is a half halt. This momentary check to the horse's forward movement helps him to shift his weight back to his hindquarters. It can warn him that something is about to happen or that you are about to ask him to do something different. You can use a series of half halts to steady a horse who is rushing too fast on

a jumping course. It is a far more effective aide than pulling on the horse's mouth which usually results in the horse shaking his head to get free of the restraining hand.

In order to be an athletic jumper, your horse needs to learn to go straight on his lines so that his hind feet track his front feet. If you watch, many horses go with their heads to the outside and their quarters inside the track. That puts them in the wrong position to jump. Your horse must also bend correctly on his corners while staying on the track you want. These two points are basic to good jumping. Horses are naturally one sided, preferring their left hand and must be taught to be straight.

Once your horse goes straight, you want to teach him lateral work which means moving sideways. The easiest movement is **turn on the forehand** which teaches him to move away from your leg applied behind the girth. Next is **leg yield** which teaches your horse to move his whole body in one direction while being slightly bent in another. On a circle this is the movement which keeps the horse from "falling in". **Shoulder-in** is best learned along a wall or fence. Keep your horse's hindquarters on the track beside the rail while leading his shoulders in slightly. **Haunches-in (travers)** is the reverse, shoulders stay on the track

## How your horse jumps



while the haunches are moved in. Finally teach the **half pass**, when your horse moves forward and diagonally at the same time.

Some more exercises to work on together are walk - halt - walk; trot - walk - trot; trot - halt - trot; each time asking for fast responses



to light, invisible aids. When your horse can do these exercises

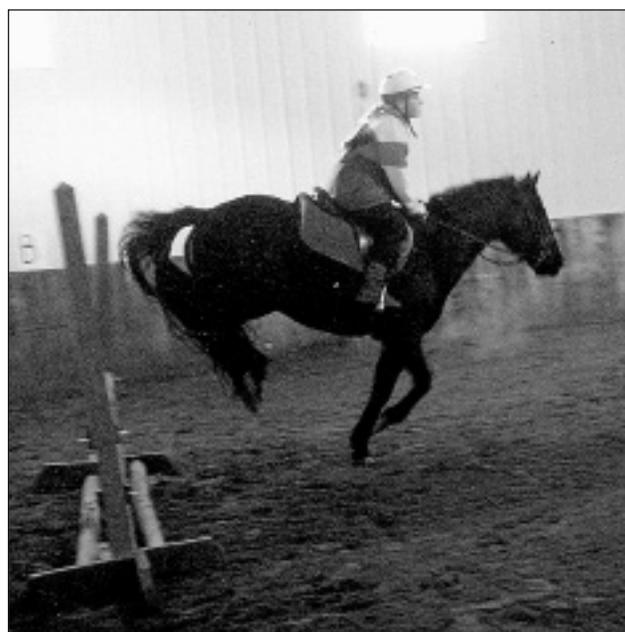


easily, start the more complicated trot - canter - trot; walk - canter - walk which help prepare your horse for flying lead changes. Other



transition exercises to help supple your horse are ones within a pace - lengthen and shorten his stride at a walk, then at a trot, then at a canter. Another exercise which helps towards the flying lead change is counter canter, also excellent for balance and control.

To help your horse to relax and strengthen his back, teach him to go long and low. This



is a movement in which you encourage your horse to stretch his head and neck down towards the ground.

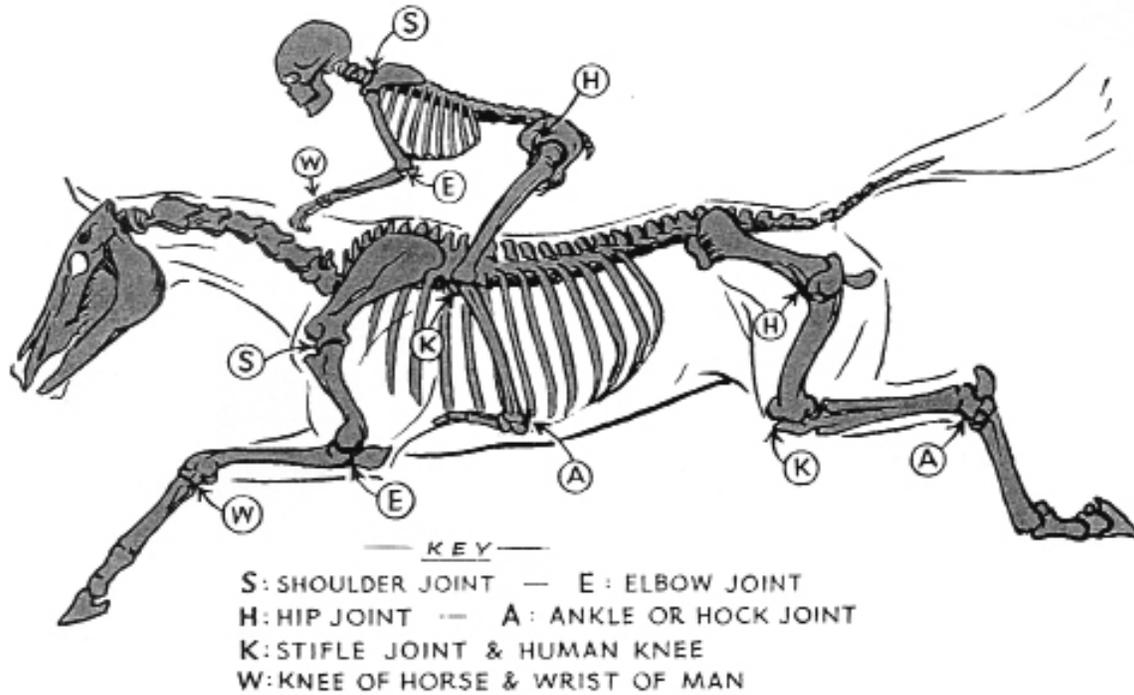
Horses get very bored doing the same things every day. Work your horse out of the arena to give him a break; he'll love going for trail rides, trotting and cantering in fields and through



