

LESSON PLAN – Jumping Exercise or Grid

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Rider/horse level: beginner – intermediate

Purpose

Lesson Plan: Teach the rider to ride a jumping exercise or grid, that has a series of trot poles and small crossed rail jumps.

Lesson Goal

By the end of the lesson, riders will have a greater understanding of why a jumping grid is a valuable training tool for both rider and horse and how the grid enables them to focus more on their riding technique, while steadily developing confidence in the horse readying them both for the start of their future show jumping.

Introduction

The instructor, at all times will consider the safety for riders and horses, while ensuring riders learn that a sound riding technique will not only help keep them safe and secure, but will also enable their horse to reach its full potential when jumping obstacles and show jumps. The lesson will progress slowly and where appropriate, pause for short discussions. The instructor will be mindful that there can be riders of different ages, experience and abilities within the group and will, where suitable and helpful, use a mix of riders to demonstrate some of the key learning outcomes of the lesson. eg. forward seat, crest release and leg position. The instructor will be mindful that other than safety and education, riders should have fun during the activity, and as such the instructor needs to be creative where and when appropriate to ensure all riders are enjoying the lesson.

The rhythm and the flow of the exercise is very important. As a single file activity, this can also be helpful for the more nervous horse and rider combination. To ensure a good rhythm through the grid, grid distances should be spaced to enable comfortable trotting at the entry and suitable canter stride distances between the jumps. The instructor will be mindful that there will be horses of differing sizes with different stride lengths and that the grid will be adjusted to best suit the bulk of the troop where possible. Should a larger or smaller horse need trotting poles or jumps adjusted, the instructor will make the appropriate changes. The height of the crossed rails will be set quite low, sufficiently high enough to invite the horse to make a small jump.

Equipment

Jumps - 3 pairs of jumping wings with one rail cup per wing, and 6 poles.

Trotting poles – 4 trotting poles

Guide poles – 2

Start posts – 2

End posts – 2

Construction of Grid – (*As per diagram below including standard distances*) On suitable flat ground with ample space at the beginning and end of the grid, set up the grid starting with 4 trotting poles followed by two trot strides to first crossed rail jump, with one canter stride to second crossed rail jump and then two canter strides to third crossed rail jump. Crossed rail jumps will only be used in this introductory lesson. These, along with appropriately placed guide poles, will minimise horse run-outs. The guide poles maybe moved to different elements of the grid if and when required. Start and end posts will assist with keeping riders on a good line for the grid.

Topic 1 - Discussion / Introduction

Key points:

- **Introduction:** The riding group will be required to marshal in a troop line, safely spaced and in a suitable location near the grid in preparation for the introduction of the lesson.
- **The design:** The instructor will **discuss** the make up of the grid and how the distances of poles and jumps relate to the walk, trot or canter stride of the horse and how this varies with different sizes of horses. This particular grid has entry trot poles followed by the first jump with one canter stride to the second jump and two canter strides to the third jump. The instructor will also explain that, by having the correct distances, the horses are ‘programmed’ to stride in a regular manner and this assists the rider to focus on their riding position/technique.
- **Saddlery:** The instructor will discuss stirrup length adjustment when showjumping and how the correct shortening of the stirrups is an aid to an effective and secure showjumping position. The instructor will also briefly discuss the different saddles styles, protective boots and the use of a crop.
- **Demonstration:** A brief explanation of how the jumping seat came to be and how it impacted on the modern showjumper. Riders will observe the various stages of the riders seat and how it changes during the grid. The instructor will discuss the riders position from sitting correctly upright (3 point seat) to fully transitioning into the forward jumping (2 point) seat as the horse moves over the obstacle.
- **The seat:** The instructor will briefly explain that there will be further discussion on the show jumping seat and its variations, when riding a show jump course, and this will happen in later show jumping lessons.
- **The rider:** The riders will be reminded of the importance of the lower leg position and its role to urge the horse forward and straight. Riders will also be made aware that a secure seat is gained by good knee and lower leg position. Through demonstration, the instructor will explain how the hands and the rider’s upper body will be sympathetic to the movement of the horse’s head and neck, ensuring that the horse, while stretching out over the jump, is not blocked in the mouth by the rider’s hands restraining the reins. The instructor will demonstrate the crest release action, as a helpful tip, to highlight the importance of the rider’s hands being in harmony with the horses’ head, neck and mouth.
- **Rider awareness/observation and body movement:** Discussion on the importance of the rider looking ahead and up, between the horse’s ears, and not ducking to the left or right as the horse jumps and how unnecessary rider movement impacts on the ability of the horse to jump.
- **Looking for the obstacle: (a forerunner to riding a course)** Discussion about the approach to the grid or a jump and how critical this is to allow the horse the best opportunity for making the jump and thus minimising possible run-outs or refusals.
- **Rider rewards:** Riders will be reminded of the importance to acknowledge good and calm behaviour of their mount while undertaking the exercise and will be encouraged to reward often via voice and/or hand.

