

HOW TO BE A TRAINER (PART 16) DRESSAGE FOR JUMPING (PART 6)

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HAVING DECIDED ON
YOUR LONG TERM AIMS,
IT IS IMPORTANT THAT
YOU THEN PLAN THE
GOALS OF YOUR DAILY,
WEEKLY, MONTHLY,
AND YEARLY TRAINING
PROGRAMME.

SHORT TERM PLANNING:

If coaches and riders just take a day at a time, they will never reach their goals. Long-term planning is very important to reach high levels but it is essential to also plan daily rides. A **riding session** should be divided into five phases: warming-up, loosening, serious work, loosening again and cooling down. If we consider that a session lasts an hour, we can split it into five phases which might vary in time in relation to the degree of physical and mental

fitness of the horse together with his degree of training and experience. This doesn't mean skipping any one of the phases, apart from the strong work phase.

Warm-up helps prepare the body and mind of both horse and rider for the effort that is to follow. It reduces the risk of injuring muscles, joints and tendons by increasing blood flow to these parts. It also makes the horse mentally responsive to the rider, while cooling down gives the horse a chance to regain its normal body temperature

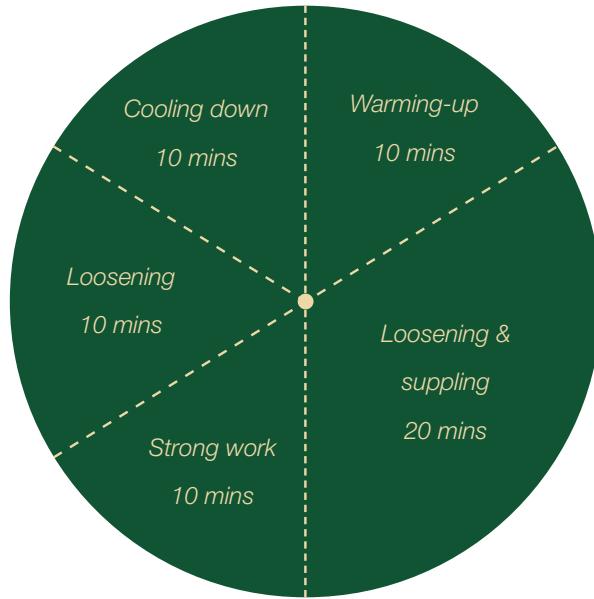


Fig 1: Example of the Five phases of a riding session

and respiration and heart rate. It also allows the body to remove waste products from the muscles (lactic acid) and reduces the possibility of stiffness.

The loosening and suppling phase is carried out in working paces. It includes some circles and serpentines combined with progressive transitions and little shortening and lengthening. For a novice horse, or when retraining horses, this stage is as far as you will go before cooling down. With more experienced and ready horses you can begin to work a little harder adding some strong work (two to three short four-minute periods, with one to two-minute rest periods in between) aiming for impulsion and collection.

THE TRAINING SCALE:

For all kinds of riding activities, the aim is to develop the physical and mental aptitude of the horse in order to make it an obedient and happy riding horse.

This is achieved by applying the training programme as shown in Fig. 2. This programme could be used to develop young horses or as a training session for older ones.

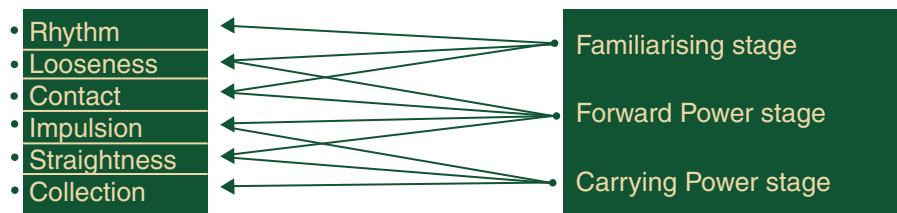


Fig. 2 The Training Scale, Horse is Supple and “Through”

Rhythm is regularity and equality of strides in each gait. The steps should also have the same duration. It is mandatory to keep rhythm during transitions and turns and not only in straight lines; there is no benefit of training with an irregular pace.

Looseness is essential for useful work. The horse should be physically and mentally free from tension. It should move through its supple back and muscles free from tension. This relaxed horse should not rush forward or resist the forward-driving aids of the rider. A good sign of looseness is when the horse stretches its head and neck forward and downward in all gaits.

Contact is the soft and steady connection between the horse's mouth and the rider's hand. It should never be achieved through a backward action of the

hand, but be achieved by the rider's driving aids affecting the hind legs of the horse delivering forward thrust. The horse is trying to find the contact and the rider is providing it, as a wise common saying in Germany. After some period of correct training with contact, the horse will develop to be **on the bit**.

Impulsion in a very illustrative expression, is the desire of the horse to move forward with active hocks and supple back. Impulsion is reached after rhythm, looseness and contact. It is only possible in gaits with suspension (trot and canter). Even if the rhythm is maintained, if the tempo is too fast the impulsion will suffer as a result due to short moment of suspension.

Straightness is keeping the horse's forehand in line with its hindquarters which is best seen from behind if the horse is moving parallel to a straight border. If the horse is straight, the hind legs will equally push in the direction of the centre of gravity making the action lighter and more active. The restraining aids will also pass through the mouth, poll, neck and back to the hindquarters acting equally on both sides. Straightness is a precondition for collection so that the weight can be transferred equally onto both hind legs.

Collection means reducing the amount of weight on the horse's forelegs to be carried on its hindquarters where the hocks and stifle joints bend more underneath the horse in the direction of the centre of gravity. This mechanism will lighten the forehand and increase the uphill look of the horse. Collection will make the horse move in balance and self-carriage in all three gaits.

A Supple and “Through” horse is a correctly schooled one which is a joy to ride. This horse is ready to accept the rider's aids obediently and happily. This horse should also remain loose while applying the driving, restraining and sides-ways acting aids on both reins. These aids should not be blocked at any point by tension. The supple and “through” quality is the hallmark of a well trained horse for all equestrian sports.