forests. Teach him to go by himself as well as with other horses.

**Fitness** is crucial to having a happy and efficient jumper. It takes several months of work to strengthen the horse's muscles and joints to withstand the stresses of jumping. Long-term wear and tear on

### COMPARATIVE SKELETONS OF MAN & HORSE IN ACTION



your horse will have the effect of shortening his working life-span if fitness requirements are ignored. Fit horses can jump for years, and many have trained several riders over the course of their working lives. Yet, the auctions are full of horses whose useful years have been shortened by carelessness and thoughtlessness in regard to their health and fitness needs.



Take off



Top of jumping arc



Landing



## Jumping

First you have to understand how your horse jumps, physically. Then you will understand how what you do on his back influences his jumping.

As a horse approaches a jump he lowers his head and neck slightly while gathering his hindquarters in under himself.

When he takes off, he brings both hind feet together and pushes off while raising his head and neck; this puts weight back on his hind end and lightens his forehead so he can get his front legs tucked up.

As he pushes up and over the jump he is in balance and powered from behind.

In mid-air he has to get his head down to take the weight off his

hindquarters to flick his back feet over the jump. As he lands he raises his head again to take some of the weight off his front legs and stop himself pitching forward onto his nose.

## Trotting Poles

As his hindlegs come down he shifts his weight forward again to take some of the strain off his hindquarters.



Horse stepping correctly in centre of spaces.

Then he gets himself balanced to canter on to the next jump.

Essentially, what happens, is that the horse incorporates the jump into his stride, but with a lot of “air time”. So you see, your horse moves very athletically as he jumps and you must remain in quiet balance with him. You need to have an independent seat, legs and hands. That means lots of practice for you in the jumping position - in the arena, in fields, up and down hill, until you are rock solid and won't interfere with your

horse. While you are practicing remember to keep looking ahead and up, your horse will follow where you are looking.

To understand correct take-off and landing spots, imagine the view of the fence from the side. The obstacle being jumped is going to be incorporated in the horse's 11 or 12 foot stride. And the highest point of the fence will be at the centre of the arch over the obstacle.



Arms outstretched



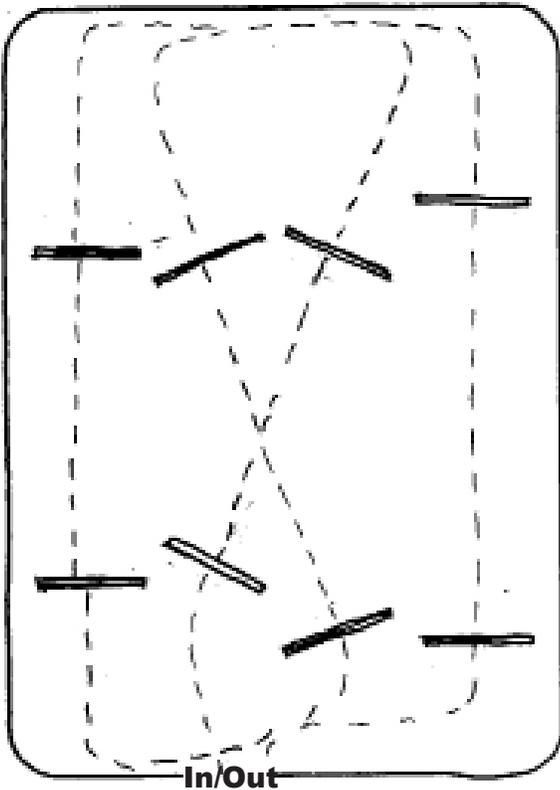
Hands behind back

In most cases, the horse takes off in front of an upright fence half of his canter stride and lands half of his stride beyond.

Taking off closer to the fence is called “getting under” the fence, and may result in the horse hitting a rail with his front legs.



Hands on head



An easy hunter course

“Chipping” is the habit some horses have of putting in an extra step immediately in front of the fence before takeoff and is rather uncomfortable. Usually, increasing the horse’s impulsion into the fence will eliminate this problem. Taking off further back is called “early”, or “taking a long one”, and may result in the horse bringing down a rail with his back legs.

