



HorseSense Learning Levels



EQUITATION PATTERNS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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www.HorseSenseLearningLevels.com

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Special thanks to all of the HorseSense students who are featured here.

Illustrations by Rhonda Hagy

Photographs by our amazing
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Patterns & Maps: Equitation Patterns!** We hope you find these patterns to be a fun and useful supplement to your lessons, camps and shows.

ABOUT THESE PATTERNS

Each set contains **five equitation patterns**, with a supplementary page of information alongside each map. All of the patterns shared here have been used in our riding school with students of all ages, and can be modified to suit riders at every level.

It is worth noting that **while the patterns are our own creation, they contain many familiar elements** found in hunt seat, dressage and western horsemanship tests. We find that challenging students with patterns is beneficial whether they intend to compete or not - but if they do, we hope these exercises will prepare them for show ring success.

You might wish to tweak the content of each pattern to suit your program's chosen discipline or goal - please, feel free to adapt! **We encourage you to use these maps as a general guideline and a source of inspiration rather than a rigid formula.**



Each map includes:

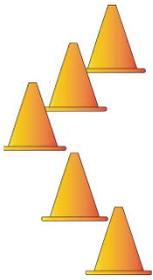
- 🐾 The pattern's **objective** and **requirements**, geared toward riders of a specific Level.
- 🐾 A list of **required equipment**, or number of cones needed.
- 🐾 Written **directions for the pattern** using the numbered cones on the map. Note that each cone may be used multiple times.
- 🐾 Several possible **variations**, including ways to modify or increase the difficulty of the pattern, and notes on pairing patterns with **HorseSense Lesson Plans**.

We have a bunch of **suggestions** to help you get the most out of our maps. Read through the following pages to find tips for using the patterns for **multiple Levels**, and for **variations** that keep lessons fresh and fun.

PLANNING FOR PATTERNS

Equitation patterns challenge students to ride with **intention** and an **attention to detail**. They emphasize careful **preparation** and **communication**, encouraging students to improve the **accuracy** of transitions and ring figures. They create a clear objective and **goals for improvement**.

They can also be a lot of fun - especially when practiced in a group setting.



As instructors, we love patterns for all these reasons and because they require a bare minimum of equipment. **Cones** can travel with you to any arena or field, and be set in a minute or less.

We recommend keeping six to eight on hand, allowing you to set complex patterns and double up cones where necessary to improve accuracy. Flexible **soccer cones**, **dressage letters**, and **12"** to **18"** **road cones** all work equally well. If you teach young children, we recommend numbering the cones, or painting the cones different colors, to help your students keep the pattern straight. (Sometimes adult riders appreciate this, too!)

Before you begin:

Ridden multiple times, an equitation pattern can easily fill a whole lesson, especially if you are working with a group. We recommend using your warm-up period to emphasize the skills your pattern will test, such as round circles, prompt transitions, or changes of lead. **Horses and riders should be loose, relaxed and attentive before attempting patterns at any Level.**

Establish **safe spacing rules**, and position group lessons to allow each rider on course to complete the pattern without interference. Explain the purpose of the pattern, and answer any questions students might have. **Help them memorize the movements** by arranging for a demonstration ride, or by leading a walk-through. Ask each rider to talk you through the pattern before sending them off to the start.

Spend as much time as necessary on helping your students understand what they are about to do. This will help them relax, and save you a lot of time in the long run as they are less likely to go off-course and need a second attempt.

Do your students know what the word *equitation* means?

Emphasize that the goal of each pattern is improved harmony between horse and rider - **not to execute the movements at any cost!**



PRACTICE, POLISH, PROGRESS

Whenever possible, we like to give students the opportunity to ride each pattern in **three successive rounds**:

Practice. The first round is a test run, with the simple **goal of riding the pattern from beginning to end**, as cleanly as possible. A student may repeat this round if they forget an instruction or go off course.