Topic 2 - Riding the Grid

Introduction: At all times during the lesson, the instructor will be observing and offering constructive feedback to riders. This may also mean the troop will be requested to come back to the marshalling position while adjustments are made to the grid, or if an individual rider requires special assistance. The instructor will also keep as many riders active as possible where it is safe and practical to do so. If the group is too large, the instructor will divide the group into smaller groups and this may be an opportunity to better match horse sizes.

Key Points :

- **Gear Check:** Before commencing the ridden section of this lesson, the instructor will complete a gear check paying particular attention to girths, girth points and stirrup leathers.
- **Warm up and Familiarisation:** The troop will move off at the walk arranged in single file, well spaced, through the grid with all obstacles placed on the ground to enable horse and rider combinations to become relaxed with the grid equipment and layout. The initial trot poles will be spaced to suit the walk in the first instance. The instructor will observe and comment where helpful encouraging riders to let their horses stretch down and look at poles while maintaining a regular walking pace. This may occur two or three times.
- **The Trot (continuation of warm up and familiarisation)** The entry ground poles will be adjusted from the walk to a comfortable trot spacing. Riders will be asked to trot (rising) in the same order through the grid with the instructor looking for safe spacing and calmness in the horses with riders sitting quietly and willingly giving the horse room to stretch their head and neck. This may occur two or three times.
- **Forward Seat:** The instructor will ask each rider, while at the trot, to demonstrate the forward seat and rein release over the jump rails (which on the ground at this stage) while maintaining a steady rhythm. This may occur two or three times.
- **Introduction of first Crossed rail:** The troop will be requested to walk while the first crossed rail is set and then return to trot and proceed through the grid. The instructor will be looking for and encouraging a steady and calm trot with each rider demonstrating the forward seat position as they jump the crossed rail. The horse will typically canter with one stride to the next (on the ground) element of the grid and then two strides to the final (on the ground) element and then be asked to quietly return to the trot to re-enter the grid. Through observation, the instructor may elect to adjust grid poles if and when required. *The instructor will be encouraging riders to reward their mounts regularly.*
- **Introduction of second Crossed Rail:** The troop will return to the walk while the grid is adjusted. With the introduction of the second crossed rail jump, the instructor will explain how this change will effect the horse while the rider will focus on their technique. The remaining poles of the grid will be on the ground.
- **Introduction of third Crossed Rail:** The troop will return to the walk while the grid is adjusted. With the introduction of the third crossed rail jump, the instructor will explain how this change will effect the horse while the rider will focus on their technique. The group will proceed through the complete grid always commencing from a calm trot.
- **Recap:** At the completion of the lesson – the group will return to the original marshalling point, marshalling in a troop line and safely spaced. The instructor will briefly recap on the topics covered in the session, ask if the riders have any questions, and then thank them for their cooperation and attention. The group will then be asked to quietly proceed to the next session for the day.

Grid and Lesson Area Diagram