## Starting to Jump

Start your horse and yourself jumping by placing a pole on the ground, walking and trotting over this until your horse is quite comfortable. Then add another 2 poles, with 4-5 ft. spaces between them



A green horse learning gymnastics

## Gymnastic Exercises

and work over these. It is better not to face your horse with 2 poles only on the ground or he may try to jump over them both, three poles makes him decide to trot through. Work up to 5 poles on the ground. 4'-5' spacing between poles works for most quarterhorses and general riding horses. Small ponies will need to work over 3' 6"- 4' spaces and large horses need 4' 6"-5'6". To get the correct canter distance for your horse, simply remove alternate poles which will give you the canter stride room you need.

## Schooling Fences in courses

Have someone watch your horse trot through to make sure he places his feet in the middle of the spaces, if he has trouble then adjust the trotting poles to suit him. Slowly stretch the spaces 6 inches bigger to make your horse increase his stride. Now you let your horse learn to balance himself over this at a trot on a loose rein. When he is happy, you start training yourself by going through in the jumping position with your arms outstretched at shoulder height.

When that is easy, go through with your arms folded in front of you, then folded behind your back and finally with your hands on top of your head. You don't have to work yourself and your horse to death doing this, do it until you are satisfied you have done it right, then reward your horse by stopping.



Scary looking jump

Now you can lay single poles out in your arena or field in a pattern like a jumping course. Trot and canter over this course, practicing correct approaches to fences.

After your horse is happy with flat poles on the ground, go back to your gymnastics. Put a pair of jump standards beside the last pole in your trotting sequence and make a cross rail jump with the last 2 poles. This gives you 3 trot poles, an 8-9 ft. space and a small jump. This is the spacing for the average horse, whatever spacing your horse uses, the last space before a jump is twice the trot pole spacing. When your horse is comfortable with this exercise, go through your no-reins-and-arms-out sequences.

Some people like to school over cavaletti, which are low pole jumps made with X frames on each end. The height of the pole is changed by turning the cavaletti over. Other people feel these jumps are dangerous as they cannot be knocked over and the horse may get his legs tangled in them. You can achieve much the same effect by raising the ends of the poles on cinderblocks or blocks of wood. There are also plastic blocks made for this purpose.

## Conditioning

Progression from this point simply includes varying the layout of your poles, and building fences starting with low heights and increasing the number of obstacles in the grid. Initially, work up to three cross poles with bounce strides (8'-10') in between, followed by an upright jump one stride away. When you are both comfortable with this, change the cross rails for uprights and the last upright jump for an oxer. This exercise teaches your horse striding, how to jump a series of obstacles in succession, how to round his back and push-off, and how to handle himself while "airborn". Heights and widths will be determined by confidence of horse and rider, and cleanness of jumping efforts. The great danger during this phase of training is to hurry the horse or rider when they are not comfortable or competent. You can expect to take two or three months of regular schooling to achieve this level. Schooling over fences should be limited to two or three sessions per week, and should generally follow your flat session when your horse is attentive, and warmed-up.

Fences can be introduced to the schooling sessions when the horse is happy with the whole idea of jumping. Keep them low, and

## Warm Up and Cool Down

encourage your horse to trot or canter with relaxation and calmness before attempting to raise the height of the jumps. Remember that as you land over one fence, you should be setting up for the next one, instead of cantering on and only setting up when you are close to the next fence.

Look at jumping courses in books and magazines. Practice the different combination problems and school over them at a low height. Teach your horse to problem-solve for himself by presenting easy question-asking fences, then increasing the difficulty. Now you can introduce various scary looking jumps: hang plastic tablecloths over a pole, use a folded blue tarp on the ground to simulate water under a jump, orange cones under a pole and so on. Old artificial Christmas tree branches make excellent fillers and never lose their leaves! Plastic flowers and artificial plants are also great since they never die. Be careful, though, not to use anything dangerous that could hurt your horse if he hit it and always start with low heights. Schooling fences are generally kept low to ensure that relaxation and attentiveness are established. Increasing heights should be schooled with individual fences and most often done over oxers. It is a good rule of thumb to school courses that are at least 6" lower than the height you are schooling over individual fences.

Distances between fences at this level must be carefully measured to ensure that the striding you are attempting to teach the horse is accurate. The table of distances included with this manual will be useful here. Knowing the distance, in strides, between fences will also teach you to count strides and learning distances will increase your competence and skill. When you are counting strides between fences, say "landing" for the first stride you feel, then "one, two, etc.". After your horse is comfortable cantering between 2 jumps in the correct number of strides, practice slowly increasing and decreasing the distance between them to teach him to cope with difficult distances.

There is no mystery or hidden secret to getting your horse fit enough to jump. Most horses who live outside move around enough to keep themselves supple and adequately fit. When we put a horse into work, however, he is burdened with the extra weight of rider and tack so needs to be made more fit so that muscles and joints, ligaments and tendons are not over stressed.

LSD, or long slow distance is the key to successful conditioning programs. Add a hack/trail ride to your regular schooling program

## Refusals and Knockdowns

3 or 4 times per week and increase the distance travelled to two or three miles, which normally takes the best part of an hour at a walk.

After your horse seems comfortable with that, you can introduce short periods of trot, then longer ones, and after that, you can add canters. Learn to listen to your horse's heart and respiration to judge how well he is handling his exercise. Avoid high speed runs until you have been working out two or three months so your horse won't have leg problems.