Polish. Students are asked to identify the highlights and lowlights of their previous pattern, and **establish the one thing they would most like to improve**. This might be a particular movement, a position goal to maintain, or an overall quality such as relaxation. Each student then rides the pattern a second time with this goal in mind. Asking students to **evaluate their own performance** helps them get the most out of their experience with the pattern - we like to start this as early as Red Level.

Challenge. We refer to the final round as the **Challenge Round** or **Bonus Round**. A new twist must be added onto the challenge to increase the difficulty, but the specifics of the challenge are a surprise - students must complete the first two rounds to find out!

The **Challenge** can vary from lesson to lesson and can be customized to suit your student or group. A few of our favorites include:



 **Riding without stirrups.** Each set of maps includes a pattern specifically designed to practice no-stirrup skills, but your students can try riding *any* of the patterns without their irons... or saddles!

 **Horse swap.** Students trade horses before riding the pattern a final time. We particularly love this exercise for upper-Level students interested in riding on a high school or college team, but Rainbow and Red students find it equally enjoyable with some careful matchmaking on your part. You may allow a warm-up period or challenge students to go immediately into the pattern, depending on their level of ability and the time allowed. The horse swap really tends to prove a rider's strengths and weaknesses - they can't blame the horse for mistakes if the same thing happens on a different mount!

 **Level Up.** A movement is added to the pattern, or one movement is substituted for another, to incorporate a more advanced skill. Stirrups may be dropped and retrieved at the trot instead of the walk; a circle may be ridden at the canter instead of the trot, or a turn on the haunches used in place of a turn on the forehand. Suggestions for increasing difficulty are included in the **Variations** for each pattern.

If teaching a group or young child, you might wish to **award a prize** to each student who completes all three rounds - or establish judging criteria and turn the second and third rounds into an equitation class.

Each pattern should be used to assess and motivate.

Avoid overfacing students, and make sure to end on a positive note - even if it means setting an easier goal than expected!

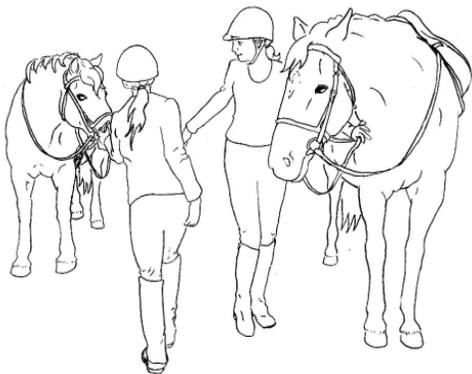
FUN FOR ALL

Our patterns are grouped by suggested Level, and frequently complement a specific Levels objective or lesson. **However, they can easily be recycled for riders of all Levels.**

The cone placement for many lower-level patterns is deliberately reused in our advanced patterns, and can be modified or renumbered as needed. We know how much precious time can be lost in setting and resetting an arena - we hope that whatever pattern you use, you can leave it up and use it throughout the following week.

We also hope that riders of all disciplines can enjoy these patterns. We think that their emphasis on fundamental flatwork makes them a fun exercise whether you say lope or canter, practice with or without a bit, ride a Thoroughbred or a Shetland Pony.

Because nothing makes a riding school grow like camaraderie.



Even if you teach private lessons, your students will enjoy knowing that each pattern is a **shared experience**. Consider designating a Pattern of the Month and sharing photos or video of participants.

You can also **host in-house schooling shows** with equitation classes. Pitch it to your beginner students and invite your most experienced students to judge. Or, create a special event just for your advanced riders. High schoolers with college team aspirations might enjoy a College Prep Club that meets regularly for horse swaps and friendly competition.

Need flatwork lessons to prepare your students for patterns?

Start with HorseSense Lesson Plans:

<https://horsesenselearninglevels.com/resource-center/lesson-plans/>

Note that all of the directions assume that all horses used are safe, sound, and have been trained to perform and/or accept the skill being taught.

While the patterns can always be used by riders bringing along green horses, their primary purpose is to *test* skills that are already confirmed. **We recommend that all horses and riders practice the individual elements of each pattern before attempting it as a whole.** This is particularly important when including no-stirrup work - especially for beginner riders!