In Alberta, where the riding season is so short, it is wise to start your conditioning in March, so that your horse is partly fit when the

snow is gone and you want to get to work. Riders with the benefit of indoor facilities are more able to keep their horses fit all year "round". It is common practice to "let horses down" (rest or turnout) during the coldest months. This means that the horse is rested from serious work and is able to relax, but still has the benefit of turnout exercise to keep himself limber. Horses lose fitness slower than people, so a three or four week rest period is not too bad for them. However, when you bring your horse back into work, it is



Horse being jerked in the mouth



Horse refusing

## Courses

important to take it easy for the first couple of weeks until muscles and joints are again accustomed to the work.

Just as you wouldn't like to go out and be asked to run and jump to the maximum of your ability with no warm up, neither would your horse. His muscles need to warm up slowly doing different exercises like straight lines, bends and circles, lengthening and shortening strides, leg yielding and changes of pace. This is essential to stretch his muscles to avoid damage from over-exerting cold muscles resulting in aches and stiffness after the workout, and making the horse less enthusiastic when you want to jump. When he feels balanced and alert, start with trotting poles then small jumps. At a show where you can't use trotting poles, do your flat work, then start on a cross-rail jump and go on from there. A young or inexperienced horse will need longer to warm up and settle down before being asked to concentrate on his jumping.

When you have finished working your horse, walk him around until he is cool and dry. A horse cools down faster walking slowly than being left to stand still. While he is cooling down, offer drinks of water to help him rehydrate. If the day is cool and your horse is hot, put on a sweat sheet or other kind of sheet which absorbs sweat. On cold winter days you can put a sweat sheet under his heavy blanket until he is dry.

If you want to wash the horse down after his workout, use lukewarm, not cold water, and sponge or scrape the excess water off before walking him dry. Various astringent additives are available to put in the water to ease his aches and pains from exertion, and a nice leg brace under stable bandages is a comfort to the working

horse. Never, ever, tie a hot horse up and leave him to cool down on his own. He will chill, which may lead to pneumonia, colds, etc., and is very hard on his muscles and system generally, as well as being unkind and thoughtless behavior on your part. It will also do nothing to enhance his thoughts about you and your desire to jump!!

Horses have no problem eating and drinking normally, exercising moderately then going back to eating and drinking. You wouldn't want to give a feed right before hard exercise and neither would you give an enormous



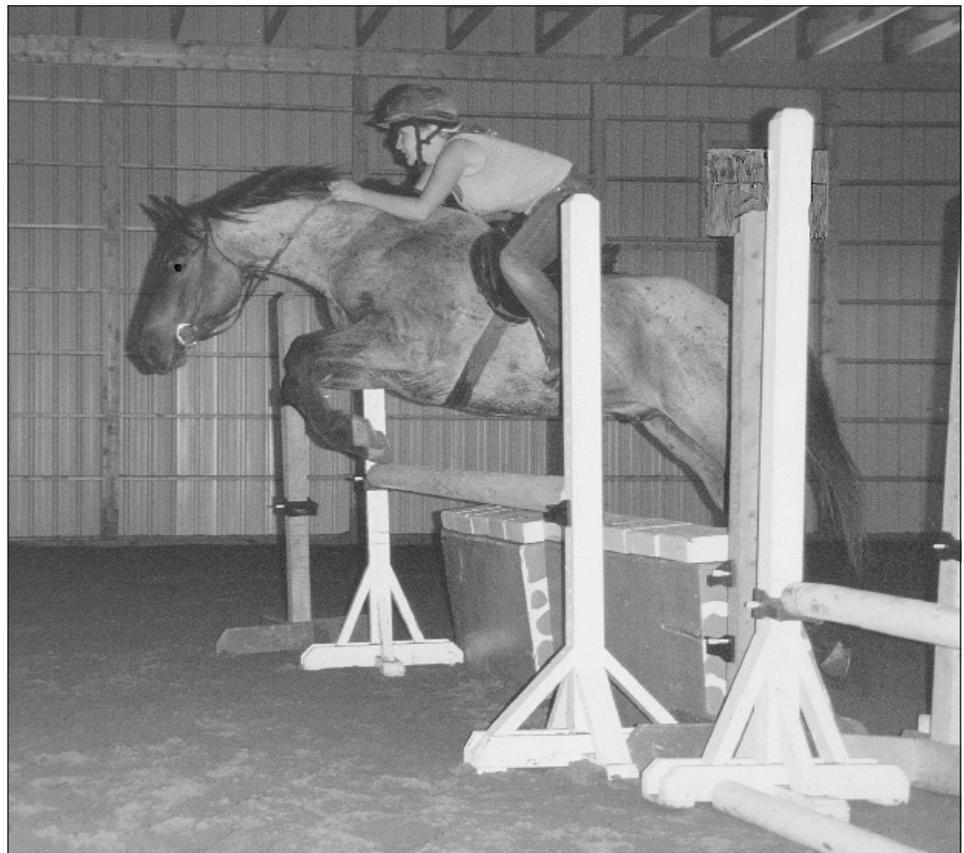
Cross country jump

## Conclusion

grain meal immediately after. The old feeding rule of offering water, hay, then grain still holds true. Frequent, smaller feeds during the day are the key to keeping your horse's stomach happy.

These happen. A refusal usually means that your horse thinks he cannot comfortably jump what is in front of him. Horses refuse because they feel intimidated by the jump, can't see it in time, sense that the rider is unsure or for many other reasons. Sometimes some part of their body hurts when they jump; sometimes the rider loses his balance and jerks his horse's mouth over every fence which is very painful. So before hitting your horse to make him jump, stop and think about why he refused. Certainly you must immediately present him at the obstacle again in case he was having a momentary fear and, having looked at the fence, will now jump. If he refuses again, lower the jump and work him over it once or twice until he is comfortable, then start to raise it up again. When he has jumped a bit higher, don't push it, praise him and stop working. In the show ring you may have two refusals before being eliminated.

If you want to know what a knockdown feels like, try jumping a rail on your own feet and hitting it with your shin - it really hurts! Transfer that thought back to your horse, he doesn't want to hit rails either! Knocking poles down is usually the result of rider error: the



horse has been brought in to the jump wrong, the rider has shifted his weight during a critical moment or the jump is just too high.

There are several different types of arena courses and all sorts of ways of arranging the jumps. A combination is any series of 2 or more fences within 2 strides (usually 39' 4") of each other. Related distances are obstacles more than 2 strides (40') from each other but no more than 5 strides (70'). A line of fences, two or more related obstacles in a row, and how these lines relate to each other is very important. Unless a class is specified as a pony class in a show, then the 11' or 12' spacing is used. It is best to train all small horses and ponies to learn how cope with the bigger striding. A really good idea is to look at books and magazines which have ideas in them. For setting up show ring courses, use the Equine Canada Handbook rule books which tell you the specifications in all classes.

The easiest courses are probably hunter ones which have 8 or 9 solid looking jumps in a figure eight pattern, 4 or 5 strides between fences, the fence height fairly constant and no true vertical or square oxers. On courses under 3' high, no combinations are used either. The jumps should be in soft colours to reflect their foxhunting country origin. Green, brown, white, grey and black are good. Use natural fillers and decorations like straw bales, small trees and jumps painted like stone walls. No numbers or flags on a hunter course and competitors may not walk the course beforehand.

An equitation course asks questions of the rider. The judge expects to see the correct number of strides in combinations and related distances. The course is harder than a regular hunter one, with bending lines, combinations, related distances, turns and changes of pace.

Open jumper classes are based on the fewest faults in the fastest time. Again, combinations, related distances, bending lines and

turns, and varying pace. The course will be designed to be ridden between 300 and 350 meters per minute depending on the class; this will be the "time allowed", anything slower will be given time faults. If more than one horse goes clear in the first round then a jump-off round is ridden with fewer but higher jumps. In this round the horse with the least faults and the fastest time wins. Besides the ordinary open jumping classes, there are various other formats like Gambler's Choice, Take Your Own Line, Match the Clock, and Six-bar.

Eventing or Horse Trials require 3 different tests of each horse/rider combination. The

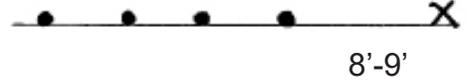


# Gymnastics Exercises

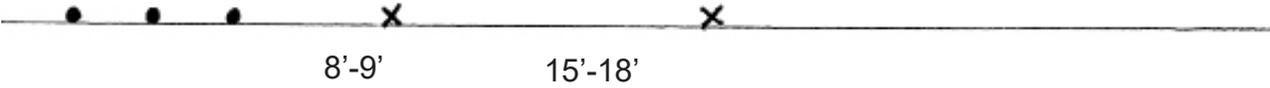
Exercise 1



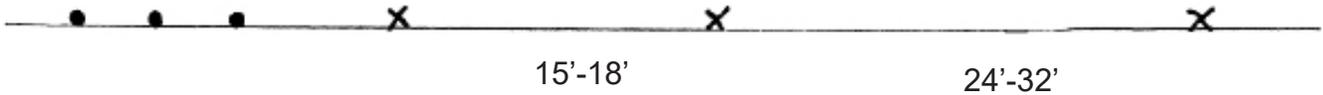
Exercise 2



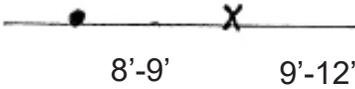
Exercise 3



Exercise 4



Exercise 5 - Bounce



Exercise 6 - Bounce



Exercise 7 - 2 Bounces to 1 Stride

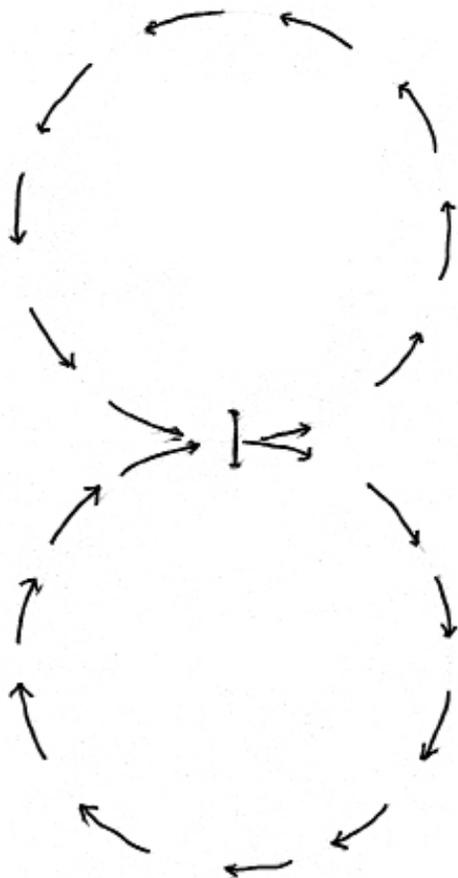


Exercise 8 - 2 Bounces to Oxer

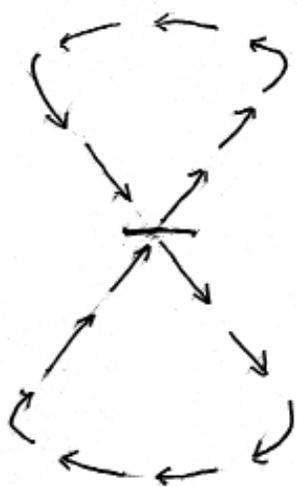


These exercises should be started as cross rails then changed to low uprights. Then the jumps can be changed to upright and oxers using the chart for strides between jumps in this book. Keep it easy for your horse.

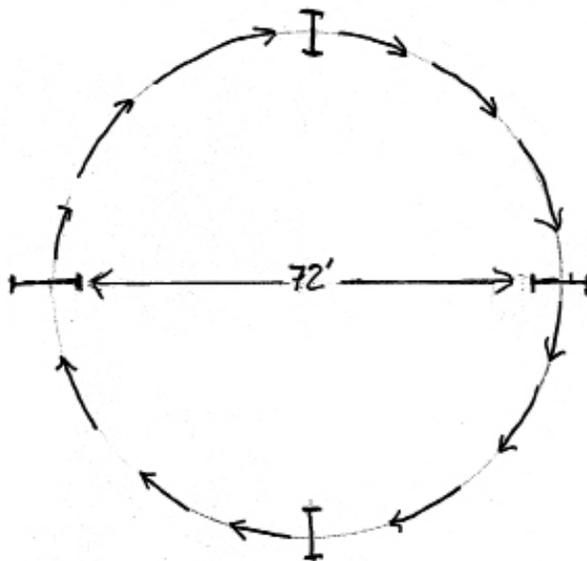
# Exercises for Suppling



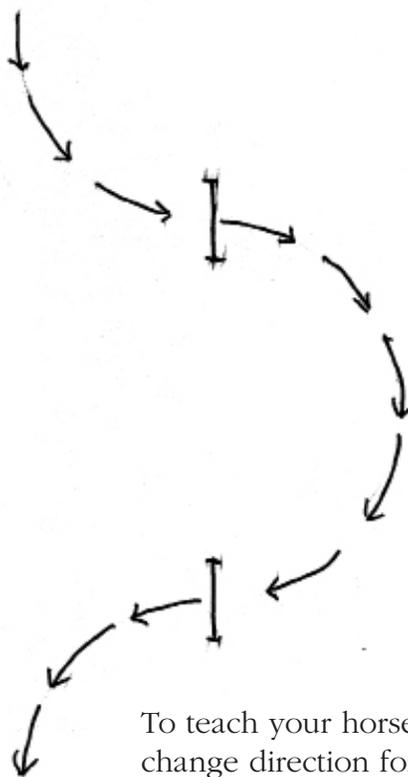
Jump in a circle on 1 rein, then on the other rein, then in a



Teach your horse to jump on an angle.



Jump around with only 2 low jumps at 12 and 6 o'clock first. Add 3 and 9 o'clock when your horse is comfortable with this exercise. Do in both directions.



To teach your horse to change direction for his

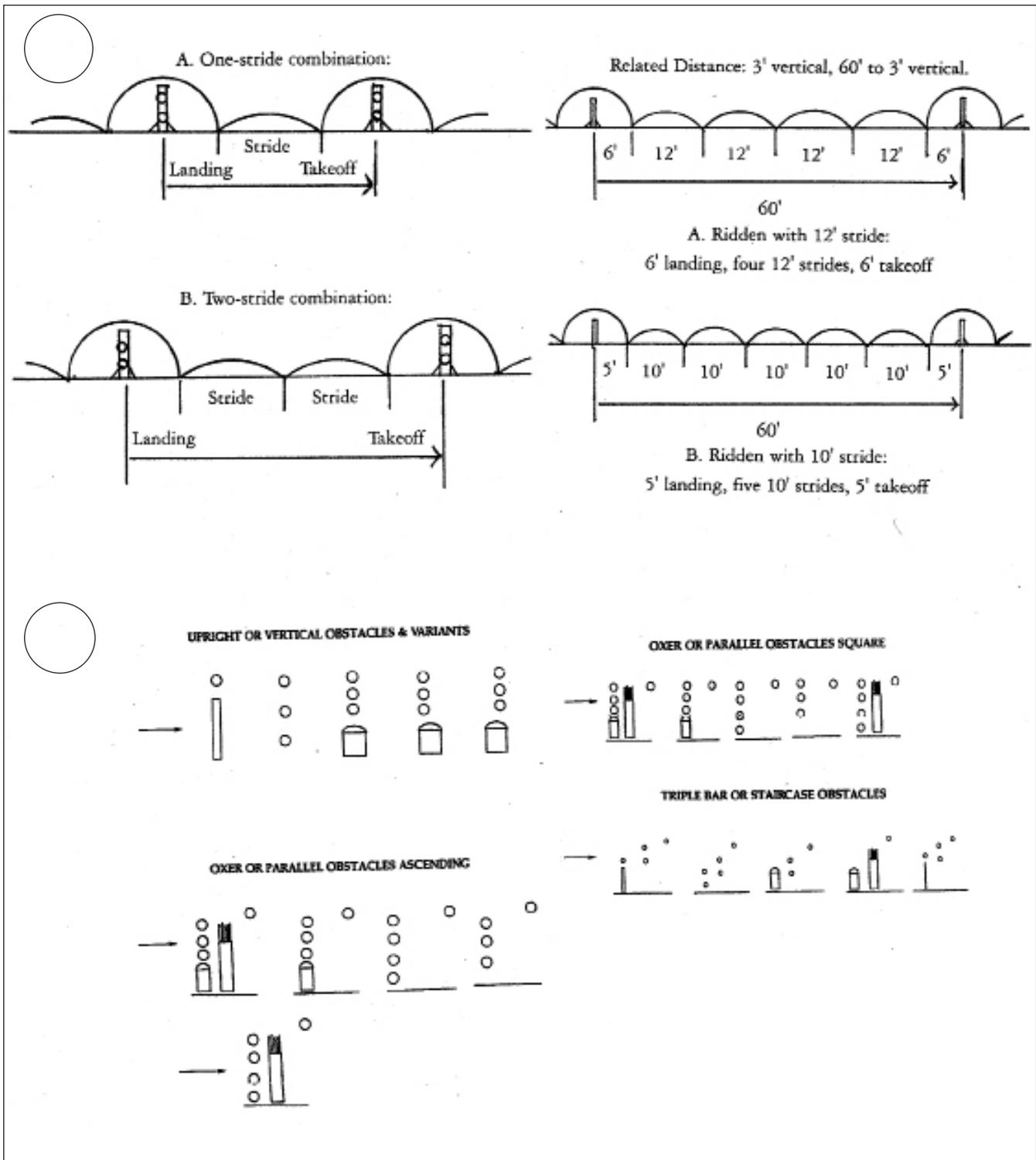
**TABLE OF EASY DISTANCES IN COMBINATIONS FOR HORSES**

		SECOND FENCE		
		Upright	Parallel	Staircase
FIRST FENCE	Upright	7.60 m (25 ft)	7.30 m (24 ft)	7 m (23 ft)
	Parallel	7.90 m (26 ft)	7.60 m (25 ft)	7.30 m (24 ft)
	Staircase	8.20 m (27 ft)	7.90 m (26 ft)	7.60 m (25 ft)

To convert the distance to two strides add 3.30 m (11 ft) to 3.60 m (12 ft) depending on going, etc.

**TABLE OF EASY DISTANCES IN COMBINATIONS FOR PONIES**

14 HANDS		SECOND FENCE		
		Upright	Parallel	Staircase
FIRST FENCE	Upright	7.30 m (24 ft)	7 m (23 ft)	6.70 m (22 ft)
	Parallel	7.60 m (25 ft)	7.30 m (24 ft)	7 m (23 ft)
	Staircase	7.90 m (26 ft)	7.60 m (25 ft)	7.30 m (24 ft)
FOR TWO STRIDES ADD 3 m (10 ft)				
13 HANDS		SECOND FENCE		
		Upright	Parallel	Staircase
FIRST FENCE	Upright	6.70 m (22 ft)	6.30 m (21 ft)	6 m (20 ft)
	Parallel	7 m (23 ft)	6.70 m (22 ft)	6.30 m (21 ft)
	Staircase	7.30 m (24 ft)	7 m (23 ft)	6.70 m (22 ft)
FOR TWO STRIDES ADD 2.70 m (9 ft)				



1. Examples of stride combinations
2. Examples of safe fence construction and groundlines. Wing standards are not shown.

# Dismounted Levels

## Level 1

- Explain and show a rider's english clothing.
- Explain and show english saddle and bridle and any other equipment your horse uses.
- Describe show jump standards, uprights and poles, including safety features.
- Explain the importance of the ground or footing being jumped on.
- Explain 4 safety rules for jumping.
- While watching another rider, explain diagonals and leads.
- Explain the spacing between trot poles, reasons for starting with and using them through a horse's working life.

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Evaluator's signature

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Date

## Level 2

- Show safe fitting of tack.
- Explain why sore teeth, sore backs or legs would affect horse's performance.
- Show different stirrup lengths and explain how they affect the rider's balance.
- Describe 2 different kinds of boots commonly used on horses when they are being worked. Explain why polo wraps can be dangerous on jumping horses.
- Explain 2 different rein releases.
- Explain a horse's stride and show how to measure it.
- Using horse's stride length, or average for size, show how to set up 1 stride and 2 stride gymnastic jumps.

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## Level 3

- Explain the phases of a horse's jump from takeoff to landing.
- Explain the difference between impulsion and pace.
- Using poles and uprights, build a vertical fence and spread fences showing both parallel and ascending.
- Explain the use of groundlines, show how to use them.
- Demonstrate, on your own feet, where a horse takes off and lands in relation to stride and width of jump.
- Show and explain the use of placing poles, both in front of and after a jump.

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## Level 4

- Explain why balance in horse and rider is most important in jumping.
- Explain good warm-up and cool down routines for your horse, including water and feed.
- If using caulks, demonstrate how they are used. Or explain the use of caulks. Mention safety practices for using caulks.
- Draw a plan for a simple beginner equitation course and explain it.

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## Level 5

- Explain the difference between hunter jumping, open jumper and horse trials cross country jumping.
- Describe speeds for different jumping courses in meters per minute.
- Set up 2 fences 5 strides apart and explain related distances and how they differ from combinations or single fences.
- Set up a 3' hunter course; describe the basic show rules governing hunter classes.
- Set up a 3' open jumper course; describe the basic show rules governing jumper classes.

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# Mounted Levels

## Level 1

- While mounted, demonstrate how to tighten your girth.
- Ride two 20 meter circles at a trot, one rising, one sitting, on the left rein and then on the right rein. Showing the correct diagonals.
- Canter a 20 meter circle to the left, trot, reverse and canter a 20 meter circle to the right. Show correct leads.
- Demonstrate a turn on the forehand.
- Lay out five trot poles with the correct spacing (3'6" - 4'6") for your horse.
- Trot over these poles in the jumping position.
- Place some poles randomly on the ground and trot over them. Show an ability to ride away from the group and maintain forward impulsion.
- Out of doors, trot up and down a small hill showing that your horse is well balanced and going at an even pace.

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## Level 2

- While mounted, demonstrate how to adjust your stirrups.
- Canter a figure of 8 of two 20 meter circles with a simple change of lead in the middle. Do this twice.
- Demonstrate a half halt.
- At a walk, demonstrate a leg-yield, in both directions.
- With 2 poles on the ground 70 feet apart, demonstrate cantering 5 strides between them. If your horse has a shorter stride, count how many strides he normally takes in this distance.
- Lay out 3 trot poles with 4 foot spacing, then 8 feet to an 18" crossrail. Ride over this.
- Add another crossrail fence 15 to 18 feet from the first and ride down this line.
- Ride over a simple figure 8 course, jumps at 18" height. Demonstrate correct position and control.
- Out of doors, canter in a field, showing jumping position.

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Evaluator's signature

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Date

## Level 3

- Demonstrate a light 3 point position and describe when to use it.
- Demonstrate walk to canter and canter to walk transitions.
- In a sitting trot, demonstrate a shoulder-in, do this in both directions.
- Canter a figure 8 of two 20 meter circles with a flying lead change in the middle. Do this twice.
- Riding with no stirrups, demonstrate sitting and posting trot.
- Explain and demonstrate how to warm your horse up before jumping.
- Build a grid of 3 trot poles at 4"6" spacing, 9 feet to an 18" crossrail, 15 to 18 feet to a 2' vertical, 16-19 feet to a 2' parallel, oxer. Ride over this.
- Build a jumping course of 8 to 10 fences, 2' high, including change of direction, verticals, spread fences, 1 stride and 2 stride combinations.
- In a field, canter up and down a small hill, showing balance and control.

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Evaluator's signature

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Date

## Level 4

- Explain and demonstrate how to make your horse go long and low.
- In a sitting trot, demonstrate haunches-in in both directions.
- Canter with no stirrups.
- Demonstrate counter canter in both directions.
- Place 2 simple 2' fences 70 feet apart. Jump these with 5 strides between. Then demonstrate 4 canter strides, then 6 in the same distance. If your horse has a smaller stride, then demonstrate his normal number of strides, then lengthen and shorten.
- Build a grid of 1 placing pole, 9 feet to a 2' cross-rail, 15-18 feet to a 2' foot oxer, 16 - 19 feet to a 2' oxer, 24-30 feet to a 2'6" vertical. Ride over this.
- Build a simple 2'6" equitation course of 10 fences and ride it.
- Demonstrate jumping a few 2' fences in a field.

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## Level 5

- Explain and demonstrate flexion and collection.
- At a walk, demonstrate a turn on the haunches in both directions.
- Demonstrate a half pass from the quarter line in collected trot, in both directions.
- Build a bounce grid of 4 fences, 2'6" high along the arena wall and ride this with no stirrups and no reins.
- Build, and explain a 3' hunter course. Ride it showing correct striding.
- Build, walk and explain a 3' jumper course. Ride it.
- Get permission and school over the starter jumps at a Horse Trials Course.

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Evaluator's signature

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Date